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THE IMPACT OF FRENCH OPERA
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY NEW YORK:
THE NEW ORLEANS FRENCH OPERA COMPANY, 1827–1845

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2015
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract


by

Jennifer C. H. Jones Wilson

Adviser: Professor John M. Graziano

This dissertation examines the influence of French opera through the touring New Orleans French Opera Company’s summer seasons in early nineteenth-century New York City. In that burgeoning operatic environment, I provide an account of the company’s interaction with both resident and traveling opera companies, beginning with the visit of Manuel García’s company in 1825–26. The French Opera Company, which performed in 1827–33, 1843, and 1845, brought new approaches in performance practice and current opera repertoire to the New World. While Italian opera companies were sought after, I demonstrate that the works coming from Paris—either in French or in English translation—were both critically admired and more successful with audiences than the Italian works. In addition, I include details about the New York French community that demonstrate the influence of the Old World. Over a span of two decades, foreign-language opera in New York City began as a cultural experiment and ended in a flood of touring companies. The performances and reception of the New Orleans French Opera Company were integral in laying the foundation for future companies.
Acknowledgments

This dissertation could not have been completed without the assistance and moral support of many people. First, I am grateful to my committee members for their encouragement, supervision, and advice. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my adviser, John Graziano, for his guidance, ideas, and counsel in this process. I am indebted to my first reader, Allan Atlas, whose keen editing and insight continually sharpened my research and writing. I would also like to thank my committee members: William Rothstein, Karen Ahlquist, and Katherine K. Preston. I am appreciative of William Rothstein’s direction in seeing this project through to its conclusion. To Karen Ahlquist and Katherine Preston, I am beholden to them for not only serving on my committee, but also being vested in my project from its inception. Their scholarly work and mentorship have served as a foundation for my personal and professional growth.

The staff at numerous archives, including the American Antiquarian Society, Harvard Theatre Collection, Louisiana Research Collection at Tulane University, Library of Congress, New York Public Library, and New-York Historical Society, provided the wealth of primary source documents and writings that are included in this dissertation and revealed further avenues of research. The Baisley Powell Elebash Foundation at The Graduate Center was a key source of financial support; their pre-dissertation and dissertation awards funded travel to archives. In addition, owing to the Kate B. and Hall J. Peterson Short-term Fellowship at the American Antiquarian Society, I spent a luxurious month working in its nineteenth-century primary sources.

A special thanks to my colleagues, friends, and family members, who have watched me learn, struggle, and thrive through my doctoral study. They have been ever supportive of my
completion and I am grateful. To my colleagues at *Music in Gotham*, your intellectual curiosity and attention to detail have been inspired; a special thank you to Roberta Graziano, Ruth Henderson, William Glenn, Javier Albo, Jill van Nostrand, Danielle Bastone, and Jonas Westover. In addition, I would like to thank Diana Hallman, who read early drafts and provided valuable feedback. Two scholars, Adrienne Fried Block and Ora Frishberg Saloman, had an indelible influence upon my project; I valued every conversation. To my dear colleagues, Christopher Bruhn, Louise Chernosky, Kathryn Fenton, Stephanie Jensen-Moulton, Anna-Lise Santella, Lauren Weintraub Stoebel, and Elizabeth Wollman, thank you for your unflagging friendship. To my family, Norman and YnDo Jones and Bud and Sandra Wilson, thank you for your constant encouragement. Lastly, I cannot express enough gratitude to Greg and Elliot, whose love, patience, generosity, and sacrifice sustain me. “Thank you” does not seem enough.
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Introduction

Paris was, as literary critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) contends, the “capital city of the nineteenth century,”¹ and Paris was the nexus of European operatic life. Considering France’s political, cultural, and social position in early nineteenth-century Europe, there has been little contemporary consideration and assessment of French opera performances and their reception in the United States, and in particular, New York. New York’s operatic history has been founded upon the intersection between the English and the Italian opera; however, New York’s foreign-language opera scene had a larger, more dynamic interaction that involved the performance of French operas, a French opera company from New Orleans, and a social and cultural connection with Paris. This dissertation juxtaposes the performance and assessment of French works against those of English, “Englished,” and Italian operas that were being performed in New York at the same time² and examines the influence, performance, and reception of the French Opera Company from the Théâtre d’Orléans in New Orleans (hereafter NOFO) when they performed in New York City in 1827–1833, 1843, and 1845.

² Until the mid-1820s, New Yorkers had heard a variety of English operas from the eighteenth-century comic operas of Thomas Arne (1710–78) and William Shield (1748–1829) to the Italian-style operas by Michael Balfe (1808–70) and William Michael Rooke (1794–1847). In addition, “Englished” operas were French, Italian, or German operas translated into English, replacing recitative with spoken dialogue, and adding popular songs from other operas. Michael Rophino Lacy (1795–1867) and Henry Rowley Bishop (1786–1855) were the most successful composers of “Englished” operas during this time. Their adaptations of operas brought internationally renowned works to London audiences. Karen Ahlquist, Democracy at the Opera: Music, Theater, and Culture in New York City, 1815–1860 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 88–89; Katherine K. Preston, Opera on the Road: Traveling Opera Troupes in the United States, 1825–60 (1993; repr., Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 2–3.
By exploring French opera in New York, I reveal a significant aspect of America’s transatlantic musical history in which decades of influences are recovered through the interplay of theatrical, societal, and critical events. The integration of French opera within the discussion of foreign-language opera discloses a vibrant interchange between the influential musical milieu of Paris and that of New York, as well as Paris’s influence upon London and, ultimately, New York. The following table displays NOFO’s touring season, set among Italian and English operatic events in New York.

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Table 0.1: French, Italian, and English operatic Events in New York, 1825–45.

³ Austin toured the United States from 1829 to 1835.
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<sup>4</sup> The celebration was scheduled for New York’s Evacuation Day, 25 November, but a daylong rainstorm postponed the outdoor festivity.
<table>
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<th>French Operatic Events</th>
<th>Italian Operatic Events</th>
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<th>Dates</th>
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**Economic Panic of 1837**

|                        |                        | Soprano Maria Caradori–Allan debuts and perform with company at the Park Theatre | 31 Oct 1837 |
|                        |                        | Soprano Jane Shirreff, tenor John Wilson, bass Edward and soprano Anne Seguin debuts and perform with company at the National Theatre | 15 Oct 1838 |

| NOFO at Niblo’s Garden |                        | 15 May–5 Aug 1843 |
| NOFO at Niblo’s Garden |                        | 6–11 Sept 1843 |
### French Operatic Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Operatic Events</th>
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### The New York Scene

Nineteenth-century New York was a culturally diverse port city where many immigrant communities converged. Although the French community was not large in proportion to the number of total inhabitants, its impact was significant. Historical analysis of the immigration of the French to America has been scant. In his article “French migration to the Americas in the 19th and 20th centuries as a historical problem,” French historian François Weil scrutinized the paucity of research:

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5 According to Chevallay, in 1830, 1/15 of the population of New York City (202,589) was French (approx. 13,506). “Il y avait également un nombre important d’Allemands, d’Espagnols et d’Italiens.”/”There was equally an important number of Germans, of Spaniards and of Italians.” Chevallay does not explain how she determined that 1/15 of the population was French. See Sylvie Chevalley, “Le Théâtre d’Orléans en Tournée dans les Villes du Nord 1827–1833,” in *Comptes Rendus de l’Athenée Louisianais* (New Orleans: Imprimerie Franco-Américaine, 1955), 28n5.
Their silence is not only the result of the relatively small number of French migrants, but also a consequence of the gallocentrism of French and non-French historians of France, the intellectual provincialism of French historians of the Americas, and the americanocentrism of American historians of the Americas. 6

As seen in figure 0.1, French immigration lagged behind the migration from the United Kingdom and Germany during the period from 1820 to 1846.

![Immigration by Nationality: 1820-1846](image)

Figure 0.1: Change in immigration from France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom to the United States between 1820 and 1846. 7

A number of explanations have emerged to account for why the French did not, or could not, immigrate to the New World in large numbers. Ramirez and Weil speculate that compared to the citizens of other European countries, the French were not compelled to leave their native country since France had “experienced both an early decline in birthrates and a fall of mortality

rates, which together led to a reduced growth in population.\textsuperscript{8} Another historian, Robert Tombs, has argued that although considerable political and social upheaval plagued France, the French people chose to remain in their homeland. According to Tombs, “Few French people emigrated to find better opportunities in the New World: this too distinguished them from every other people in Europe. Millions of French families wanted both to better themselves and to stay put.”\textsuperscript{9} Marcus Lee Hansen gives an alternative account for the lack of French emigration:

France’s incessant involvement in wars made her man power [\textit{sic}] too valuable for a generous policy of voluntary migration. . . . Not until the French Revolution did the choice of emigration win recognition as a natural right; and even this recognition remained but a philosophical principle during the ensuing generation of wars when the nation had need of all her sons.\textsuperscript{10}

According to the New York State 1845 census, 134,656 residents of New York City were identified as being born outside of the United States.\textsuperscript{11} The French remained a minority, totaling only three percent, whereas those from the German states and Great Britain were eighteen percent and seventy-two percent, respectively. The declared Italian population was even smaller and was combined with those from “other European countries, occupying two percent of the foreign-born.”\textsuperscript{12} Even with these low figures, the musical opinions of the French community as found in the press continued to be important to New Yorkers.

\textsuperscript{11} The 1845 New York State census was the first to provide information on an individual’s birthplace.
\textsuperscript{12} Ira Rosenwaike, \textit{Population History of New York City} (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 40.
The French community in New York kept abreast of the latest musical trends and activities through the *Courrier des États-Unis*. Ideas and events from Paris were conveyed through the *Courrier*, a French-language daily newspaper published in New York that discussed, interpreted, and supported French culture. During much of its first decade, the *Courrier des États-Unis* supported a highly political agenda. When Félix Lacoste (1795?–1853), a close ally of Joseph Bonaparte (1768–1844),\(^{13}\) founded it in 1828, he provided the *Courrier* with a pro-Bonapartist perspective. In 1836, Charles de Behr (fl. 1820s–30s), a New York City bookseller and supporter of Louis-Philippe, acquired the *Courrier* and adjusted the paper’s rhetoric accordingly.\(^{14}\) Shortly thereafter, in 1839, Frédéric Gaillardet (1808–1882) purchased the *Courrier*; he broadened the publication’s scope and updated its slogan to “L’Organe des populations franco-américaines.”\(^{15}\)

Notable French musicians contributed to New York’s musical life. One was Denis-Germain Étienne (1781–1859), who was one of the conductors of the third Philharmonic Society of New York and an active participant from 1816 to the 1850s.\(^{16}\) He emigrated with a group of musicians after the War of 1812. Vera Brodsky Lawrence describes briefly this cohort’s musical impact as introducing “a more sophisticated level of performing and listening than had yet been

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known” in New York. An award-winning graduate of the Paris Conservatoire and student of François-Adrien Boieldieu (1775–1834), Étienne was an accomplished pianist, composer, instructor, French horn player, and conductor. He was asked to serve as the conductor of the second Philharmonic Society, which was active from 1824 to 1827. At the orchestra’s first public concert on 14 December 1824, he conducted a program of music by Henri-Mouton Berton (1767–1844), Bishop, Boieldieu, Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868), Stephen Storace (1763–1796), and the Second Symphony finale by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827). In November 1825, Manuel García’s Italian Opera Company enlisted Étienne to conduct the twenty-five-person orchestra for its performances. When the third Philharmonic society was established in 1842, Étienne was one of the three conductors who led the orchestra at its first concert. Howard Shanet makes an unsupported, but possible, claim that Étienne commanded “a large following of potential subscribers” and a “small, but vigorous French clique which watche[d] jealously the inroads of the Germans on New York’s musical life.”

New Orleans, an Outpost of French Culture

Nineteenth-century New Orleans was an equally diverse port city whose residents directly interacted with Paris. Formerly the capital of French colonial Louisiana, New Orleans was a significant point of entry for French music and, beginning in 1796, the location of the first resident opera company in the New World. The earliest verifiable opera performed in New Orleans was...
Orleans, and in the New World, was *Sylvain* by André Grétry (1741–1813) on 22 May 1796 at the St. Peter Street Theatre.  

Early programming of operas in New Orleans demonstrated a direct connection to the Parisian repertoire; composers included Grétry, Boieldieu, Nicolas Dalayrac (1753–1809), Étienne-Nicolas Mêhul (1763–1817), and Pierre-Alexandre Monsigny (1729–1817).  

The perpetuation of French culture in Louisiana has been described by historians as a “perplexing historical problem” in the antebellum South. French culture endured without being affected by the Anglo-American mainstream and the continuous arrival of English-language speakers. From 1820 to 1839, a significant influx of French nationals immigrated to that state. New Orleans’s federal port authority documented the arrival of at least 8,264 French nationals, which is a notable figure when one considers that the Crescent City’s population was only 27,176 in 1820 and 46,082 in 1830. During this period, eighty people identified themselves as “actors or actresses” and eighteen as “musicians.”

In 1819, Parisian-born entrepreneur John Davis (1773–1837) invested in the Théâtre d’Orléans located on Orleans Street between Royal Street and Bourbon Street. In response to competition by other venues that produced operas, Davis recruited his actors, musicians, and dancers from France. His recurring trips to Europe infused the New Orleans theatrical repertoire

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with recent Parisian successes. During the summer months, Davis employed his troupe by taking it on tour when the southern weather was too oppressive.

Many scholars of American operatic history have mentioned French opera in passing, but few have approached its ramifications as part of the nineteenth-century operatic environment in antebellum New York. By including the French Opera Company, we can discern that a musically cosmopolitan environment was evident before a permanent foreign-language opera house was established in New York City. Karen Ahlquist and Katherine K. Preston mention NOFO, but they do not examine its impact and its interaction with other operatic traditions within the scope of their historical projects, which focus on English and Italian opera companies. In his book *High-Minded and Low-Down: Music in the Lives of Americans, 1800–1861*, Nicholas Tawa takes a broad brush in his approach to American musical life. With respect to this study, his method poses a problem when considering opera during this time. During this wide time frame, Tawa asserts that French opera was only performed in New Orleans and that during this period Italian opera was dominant and centered in New York. In her chapter “Aftermath,” Molly Nelson also omits any acknowledgement of NOFO. NOFO influenced foreign-language operatic production in New York City, shaping the quantity and quality of Italian opera companies that would arrive after Manuel García’s first season concluded. The

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27 For example, the Théâtre d’Orléans presented Rossini’s *Barber of Seville* seven years after its premiere in Italy and three years before its New York City premiere. See Kmen, “Singing and Dancing,” 165.

28 In 1824, the company went to Havana in search of audiences and revenue. See Kmen, “Singing and Dancing,” 174.


interactions between the two operatic genres and companies are newly evaluated in this dissertation.

In some instances, the examination of French opera in America has been restricted to terse chronologies and lists of premiere dates. Alfred Loewenberg’s Annals of Opera: 1597–1940 fails to include some early performances at the Théâtre d’Orléans in New Orleans, which often predate the recorded New York premieres. New Orleans performances in the 1840s are better documented. In two articles, Sylvie Chevalley provides a thorough documentation of NOFO from 1827 to 1833; however, she does not include a discussion of the musical styles, genres, and themes of the operas. Mary Grace Swift records the 1843 and 1845 tours. Her focus is on the company’s soprano Julie Calvé (1816–98). Swift and Chevalley rely on primary sources, but they overlook the rich commentary that can be found by including a fuller complement of weekly and bi-weekly journals of the day. We know when and where these works were performed, but there has been little research on the reception of specific performances and their interaction with other foreign-language operas in New York.

In Opera in America, cultural historian John Dizikes dedicates a chapter to opera in New Orleans, but only in its regional, social, and cultural context; he does not address the musical aspects of the operas, nor does he provide a thorough reaction to the works performed. His narrative includes NOFO’s Northeast tours from 1827 to 1833, but not those of the 1840s. Julius Mattfeld briefly mentions the New Orleans company’s tours in 1827, 1833, and 1843 in A

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Hundred Years of Grand Opera in New York: 1825–1925. His use of the term “Grand Opera” is an example of a dated, general way of referring to opera that ignores the genres of French opera and is no longer valid in contemporary musicology.36 On the other hand, The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera offers excellent discussions of the current understanding of *grand opéra* in its more specific French meaning. Less satisfactory is Sarah Hibberd’s chapter on *grand opéra*, “Grand Opera in Britain and the Americas,” which draws on secondary sources and provides a superficial account of the subject.37

In his dissertation, “Singing and Dancing in New Orleans: A Social History of the Birth and Growth of Balls and Opera, 1791–1841,” Henry Kmen offers an important and pioneering study, but he neglects the transatlantic exchange of repertory and information that was present in the popular press in New Orleans. His historical focus neither places the works within the context of their original performances in Europe nor tries to interpret the American performances in terms of the French-speaking audience in New Orleans. In addition, he omits a discussion of musical styles, genres, and themes of the operas.38 Kmen’s subsequent book *Music in New Orleans* includes a chapter on the 1827–33 tours in which he relies heavily upon Sylvie Chevalley’s article “Northern Tours,” with the additions of some limited New Orleans primary sources. He too fails to include a detailed assessment of the impact of the operas upon the New York community.39

38 Kmen, “Singing and Dancing in New Orleans.”
Drawing heavily on Kmen, June Ottenberg’s book *Opera Odyssey: Toward a History of Opera in Nineteenth-Century America* includes the first tour of the Théâtre d’Orléans to New York City and Philadelphia. While I agree with her assessment that the French performances broadened the experience of opera goers in those cities with the “variety, quantity, and fine quality” of the performances and raised “the general level of expectations and taste,” Ottenberg neither acknowledges the subsequent tours nor delves into the implications of the company’s repertory within the nascent New York operatic scene.\footnote{June C. Ottenberg, *Opera Odyssey: Toward a History of Opera in Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 58–59.} John Baron’s recent book, *Concert Life in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans: A Comprehensive Reference*, provides a valuable evaluation of a concert life in which many of the performers and works cross over with the operatic scene; however, the influence of New Orleans musicians and French repertoire upon New York was beyond the scope of his project.\footnote{John H. Baron, *Concert Life in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans: A Comprehensive Reference* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).} All in all, considerable information can be added to all existing accounts.

This dissertation illuminates new levels of interpretation of Parisian operas by critics and audiences in New York City. Influences were transmitted to America from Europe through the dynamic exchange of ideas substantiated in the public press, musical and non-musical journals, travel diaries, and books of the day, as well as in the performances. New York newspapers and journals had correspondents in Europe who wrote about important musical events or reprinted reviews. The French-language newspaper in New York City depicts vibrant musical activity, but few musicologists have included non-English-language American newspapers as sources in studies of this topic. My approach to nineteenth-century American musical life depicts a fuller
view of the multi-lingual, multi-faceted, newly immigrant French-American communities and of their role in responding to French opera.

In chapter 1, I focus on the first performances of NOFO in New York City from 1827 to 1830. The chapter compares and contrasts the company’s presence with that of Manuel García’s recently departed Italian opera company. When manager John Davis brought NOFO to the Park Theatre to perform operas and vaudevilles, the company entered an operatic environment that was responding to, and reacting to, New Yorkers’ first experience with Italian opera.

I provide an in-depth cultural and social context for the French community in New York in chapter 2. In the months after news reached New York of the July Revolution in Paris (27–29 July 1830), New York theaters presented new works that endorsed the sentiment of the French uprising. The entire city supported the uprising and organized celebrations to commemorate the freedom of the French people, culminating in a city-wide parade.

In chapter 3, I evaluate the 1831 NOFO tour—the year after the July Revolution in France—where the operas, plays, and vaudevilles revealed a distinct political tone that evoked detailed reactions within the French community in New York. For example, although it had been performed previously in English translation, *La muette de Portici* with Daniel-François-Esprit Auber’s (1782–1871) original music was presented for the first time in its original language. Most of the tour’s repertory reflects the theme of popular revolution.

I discuss operatic endeavors in New York by the Italian- and English-language opera companies between 1832 and 1842 in chapter 4. In response to the recent French events, Lorenzo Da Ponte wrote a fervent letter to bring back an Italian opera company. During this time, the New York *bon ton* made multiple attempts to bring Italian opera troupes to New York. *A querelle de New York* was documented in a journal that provides more context for New York’s
operatic history. While this chapter does not focus on NOFO, it shows that many French operatic works were being performed in the repertoire of the English companies.

In chapter 5, I analyze the welcome return of NOFO in 1843. NOFO had adapted its company and repertory to reflect the changes that had taken place during the last ten years in New York and in Paris. Featuring vocal star Julie Calvé, its repertory promoted the recent successes from the Paris Opéra-Comique. At the same time, three additional French sopranos arrived and performed in New York, singing in French and Italian. They represented the cohort of cosmopolitan singers that was being trained in Paris.

I focus on the performance and reception of NOFO on its final New York tour in 1845 in chapter 6. The company introduced audiences to operas in French by Auber, Rossini, Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848), Jacques-François-Fromental-Élie Halévy (1799–1862), and Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864) and transformed its repertoire from performing mostly opéras comiques to performing the successful grands opéras from the Paris Opéra. In Strong on Music, Vera Brodsky Lawrence suggested that the critics were “running out of evaluative steam as the season progressed”; yet a more complete appraisal of the English- and French-language press reveals a rich assessment of the troupe, the composers, and the works they presented.

In the final chapter, I examine closely New Yorkers’ reactions to the two grands opéras by Giacomo Meyerbeer that were performed during the 1845 tour. Until then, Meyerbeer’s operas had been heard only in English pastiches and concerts. The New York premieres of Robert le diable and Les Huguenots were enthusiastically anticipated. By examining the critical and popular reception of these celebrated operas in New York, we can understand the American connection to Europe as well as American perceptions of Meyerbeer and his cosmopolitan compositional style.
Chapter 1

Foreign-Language Opera in New York: A Cultural Experiment

In an 1827 guidebook, James Hardie described a shift in the cultural atmosphere of New York City. Previously identified as the “London of America” for its “rapid growth, commercial character, and unrivalled [sic] prosperity,” New York was now “constantly filled with strangers.” Hardie likened the cultural scene to cosmopolitan Paris, which he hailed for its “extensive patronage afforded to the liberal arts, and works of taste; the unexampled increase of public amusements, with the consequent progress of morals and refinement . . . ”\(^1\) While scholars have often cited this guidebook as having observed New York’s transformation into a worldly, international city, few have explored the presence of French arts and culture within the city. Gallic art and artists had become more prevalent in New York in the late 1820s. In the visual arts, the Gallery of the American Academy of the Fine Arts exhibited the *Coronation of Napoleon* by Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) from 10 January to 15 April 1826.\(^2\) At the Bowery Theatre in 1827, French dancers Francisque Hutin (fl. 1820s) and Celeste Keppler (?1810–?82) introduced the Parisian school of dance to the New York stage, scandalizing and mesmerizing audiences with their dress and movements.\(^3\)

The city’s burgeoning foreign-language opera scene contributed to its comparison to Paris, where multiple theaters were government-approved for different styles of entertainments:

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e.g., the Opéra, Théâtre Italien, and the Opéra-Comique, among others.\(^4\) Even from abroad, New York’s emerging cosmopolitan environment was deemed noteworthy. In 1828, a writer at the London *Harmonicon* observed, “[T]he French and Italian opera were naturalized in North America. In all the annals of the drama, there are no years more memorable than those of 1826 and 1827.”\(^5\) While the complete “naturalization” of foreign-language opera in New York ultimately required more than a few introductory performances, those two years did in fact educate theater managers and audiences, as well as international touring troupes, as to what conditions were needed for opera to be successful.

A considerable effort was made to bring foreign-language opera to New York. Gotham’s theatergoers—accustomed to English plays, ballad operas, and pastiches vetted by the London establishment—were offered a greater variety of experiences. Members of the entertainment and social elite actively sought to bring Italian opera to Gotham. Given New York’s close connection with London and Londoners’ predilection for Italian opera, it was not a great leap for New Yorkers to pursue foreign-language opera in that language. Yet within a year of the end of the first Italian opera season in 1825–1826, a French opera company from the New Orleans Théâtre d’Orléans was also in New York, performing operas, vaudevilles, and plays in French at the Park Theatre. By examining the performances and reception of NOFO in this chapter, I introduce them as a significant influence in the establishment of foreign-language opera in New York.

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\(^4\) Each venue had its own specific performance criteria; the Opéra performed works with music throughout in the French language; the Opéra-Comique staged works with spoken dialogue; and the Théâtre Italien performed works only in Italian. Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 24–32.

\(^5\) This article was published originally in February 1828 in the *Harmonicon* and was republished in the April 1828 issue of *The New-York Mirror*; see “Italian and French Opera,” *The New-York Mirror* 5, no. 42 (26 April 1828): 330.
The García Company, 1825–26

Before delving into the New York performances and reception history of NOFO, it is important to provide the backdrop for New York’s foreign-language opera environment, which began with the tenor Manuel García (1775–1832) and his family. New York socialite Dominick Lynch, Jr. (1786–1857), Park Theatre co-manager Stephen Price (1782–1840), and Italian opera librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749–1838) first envisioned a broader palette of entertainment than the existing English-language musical fare; this threesome sought to recruit and promote Italian opera in the city. Expatriate Da Ponte had cultivated and promoted the Italian language and customs within the educated class since his arrival in 1805, while Lynch, from his position within the bon ton of New York society, strove to “wed European culture to American sensibilities.”

The Park Theatre, one of the oldest entertainment venues in the city, was built in 1798 and purchased by John Jacob Astor (1763–1848) and John K. Beekman (fl. 1800s–1840s) in 1808. Price, a lawyer and member of the city’s cultural elite, co-managed the successful Park Theatre and has been credited with establishing the “star system” of entertainment in America. Price provided a welcoming venue for Italian opera and, thanks to being well-connected to the theater scene in London, was able to attract singers. And when Price was away procuring

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8 Nelson, “The First Italian Opera Season,” 37.
performers, it was the actor Edmund Simpson (1784–1848) who assumed the day-to-day responsibilities of managing the Park Theatre.¹¹

In the summer of 1825, Lynch and Price traveled to London to seek out and assemble a troupe to perform Italian opera in New York.¹² There, they hired seven principal singers and six chorus members. In creating an Italian opera company for New York, Price began with a well-known “star”: the celebrated Spanish tenor Manuel García, Sr. Internationally known for creating the role of Count Almaviva in Rossini’s Il barbiere di Siviglia (Rome, 1816), García arrived with his second wife, soprano Joachina Briones (1780–1864), his son, basso cantante Manuel Patricio García (1805–1906), and his daughter, contralto María Felicita, later known as Maria Malibran (1808–1836).¹³ The company was completed by bass Félix Angrisani (fl. 1820s), basso buffo Paolo Rosich (fl. 1780s–1830s), and tenor Giovanni Crivelli (1801–1833). While the minimum number of male voices was complete, the female voices lacked an additional soprano. The company would perform without one until Madame Barbieri [Barbiere] (fl. 1820s),¹⁴ a new graduate of the Paris Conservatoire, arrived in December 1825.¹⁵ The London-enlisted performers were untested or past their prime, unlike the New Orleans company, which later arrived with a well-rehearsed and unified cast and crew.

The first performance of the Italian opera company took place on 29 November 1825; their residency concluded ten months later, on 30 September 1826. During four “seasons” of varying lengths, the García Company performed only nine works, as seen in table 1.1.

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¹² Nelson, “The First Italian Opera Season,” 90.
¹³ María had made her operatic stage debut in London as Rosina earlier that year, 7 June 1825. Nelson, “The First Italian Opera Season,” 102–8, 135.
¹⁴ Preston, Opera on the Road, 102.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Librettist</th>
<th>Premiere</th>
<th>New York Premiere</th>
<th>Number of Performances</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Il barbiere di Siviglia</em></td>
<td>Gioachino Rossini</td>
<td>Cesare Sterbini [after Pierre-Augustin Beaumarchais]</td>
<td>Rome, 20 February 1816</td>
<td>29 Nov 1825&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>L’amante astuto</em></td>
<td>Manuel García&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Paolo Rosich</td>
<td>New York, 17 December 1825</td>
<td>17 Dec 1825</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Tancredi</em></td>
<td>Rossini</td>
<td>Gaetano Rossi</td>
<td>Venice, 6 February 1813</td>
<td>31 Dec 1825</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Otello</em></td>
<td>Rossini</td>
<td>F. Berio di Salsa [after W. Shakespeare]</td>
<td>Naples, 1816</td>
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<td><em>Il Turco in Italia</em></td>
<td>Rossini</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>La figlia dell’aria</em></td>
<td>García</td>
<td>G. Rossi</td>
<td>New York, 25 April 1826</td>
<td>25 April 1826</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Don Giovanni</em></td>
<td>Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart</td>
<td>Lorenzo Da Ponte</td>
<td>Prague, 1787</td>
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<td><em>La Cenerentola</em></td>
<td>Rossini</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Giulietta e Romeo</em></td>
<td>Niccolò Antonio Zingarelli</td>
<td>G. Foppa</td>
<td>Milan, 30 Jan 1796</td>
<td>26 July 1826</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> NOFO had already performed the American premiere of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* on 4 March 1823, thus preceding the García Company’s New York premiere by almost three years. See Henry Kmen, “Singing and Dancing in New Orleans: A Social History of the Birth and Growth of Balls and Opera, 1791–1841” (PhD diss., Tulane University, 1961), 347.


Table 1.1: Operas performed by the Manuel García Company, 1825–1826
García was inexperienced as a manager and unfamiliar with the attention span of New York theatergoers, who thrived on variety. He had promised new works, but had been unable to deliver them.\(^{16}\) His credibility waned, especially among season ticket-holders.\(^{17}\)

Specific details of the Park Theatre financial investment in the García Company are unknown; however, the Italian opera experiment was not a fiscal success. It is clear, though, that the Park Theatre invested heavily in the venture, by hiring an enlarged orchestra,\(^{18}\) printing librettos, procuring additional singers, and holding extra rehearsals. Relying upon a single singer was risky, particularly if the singer was unavailable and/or cancelled a performance at the last moment.\(^{19}\) The gross receipts for the entire venture were $56,685, which averaged $700 per performance, from the smallest house at $250 to the opening night at $2980.\(^{20}\) In the end, Edmund Simpson did not extend the relationship with the Garcías, returning to the theater’s

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17 Nelson, “The First Italian Opera Season,” 137.
18 Forging a mutually beneficial arrangement, the Park Theatre negotiated a reciprocal relationship between the Second Philharmonic Society and the Italian Opera singers to create the proper operatic musical experience. Per the agreement, Philharmonic Society conductor Denis-Germain Etienne (1781–1859) and six instrumentalists—Ureli Corelli Hill (1802–1875, violin), William Taylor (fl. 1820s–30s, violin), Nicholas Dumahault (fl. 1820s, violin), J. A. Boocock (fl. 1820s–40s, cello), Peter F. Gentil (fl. 1820s–30s, cello), and Patrick H. Taylor (fl. 1820s, flute)—enhanced the Park Theatre orchestra. The singers would return the favor by singing at three Philharmonic Society concerts during the coming season. “[No title],” *New-York American*, 29 November 1825, quoted in Nelson, “The First Italian Opera Season,” 123–24; The singers participated in four New York Philharmonic concerts: 22 December 1825, 26 January 1826, 6 April 1826, and 4 May 1826. See Nelson, “The First Italian Opera Season,” 316–20.
20 Bernard Hewitt, “‘King Stephen’ of the Park and Drury Lane,” 112; Ahlquist, *Democracy at the Opera*, 50–51.
standard program of regular drama. \textsuperscript{21} Further investment in Italian opera was not attempted for another six years. \textsuperscript{22}

By the end of the García company’s residency, the perception of Italian opera changed precipitously. Initially, the \textit{Albion} critic credited the company with raising musical taste and promoting musical events in the city, stating “[Italian Opera] has purified and elevated our taste—taught us the difference between science and pretensions to science—and furnished us with a sure standard by which to estimate the true value of subsequent musical displays . . .” \textsuperscript{23} Furthermore, he envisioned that “a regular Opera (Italian or English—perhaps both) will soon become one of the permanent amusements of our city.” \textsuperscript{24} This prediction would not come to fruition for more than two decades. In the following issue, the same critic noticed that the theater audience was “scanty.” He perceived that the \textit{bon ton} were no longer satisfied with the usual fare and considered the existing theatrical menu inferior. He declared:

\begin{quote}
They have been spoilt by the Italian Opera. Some of them vaunt, that they have not entered the theatre since the Garcia’s [sic] \textit{withdrew} from the stage. But these are the whims and freaks of fashion which time will sober down to the old likings and the old habits. \textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{21} Nelson, “The First Italian Opera Season,” 299–301.
\textsuperscript{22} The formal organization of the Italian Opera Association of New York City occurred on 19 November 1832.
\textsuperscript{23} “The Drama,” \textit{The Albion} 5, no. 29 (30 December 1826): 232.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} “The Theatres,” \textit{The Albion} 5, no. 30 (6 January 1827): 240.
A month later, an even bleaker assessment described the “failure” of the Italian Opera. Nearly six months after the Italian troupe left the city, the reviewer conceded that the majority of New Yorkers’ musical taste was not “sufficiently expanded” and that “the general character of Italian music is not ‘germane’ to the likings of an infant.” He dismissed the ability of New Yorkers to comprehend the harmonies heard in Mozart’s and Rossini’s operas, claiming that Mozart’s music “appeals to a simple and natural (and somewhat rude) susceptibility of our nature,” and Rossini’s works were “founded upon the same susceptibility, but shaped and tempered by cultivation, study and experience into the most refined and exquisite perception.” For New Yorkers, he contended that most successful Italian operas “told some interesting and intelligible story, or were studded with simple melodies” and that Rossini’s Il barbiere di Siviglia was the only opera to achieve “popularity.” He concluded by saying that there was a bias against the Italian language, saying “People do not like to pay for hearing that which they do not understand. It is something like an insult to one of our faculties to address us through an unintelligible medium.”

Even with the desire for Italian opera, the experiment could not be sustained at the Park Theatre. Within the year, instead of acquiring performers and providing rehearsal time and space, the Park Theatre management reduced its investment and risk by renting the theater to the French opera company from the Théâtre d’Orléans. Moreover, the large French company performed nine different works in their first four nights, ultimately presenting thirty-one different operas. The burden to be profitable and attract audiences was thus transferred from the Park

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26 These three reviews from The Albion are unsigned, making it difficult to determine if they were written by the same critic. If it is the same critic, one might conclude his attitude toward New York’s ability to sustain a foreign-language opera became more and more pessimistic.

Theatre to the touring French company, which had a greater audience base in New York: the French expatriates.

**The New Orleans French Opera Company, 1827**

NOFO sought to fulfill Gotham’s newly-expressed interest in foreign-language opera in the city and made its debut in New York in 1827. Via steamboat, impresario John Davis brought twenty singers, actors, two conductors, musicians, and technical personnel to New York to produce a summer season. Both the *Albion* and *New-York Mirror* described the arrival of the French company as an “experiment” and were cautiously optimistic about its ability to attract audiences. The *Mirror* critic warned that the season was “hazardous” but boasted that New York theatergoers were adventuresome, and their “hearty support attends every project, no matter whether French, English, or Italian; and we would scarcely be surprised at the announcement of an importation from Amsterdam of ‘first-rate Dutch talent,’ for the delight and edification of the Americanized Mynheers.”

The editors at the *New-York American* arranged for a French-language critic to review the performances of the French company. In his opening statement, the critic highlighted the position of New York City as a welcoming cultural environment, exclaiming, “Vive New-York, la métropole du commerce des Etats-Unis [sic], le séjour des arts, et l’asile des plaisirs!”

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31 This is not the first time that the *New-York American* provided a French reviewer for its readers. During the García company’s season in New York, that journal printed a French-language review that described the merits of Madame Barbiere, Maria García, the orchestra, and Rossini. See F. D., *New-York American* (5 January 1826), quoted in Nelson, “The First Italian Opera Season,” 202–5.
live New York, the metropolis of United States commerce, the place to go for the arts, and the refuge of pleasures!). After reminding readers about the Italian opera, he expressed support for the French opera company as another positive cultural experience for the city, pointing out that “aujourd’hui une nouvelle carrière vient s’ouvrir devant nous . . . nous promet une somme de plaisirs qui atténuerez l’idée du passé par la possession du présent et l’espérance de l’avenir” (today a new arena just opened before us, promising us an amount of pleasure that will lessen the idea of the past by the possession of the present and the hope of the future). The French critic thanked Davis for bringing the troupe, which he believed was the equal of the Italian company and provided a new caliber of theater to New Yorkers: a theater “rempli de difficultés, mais basé sur les règles d’Aristote [sic]” (full of difficulties, but based on the rules of Aristotle). He posited that the company’s performances would influence both American and French audience members in different ways. He believed that the Americans will have their “goût” enhanced by the good example of the company, whereas the French will be patriotically nostalgic, observing the theater of their homeland. He concluded his review with a patriotic quote from act 3, scene 1, of Voltaire’s play Tancrède, “À tous les coeurs bien nés que la patrie est chère!” (How dear to each well-born heart is one's native country!), appealing to the community to support the French theater.\footnote{D, “[No Title],” \textit{New-York American} 7, no. 2241 (14 July 1827): 2.}

The \textit{Albion} critic noted that operas given in French had a significant advantage over those in Italian, for the city’s French-speaking residents could experience the “native attraction” of the New Orleans company. He also raised the instructive aspect of the entertainment for all those
who were studying French. The *Mirror* speculated that three factors would make this endeavor profitable: the French-speaking population, “fashion,” and “curiosity.”

Like the García company, the French opera company was recruited from Europe. Unlike the singers in the García company, however, those in the French troupe were not internationally known, though they had had the advantage of performing together for an entire season. In contrast to the “star system,” under which New Yorkers were accustomed to an evening’s entertainment focused on one or two major entertainers, NOFO offered a company with five principal singers. The ensemble was hailed as “far above mediocrity” and was regarded “as good as is generally met with in the largest provincial cities of France, and much better than it has been our good fortune to see in any of the capitals (out of France) of Europe.”

The American critic claimed that, apart from the Italian company, “the [French] company is better than any we have ever seen here” and employs “much general and useful skill” despite performing “without any very striking and surpassing talent.” The *Evening Post* echoed this comment, which would be a recurring theme in positive notices for the company.

The French company had the ability to provide a wider range of entertainments than did the Italian company. New Yorkers preferred a variety of entertainments, as found in a collection of outwardly unrelated dramatic elements. Ahlquist describes the typical “formula” where “The program opened with an overture and included a main piece (usually a drama, ‘opera,’ or genteel comedy) and an afterpiece (usually a farce, sometimes a short ‘opera’). In between appeared

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36 “[No Title],” *New-York American* 7, no. 2282 (31 August 1827): [2].
variety acts that depended on available performers.” She emphasizes that managers took programming cues from their audiences in order to promote patronage.38

The French company performed not only operas from their recent season in New Orleans, but also vaudevilles and plays. They presented thirty-one different operas during a thirty-six-night season, most of which were New York premieres—in their original language—that had first been presented in Paris from 1784 to 1826.39 The oldest was the opéra bouffon L’épreuve villageoise (Paris, 1784; New Orleans, 1806) by André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry (1741–1813);40 the newest was the opéra comique La vieille (Paris, 1826; New Orleans, 1827) by François-Joseph Fétis (1784–1871).41

New Yorkers’ general reaction to the French company and its repertory was favorable. The company opened its tour with Cendrillon (Paris, 1810; New Orleans, 1814) by Nicolas Isouard (1773–1818). The operatic treatment of the fairy tale of the mistreated step-daughter was familiar to New Yorkers, who had seen the Italian company’s performances of Rossini’s La Cenerentola (Rome, 1817) eleven months earlier.42 The opéra comique Aline, reine de Golconda by Henri-Montan Berton (1767–1844) was considered “pleasing,” with “sweetness” in some of the lighter airs. The American critic appreciated the overall performance, praising the

38 Ahlquist, Democracy at the Opera, 2–3.
39 See Appendix B: List of operas performed by NOFO, 1827–33.
42 Rossini’s La Cenerentola quickly superseded Isouard’s Cendrillon in Europe. The English adaptation of Rossini’s work by Michael Rophino Lacy (1795-1867) was premiered at Covent Garden on 13 April 1830. This English pastische, which uses music from La Cenerentola as well as other Rossini operas, was a transatlantic hit when it was performed by star singer Elizabeth Austin at the Park Theatre on 24 January 1831. See John Graziano, ed., Italian Opera in English: Cinderella (1831) Adapted by M. Rophino Lacy from Gioacchino Rossini’s La Cenerentola, xvi–xxii; Preston, Opera on the Road, 12; Nelson, “The First Italian Opera Season,” 280.
chorus as “full and efficient.” Of Daniel Auber’s *Le maçon*, the critic at the *Albion* claimed that “three or four compositions” had “great beauty.”

Owing to its risqué plot, Isouard’s *Joconde*, a comédie mêlée de chants, was observed to have been “somewhat qualified in the details to suit the refinement of modern manners.” Mathilde and Edile conspire to seduce the others’ lovers. This plot, one can imagine, might have been adjusted to assuage New York sensibilities. Despite this dramatic issue, the *Albion* critic believed that Isouard’s *Joconde* was “sweetly played”; and the *Evening Post* critic noted that *Joconde* contained “fine music” and was “exceedingly well received.”

Within its diverse repertoire, the company featured seven works of François-Adrien Boieldieu (1775–1834), the only French composer whose style was discussed in the New York press. By 1827, Boieldieu was internationally known and an acclaimed composer of *opéras comiques*. NOFO had been performing his operas since 1805. The *Albion’s* critic eagerly awaited their productions of Boieldieu by proclaiming:

The Operas hitherto performed, have been the production of Boieldieu, the prince of living French Composers. He is in Paris what Rossini is in Italy. If not equal to the Italian in brilliancy, variety, and voluptuous sweetness, he is certainly his equal in the rapidity with which he composes, and he occasionally exceeds him in dramatic character and passion of his music.

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44 “The Drama,” *The Albion* 6, no. 9 (11 August 1827): 72.
The public clearly agreed, and the company scheduled six performances of *La dame blanche*, reprising it for the benefit for their conductor, Martin-Guillaume Paradol (fl. 1820s–30s). While Boieldieu’s *La dame blanche* was admired, *Jean de Paris* was considered “less successful.”

On 13 August 1827, the company presented *Robin des bois* (Odéon, December 1824) an adaptation by François-Henri-Joseph [Castil-]Blaze (1784–1857) of Weber’s *Der Freischütz,* which was enjoying a phenomenal international success. After its 1821 Berlin premiere, an adaptation of *Der Freischütz* appeared in London at the English Opera House (July) and was quickly followed by versions for Covent Garden and Drury Lane, among others, in 1824. New Yorkers enjoyed the Covent Garden adaptation, titled *The Freyschütz; or, The Wild Huntsman of Bohemia* on 2 March at the Park Theatre. In 1825, the Park Theatre manager was commended for securing the rights to the work, which reflected “his determined perseverance to improve the taste of our city.” Yet, the *Mirror* critic observed that the work had been “too powerful” for the Park Theatre cast to perform since they were actors not accustomed to singing roles.

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51 “The Drama,” *The Albion* 6, no. 9 (11 August 1827): 72.
By contrast, the French company was commended for its performance of *Robin des bois*, which attracted a “crowded” house.\(^{57}\) The *New-York American* critic boldly stated that “We think we risk nothing in saying, that the piece has never been throughout so well supported in this country.”\(^{58}\) Although there had been undisclosed minor issues, the second performance was also deemed a success, and the *Evening Post* endorsed the company, saying “If good music, chaste and skillful acting, and sprightly and amusing, and at the same time inoffensive pieces, deserve good houses, they are deserved by the French company.”\(^{59}\)

After thirty-six nights, the company departed for Philadelphia for a two-week engagement at the Chestnut Street Theatre. After considerable success there, the company returned briefly to New York and performed for three evenings.\(^{60}\) The popularity of the troupe was again noted, with the *Albion* mentioning that their last performance of *La dame blanche* was well attended even though it conflicted with the farewell concert of Marie [García] Malibran at the Bowery Theatre, whose first aria was from Boieldieu’s *Jean de Paris*.\(^{61}\)

A discussion about the American and “foreign” audiences emerged in the press accounts. The *Albion* critic noticed that the Americans were “lukewarm” in their attendance of the French company’s performances but strove to provide them with “the most liberal encouragement.” He hoped that their absence was a result of “a disinclination to endure the heat and fatigue of the

\(^{57}\) New Orleans theaters witnessed both versions after New York; the Camp Theatre performed an English version on 18 March 1826 and the Théâtre d’Orleans premiered the Castil-Blaze adaptation on 22 May 1827. See Kmen, “Singing and Dancing in New Orleans,” 360, 364.

\(^{58}\) “*Der Freyschutz,*” *New-York American* 7, no. 2281 (14 August 1827): [2].

\(^{59}\) “*Der Freyschutz,*” *The New-York Evening Post*, 16 August 1827, 2.

\(^{60}\) Chevalley notes that the company returned for two more performances, but the *Albion* documents three performances. See Sylvie Chevalley, “Le Théâtre d’Orléans en Tournée,” 34; “The Drama,” *The Albion* 6, no. 21 (3 November 1827): 168.

theatre." The critic at the *New-York American* also noticed the dearth of American attendees owing to the heat of the summer and families away on holiday. He promoted attendance at the operas as a means to improve audience members’ studies of the French language.\(^\text{63}\)

An observation about the New York French-speaking community was relayed in an *American* review of the *vaudeville historique Rataplan* by Marc-Antoine-Madeleine Désaugiers (1772–1827).\(^\text{64}\) The critic remarked upon a portion of the theater that was filled with French expatriates. He observed:

> In the second piece, of the Little Drummer, the appearance of *Alexandre* in the uniform, and with the air and manner of the “*vieilles mustaches*” of the imperial army, seemed to strike a chord to which many hands and hearts were responsive. The applause was very great, and it was renewed, when he gave, with great effect, the song, which recounted the manner in which, during an assault, he had saved the life of the little drummer, then an infant.\(^\text{65}\)

Little has been written about the “*vieilles mustaches*” of New York, which included brothers Louis (?1793–?1877) and Hyacinth Peugnet (?1794–1855), who were officers under Napoleon Bonaparte and directed a civil and military boarding school—Frères Peugnet School—located at Bank and Twelfth Streets.\(^\text{66}\)

Pragmatically, the French critic for the *American* had two administrative suggestions for the company. First, he recommended that the playbills and newspaper advertisements for the troupe be fully translated into English in order that it be understood by all New Yorkers. The

\[^\text{62}\]“The Drama,” *The Albion* 6, no. 9 (11 August 1827): 72.
\[^\text{63}\]“[No Title],” *New-York American* 7, no. 2282 (31 August 1827): [2].
\[^\text{64}\]“[Advertisement,” *New-York American* 7, no. 2241 (14 July 1827): [2].
advertisements and playbills were published in French and English, but the titles offered in French only, i.e., as seen in the following playbill (figure 1.1) from the first performance of the company, where the title “Cendrillon” was not translated into “Cinderella.”

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Figure 1.1: Partial broadside for Cendrillon, Park Theatre, 13 July 1827 (after TCS 65 [Park Theatre], Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University).
The company took the critic’s advice, and by the end of the tour, the titles of their presentations were translated into English, as seen in their advertisement (figure 1.2) for the benefit for Monsieur Paradol, where Boieldieu’s *La dame blanche* was listed as *The White Lady*.

![Figure 1.2: Advertisement for the benefit for Monsieur Paradol (after “[Advertisement],” *The New-York Evening Post*, 10 September 1827, 3).](image)

The critic wanted this foreign-language company to appeal to as wide an audience as possible. Concerned about building an audience for the company, the *American* critic also suggested that Davis consider adjusting the seat prices. The French opera company was charging $1 for the boxes, $.75 for the parterre, and $.25 for the gallery. He wrote that if the company lowered the price of the parterre to $.50, the attendance would increase, and raise revenue for the performance as well as foster a larger audience. The critic further reminded his readers how the Italian company’s ticket prices, in which they doubled the prices for the premiere performances, had a deleterious effect:

> You will perhaps object to the price of the parterre of the Italians; we will reply that the premieres were double, that the troop, paid at great expense, had been especially engaged for this city, and that curiosity needed to satisfy itself in this new importation. The first ones win the race, and if their director lost [money], this is not at all the fault of the public. 68

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68 “On m’objectera peut-être le prix du parterre des Italiens; nous répondrons que les premières étaient du double, que la troupe, payée à grands frais, avait été spécialement engagée pour cette
After two columns, the French critic at the New-York American was not able to continue. The newspaper claimed that not only was the French text difficult to reproduce, but also that the foreign-language review was “not acceptable to the majority of our readers.” It is unclear whether the language or the content was intolerable.

After the company’s departure from New York, the Albion critic publically approved of the Park Theatre’s programming NOFO for New York’s French community, which did not have its own theater stating that “We are glad of it, for our own sakes as well as for that of the large and respectable portion of foreigners, whose ignorance of the language cuts them off from the amusement of our vernacular drama.” The critic also noted that the company was anticipated to return to New York and Philadelphia every summer, affirming that the French Opera “experiment has been tried, and found to succeed . . .” From the discussion, one can speculate that the French company introduced a second type of foreign-language opera, one with an immediate appeal to an existing New York audience, and one that ultimately posed a problem to some of the bon ton, who saw Italian opera as the more desirable style.

The New Orleans French Opera Company, 1828

During the company’s second tour of the Northeast in the fall of 1828, the French company added Boston to its itinerary, where it was admired over the course of seven evenings of performances. They then returned to New York, performing at the Chatham Theatre for
only three nights. Shortly afterward, the company traveled to Philadelphia for sixteen performances, revisited New York for four nights, and concluded its tour in Philadelphia with another five performances. As seen in table 1.2, the basic north-to-south trajectory guided the company in its initial tours.

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<th>Dates</th>
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<td><strong>1827</strong></td>
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<td>13 July–22 Sept</td>
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<td>23 Aug–5 Sept</td>
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<td>10 Sept–12 Sept</td>
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<td>7 Sept–8 Oct</td>
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<td><strong>1830</strong></td>
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<td>16 Aug–31 Aug</td>
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<td>6 Sept–4 Oct</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Oct–20 Oct</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
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Table 1.2: NOFO’s Northeast Tours, 1827–30.\(^{75}\)

\(^{74}\) The writer at *The Albion* indicated that the company was in New York City for three nights; see “The Drama,” *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics and Literature* 6, no. 21 (3 November 1827), 168.

Although its return to New York was brief, the company programmed the same wide range of works, repeating three operas from the previous season and introducing five new ones. They reprised Boieldieu’s *La dame blanche*, Isouard’s *Joconde*, and Castil-Blaze’s *Robin des bois*. They remained *au courant* by including works that had been recently premiered in Paris: Castil-Blaze’s *Les folies amoureuses* (Lyons, 1823) and Rossini’s *Le barbier de Séville* (Paris, 1824), while also presenting works that had been in their New Orleans repertory but had not yet been performed in New York: Devienne’s *Les visitandines* (Paris, 1792; New Orleans, 1805); Louis-Sébastien LeBrun’s *Le rossignol* (Paris, 1816; New Orleans, 1821); and Boieldieu’s *Les voitures versées* (Paris, 1820; New Orleans, 1821).

That fall, James S. Wallace began a short-lived journal, *Opera Glass*, dedicated to supporting the arts: visual, dramatic, and literary. He extolled the French company as a “pleasing vehicle for instructing novices in the polished dialogue of the French tongue” and complimented the company for furnishing a complete set of original-language texts of the operas and vaudevilles. The journal applauded the company’s talent, which it described as an “uncommon intellectual treat” for the city.

The *Opera Glass* favorably reviewed Boieldieu’s *La dame blanche*, writing:

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76 *Les Visitandines* was one of the first operas performed in New Orleans. See Kmen, “Singing and Dancing in New Orleans,” 275.
80 “Behind the Curtain,” *Opera Glass* 1, no. 7 (20 October 1828): 56.
This opera contains some most delightful music; its diversity is a principal charm, sweetness and strength are blended in most harmonious proportions; no discordant or unnatural harshness annoys the ear; the sounds breathe so soft, they almost appear an awakened echo.  

He also gave detailed accounts of the French company’s singers. Of his performance as Georges, Jean Alexandre (fl. 1790s–1830s) was described as having a “qualification so rare in a good singer; he is likewise a good and natural actor.” The critic observed that “he sometimes grimaces a little, but this perhaps, is a national rather than an individual fault.” Attributing this vague fault as “national” indicates that the critic was aware of differences in singing and acting styles although not able to meaningfully describe them. Madame Alexandre (fl. 1800s–20s) received a more musically specific assessment as Jenny, with the review stating that she was a “pleasing actress, a little en bon point; she has a good voice, though rather infantile. We sometimes detected her out of tune, singing a semitone too flat.” Monsieur Leblanc (fl. 1820s) was lauded for his performance as Gaveston in the act 2 auction scene. The newly acquired Madame Mariage (fl. 1820s), who sang the role of Anna, was assessed as a “pleasing singer” when “she does not attempt any embellishment of her own.” The critic considered her to have “no science, but her natural good taste in a degree atones for this deficiency.”

The company’s ensemble and orchestra continued to be held in high esteem. The Opera Glass critic deemed the chorus as “faultless.” He noted that “instead of quarreling about parts, as is too frequently the case, some of the best artists were seen amid the chorus singers.” Paradol had returned as the leader of the orchestra and was commended for his “accuracy” and “taste.”

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81 “Bowery,” Opera Glass 1, no. 2 (15 September 1828): 14.
82 Brasseaux, The Foreign French, 569.
A suggestion was made to include another trombone or double bass, but the Opera Glass critic believed that even without the additions the orchestra’s contribution was “already very imposing.”

The Opera Glass critic found the most dramatic moment of La dame blanche in the auction scene that concluded act 2. At its Parisian premiere, a Parisian reviewer lauded Boieldieu’s ability in setting this scene, saying:

One imagines oneself in a scene in the notary chamber put into music, without any of the rigorous formality being omitted . . . There are the words that M. Boieldieu had to reanimate by his melody and harmony: he has managed with an incredible dexterity. Rameau said that he could skillfully set the Gazette de Holland (the Gazette de France of the day); in truth, Boieldieu’s feat is even more marvelous.

The multi-sectional finale is staged for full ensemble, with two aspects of the plot developed: Gaveston’s plans for Avenel Castle are thwarted, and Georges and Anna are brought together. After the first, intense rounds of bidding, Boieldieu demonstrates his ability to weave the soloists’ voices in a slower, reflective polyphonic section, as seen in figure 1.3. Three distinct voices are heard during the sextet and chorus; Gaveston (bass) muses on the boldness of “ce nouvel acquéreur” (this new buyer) while Georges and Anna (tenor and soprano) form a duet in thirds in which they are musically linked to bid on the castle.

84 Ibid.
85 “Qu’on s’imagine une scène de la chambre des notaires mise en musique, sans qu’aucune des formalités de rigueur soit omise . . . Voilà les paroles que M. Boieldieu avait à réchauffer, de sa mélodie et de ses accords: il s’en est tiré avec une adresse incroyable. Rameau disait qu’il se ferait fort de mettre en bonne musique le Gazette de Holland (la Gazette de France de l’époque) en vérité, le tour de force de M. Boieldieu est encore plus merveilleux.” Quoted from Le Glove, 13 December 1825; as found in Sarah J. Mantel “An Examination of Selected Opera [sic]-Comiques of Adrien Boieldieu” (DMA diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1985), 138, 146fn26.
Figure 1.3: “Dieu tout puissant,” La dame blanche, act 2, mm. 256–78
(after Adrien Boieldieu, La Dame Blanche, libretto by Eugene Scribe, piano-vocal score
... d'un maître que je re-... digne sau-ver les... donc ce my-s-tère?
quel est donc quel est donc ce nou-
quel est donc ce my-s-tère?
digne sau-ver digne sau-ver... donc ce my-s-tère?
quel est donc quel est donc ce nou-
hieux que vient-il faire? que vient-il faire? mais quel est donc ce nou-
hieux que vient-il faire?

1599, n° 11 bis, 2470 J.C.
Las promis, ta las promis sur l'honneur bon de c'est le seul le
mais, mais quel est donc ma quel est donc ce mystère que le sort
que le
la suffit, ce la suffit a mon bonheur je le vois
quel est donc quel est donc ce nouvel acquéreur? que le sort
quel est donc quel est donc ce nouvel acquéreur? dans ces lieux
quel est donc quel est donc ce nouvel acquéreur? dans ces lieux
Georges, who is bidding at the encouragement of Anna, prevents Gaveston from winning the castle, and the concluding chorus rejoices that Georges will be the new owner. The Opera Glass critic proclaimed it to be Boieldieu’s most successful moment, where “the master stood revealed, and its effect in so small a house as the Chatham was tremendous.”

Whether the company’s performances attracted full audiences at the Chatham Theatre is difficult to tell from the press accounts. The New-York American reported that the “performances were admirable—to a very thin house” and encouraged its readers to attend by saying, “Certainly there is taste enough to alter this.” By contrast, the Albion announced that the French company “draws full houses” and the performances were hailed “with most flattering success.” More specifically, the Evening Post remarked that the audience was predominantly composed of the New York French community. An observation in the Opera Glass spoke of an “original” Frenchman in the audience for a performance of La dame blanche and the following one-act vaudeville, Le Charlatanisme by Eugène Scribe (1791–1861) and Édouard Mazères (1796–1866):

During one of the most brilliantly executed airs, we heard a stifled sob,—the old man was playing with his handkerchief, he was certainly weeping. And away we rambled. He was undoubtedly one of those who had suffered for the Bourbons, and had fled from the blood thirsty Robespierre; he has since settled in America, thought we, but still cannot forget, la belle France even in the endearments of a land, which is his home, and the home of liberty.

86 Ibid.
89 LAACOON, “[No Title], The New-York Evening Post, 13 September 1828, 2.
The critic identified this “old man” as an upper-class Frenchman who had fled France when the fanatical Maximilien de Robespierre (1758–1794) instigated one of the bloodiest moments that followed the French Revolution.90 The writer further speculated about the old man’s response to the music:

This music, perhaps he may have heard in his early days, and it recalls past pleasure, till the remembrance of them becomes painful, and many a poor exile may feel as the old man does. At this moment the most obstreperous applause . . . awakened us from our dreaming, we turned round, and beheld the object of our speculations, applauding, as a sailor would say “at the rate of twenty four knots an hour.” His face resembled an April sky—the traces of tears were still visible, but the sunshine of pleasure lighted up his whole countenance. Ah, thought we, such are the French, their feelings are strong, but evanescent,—and we were half angry with the old man for not continuing to be miserable.91

The critic’s description may well reveal an important detail about the perception of the French community in New York—that perhaps it was not by choice that its members had left their homeland.

**The New Orleans French Opera Company, 1829**

During its 1829 tour, the company began in New York, continued on to Philadelphia, and concluded in Baltimore. While in New York, it returned to the Park Theatre for nine evenings.92

During its New York engagement, the company repeated *La dame blanche* from the previous season. But instead of reprising other older works from its repertory, it performed newer works

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92 The French Company spent the most time in Philadelphia, performing nearly twice as many evenings as in New York.
from Paris: Hérold’s Marie (Paris, 1826; New Orleans, 1829); Castil-Blaze’s arrangement of La fausse Agnès (Paris, 1824; New Orleans, 1829); Auber’s La fiancée (Paris, 1829; New Orleans, 1829) and Fiorella (Paris, 1826; New Orleans, 1828); and Rossini’s La Dame du lac (Paris, 1824 [in Italian] and 1825 [in French]; New Orleans, 1829).

As in previous years, the press commended the company for its variety of works and quality of performance, claiming that “as a whole, [it was] of an order superior to those generally exhibited at our theaters . . . .”93 The ensemble and orchestra were featured as its most important asset, with the acknowledgement that French “stars” were a “commodity not easily to be come at in this country.”94 The New-York American expounded that the “general effect” of the company, with “an absense of what is positively bad,” is better than missing an “absolute superiority,” or “star,” with a chorus of “absolute inferiority.”95 The American critic promoted the company as providing a positive opportunity for audiences to refine their French-language skills, and suggested that attending the performances conferred good “taste.”96

The New Orleans French Opera Company, 1830

During its return in August 1830, the company repeated its tour itinerary from the previous year—New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. The company reprised known works: Boieldieu’s La dame blanche and Jean de Paris; Auber’s La fiancée and Le maçon; Isouard’s Joconde; Hérold’s Marie; and Castil-Blaze’s adaptation of Rossini’s Le barbier de Séville, La pie voleuse; and his adaptation of Weber’s Robin des bois. Older works were also included:

93 “[No Title],” New-York American 10, no. 2971 (25 August 1829): [2].
95 “[No Title],” New-York American 10, no. 2971 (25 August 1829): [2].
Catel’s *L’Auberge de Bagnères* (Paris, 1807; New Orleans, 1820) and Dalayrac’s *Une heure de mariage* (Paris, 1804; New Orleans, 1807).

That summer, John Davis coordinated the arrival of twelve new singers and instrumentalists from France to coincide with the company’s performances in New York. The “star” singers gained attention in the press: Monsieur Letellier (fl. 1830s) from the Feydeau Theatre, Madame St. Clair (fl. 1830s) from the Theatre Royal and the Odéon, and Gregorio Curto (1805–1887), who, according to the *New-York American*, had studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Felice Pellegrini (1794–1832) and Manuel García, Sr. This company was hailed as “the strongest French company that has ever been in this country”; as a result, the press coverage of performances increased.

Most of the New York press supported and encouraged the returning French company. The *American* critic pointedly hoped for a more fruitful “patronage” for the company, which brought “the music of Boildieu [sic] and Auber, with the expressive pantomime of the French stage.” As it did when the French company first performed in New York in 1827, the *American* included a French-language review of the opening performance of *La dame blanche*. A lone dissenting voice was found in the *Mirror’s* reviews, which became progressively anti-French, especially with respect to the company’s performance of non-French repertoire.

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98 According to Edwin L. Jewell, Curto received his early training at the School of Choron in Paris. He does not mention the Paris Conservatoire. See Edwin L. Jewell, ed., *Jewell’s Crescent City Illustrated* (New Orleans, 1873), unpaginated.
100 Ibid.
As in previous years, the company was praised for its tight-knit ensemble, a unique feature in a city that had an entrenched “star” system. The chorus was acclaimed for its organization, training, and “thorough drilling.” The *New-York American* critic wrote that the chorus was in “perfect harmony” and “remarkably fine”; however, the *Evening Post* accused the company of “acting too much to the audience.” The *Mirror* critic divided his evaluation along two lines. First, he endorsed the pluralistic approach in which “every member of the company is compelled to appear in the chorus, and no petty pride seems to interfere with their strenuous exertions” and suggested that the chorus from the Park Theatre could learn from the French opera chorus, stating pointedly:

> We would recommend the gentlemen who form Mr. Simpson’s chorus at the Park theatre, to take an example in one respect from the French comedians; instead of standing like so many ill-looking statues, shuffling into the rear and trying which can do least, if they were to feel a little of the “esprit du corps” of their Gallic brethren, and try to acquire some of their vivacity, their superior knowledge of music would cause them to be much better appreciated.

On the other hand, he maligned the company musically as “very effective, without being very correct,” saying that they “sing the melody in utter neglect of the harmony.” He pined for the chorus from García’s company, which he claimed was “much more correct, although not so powerful, but to musical ears more grateful.”

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106 Ibid.
The company opened to a full house on 16 August with the perennial favorite, *La dame blanche*. With the arrival of the new singers from Paris, the New York press could assess them in light of an oft-performed work. About the new tenor Letellier, three differing assessments were posed, the two French-language critics being more accommodating than the *New-York Mirror* critic. The French-language critic for the *New-York American* considered Letellier (in the role of Georges) an improvement over his predecessor, Monsieur Alexandre. He wrote that Letellier’s voice did not have “force,” but that there was a sense of “gentleness” in the middle range. The critic found his falsetto range to be “pleasant” and not overly used. As an actor, Letellier performed with energy, but with too many gestures. Further, the critic praised his first aria, “Ah! quel plaisir d’être soldat”; the duet with Jenny, “Ils’éloigne, il nous laisse ensemble”; and the cavatine, “Viens, gentille dame,” and predicted that French-Americans could anticipate a successful career as Letellier gained experience.108 The other French-language critic, from the *Courrier*, also found Letellier to be appealing as an actor, but with a limited vocal range.109 The *Mirror* critic portrayed Letellier more harshly. Agreeing with the others, he preferred him to Monsieur Alexandre. In his description of Letellier’s performance practice, he described his voice as a noisy “little penny-trumpet” and that his “French méthode . . . [indulged] in the use of the falsetto, and concluding all his cadences with three semitones.”110 The *Mirror’s* assessment perpetuated the divide between those who supported the French company and those who remonstrated every aspect of the company, couching the criticism in nationalistic terms.

109 “Opéra Français. La Dame Blanche.—Angéline,” *Le Courrier des États-Unis*, 18 August 1830, [2].
As Gaveston, the dishonorable steward of Avenel, Gregorio Curto was integral to the act 2 finale as he bid for the title of the castle. As mentioned above, the entrance of Georges Brown bewilders Gaveston, who at the change of tempo begins a new moderate section in A-flat major. Instead of the frenetically paced bidding, Boieldieu uses the antagonist to establish the next section. Gaveston creates the atmosphere and harmonic structure that leads to the reflective polyphony that we see in figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4: Gaveston, “O Ciel!,” La dame blanche, act 2, mm. 233–56 (after Adrien Boieldieu, La Dame Blanche, libretto by Eugène Scribe, piano-vocal score (Paris: Chez Janet et Cotelle, [1826?]), 147–50).
quelle est donc ce nouvel acquéreur? dans ces lieux, dans ces lieux

que vient-il faire? mais cachons lui ma rage et ma fureur co-

nons cachons ma rage cachons ma rage et ma fureur ca-

chons lui bien cachons lui bien cachons lui bien ma rage et ma fureur co-

nons une

\[\text{Ref: 4890, N°41 bis, 2170 J.C.}\]
As his bids are foiled, Gaveston becomes more and more angry, fuming that “la rage est
dans mon coeur.” In figure 1.5, one observes Gaveston’s fury in his text and melodic line, which
reaches chromatically to an F4—the highest portions of his range.
Figure 1.5: Gaveston, “la rage est dans mon coeur,” *La dame blanche*, act 2, mm. 433–38 (after Adrien Boieldieu, *La Dame Blanche*, libretto by Eugene Scribe, piano-vocal score (Paris: Chez Janet et Cotelle, [1826?]), 164–67).
Curto was judged a little cold as Gaveston in this first performance. The New–York American French reviewer admitted that evaluating Curto was difficult, for he was featured only in the auction scene. The Courrier found Curto’s performance in the second act “exécuté avec une verve” (implemented with a vivacity), saying that his voice was “fort belle” (beautifully strong). The New-York Mirror critic, with a dig at Curto, argued that knowing the musical training of a singer did not guarantee the singer’s ability and concluded that “[singing] masters seldom permit very promising pupils to wander far from home,” thus implying that Curto was not an excellent singer because he was in New York and not performing in Europe. With respect to Curto’s performance as Gaveston, the Mirror critic said, “His voice is mellow and good, but shows no great traces of superior cultivation; his acting, of course, we ought not to criticize, and we hasten to add, that acquired confidence may place his singing in a more favorable point of view.”

Madame Berdoulet appeared as Jenny, the role of a Jeune Dugazon. As with their appraisals of Letellier and Curto, the New-York American and the Courrier critics applauded her performance, with the latter saying that she had “une jolie voix” (a pretty voice) with a touch of “fraicheur” (freshness). The American appreciated her act-one ballade, “D’ici voyez ce beau

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112 “Opéra Français. La Dame Blanche.—Angéline,” Le Courrier des États-Unis, 18 August 1830, [2].
114 Dugazon is the shortened nickname for Louise-Rosalie Dugazon (1755–1821), also known as Madame Dugazon, who was a well-known French operatic mezzo-soprano, actress and dancer. A Jeune Dugazon came to portray the light, but evocative roles that Dugazon made popular at the Opéra-Comique in the 1780s. Grove Music Online, s.v. “Dugazon, Louise-Rosalie” (by Elizabeth Forbes), http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O006620 (accessed 28 August 2014).
domaine.” The Courrier also observed that the aria earned her “nombreux applaudissemens” [sic] (much applause). Once again, though, the New-York Mirror disagreed, stating that “she may act very well, but her voice is thin, wiry, and hardly audible; and in this character she was decidedly less capable than her predecessor, Madame Alexandre.”

Though critical of the French company’s performers, “E.,” as the New-York Mirror critic signed his work, praised Boieldieu as the “Mozart of the French school,” and for introducing musical themes that reflect the setting of the work:

Examine “Le Calife de Bagdad,” and the music will at once decide the piece to be oriental. In his “Nouveau Seigneur du Village,” he has hit the style of the old Provençal melodies. In his “Jean de Paris,” the bold and gay bearing of the gallant young prince claims one strain of martial melody, to be found in almost every piece in the opera. The music of the princess insists upon a plumed and robed dame of birth and breeding to execute it; and the romance sang at table recalls the days of knight and troubadour, and again you are transported to the classic regions of Provence.

He explained varying impressions of Boieldieu, stating, “ask a Frenchman as to his merits, and he will assuredly reply that Boieldieu is the first composer of the age; but as this is the age of Rossini and Weber, we are not quite prepared to acquiesce in such an assertion . . . .” Thus E. showed his partiality for German and Italian composers, a view that was repeated in two subsequent articles in the New-York Mirror, signed by “Il Fanatico and Co.”

117 “Opéra Français. La Dame Blanche.—Angéline,” Le Courrier des États-Unis, 18 August 1830, [2].
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid.
“Il Fanatico” replaced E. as the critic for the Mirror after the second week of performances, reviewing Boieldieu’s Jean de Paris, Auber’s La fiancée, and Castil-Blaze’s adaptation of Il barbiere di Siviglia. When he addressed the performance of Jean de Paris, “Il Fanatico” buried complimentary statements about the chorus, conductor, and orchestra amongst scathing evaluations of the singers. The orchestra was praised as having “force and precision,” their leader, Paradol, observed as supporting the singers with his “watchfulness and tact.” The critic remarked on Paradol’s attentiveness to the baritone Privat’s rendition of “C’est la princesse de Navarre”:

It was curious to observe the anxious solicitude which [Paradol] manifested for the singer. When, for instance, he observed Privat give demonstrations of being about to attack a note a little above his compass, which is perceptive to the vigilant leader by sundry signs of inquietude, such as a wrinkling of the forehead, and a projective erection of the chin, instanter [sic] seizing his violin he would give such a powerful coup d’archet on the note, that the effort was concealed, and no person could detect that “vox faucibus haesit” [lit: voice stuck in the throat].” On the contrary, when his sagacity prompted him to discover that Privat was about to search the depths of his person, his very penetralia [interior], for a low note, demonstrated, as such efforts generally are, by a portentous frown on the singer’s os frontis, and a burying of the chin in the neckcloth, quick as lightning, snatching his baton of command, he would bring in the band strong on the note, and add to the effect by sundry blows on the wood of his desk; again the singer is safe!

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121 It is likely that “Il Fanatico and Co.” was a pseudonym for “E.” The articles signed by them did not appear at the same time, and their views on the French Opera Company were alike. In a review signed by “Il Fanatico,” the writer refers to an earlier comment that he made about Boieldieu, a comment that appeared in an article signed by “E.” See Il Fanatico and Co., “The Park Theatre. Three evenings at the French Opera,” The New-York Mirror 8, no. 8 (28 August 1830): 58.
Of Berdoulet, “Il Fanatico” delighted in her portrayal of the page Olivier, which had “fire and
tenderness”; however, he disliked her “powerless” and “flat” voice. Even so, he congratulated
her on the duet “Rester à la gloire” with Letellier as Jean de Paris. Letellier was found to have a
“weak” voice, but “generally sings in tune.” The new soprano, Madame St. Clair, was making
her debut in the role of the Princess of Navarre. “Il Fanatico” summarized her vocal qualities by
saying that her voice was “pure, and her intonation generally correct,” concluding that whereas
in Jean de Paris she “may fail in bringing her allotted music as forward as the author might
desire, she is not likely to offend her audience.” “Il Fanatico” gave no ringing endorsements to
the French singers at this performance.123

With respect to Auber’s La fiancée, “Il Fanatico” disparaged Auber as an imitator of
Weber and Rossini. He considered Auber’s “recurrence of ear-startling discords . . . without the
judicious application of them” an indication that Auber had studied Weber, but had not
“mastered” his style, nor created his own. “Il Fanatico” found hints of Rossini in Auber’s
melodies, which, in his opinion, had “decidedly enlightened the barbarity” of the French
approach to singing.124 Monsieur Letellier, as Fritz, continued to draw “Il Fanatico’s” disdain
for his approach to the falsetto range; the critic likened his singing to a “Swiss peasant howling
the ‘Rans de vâches.’” Madame Berdoulet, again, was complimented upon her acting, and
Monsieur Privat and Madame Milon did not give “Il Fanatico” cause for complaint.

“Il Fanatico” took umbrage at the French company’s performances of Castil-Blaze’s
adaptation’s of Il barbiere di Siviglia and Der Freischütz, while the New York press in general

123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
took the opportunity to remind readers of the García company performances of Rossini’s original Barber.\textsuperscript{125} The New-York American critic declared:

"Let it not be forgotten by those who wish to revive the recollection of all that was delightful in music and fascinating in acting—the García days of the Italian Opera,—that Rossini’s most popular piece will be produced by the French Troupe at the Park Theatre to-night.\textsuperscript{126}"

“Il Fanatico’s” assessment focused on the performance practice of the singers, taking every opportunity to compare them to Italian singers. He did not believe that the French singers should sing Rossini’s music and presented his view of the perceived French dominance: “if you were to point out to a French musician [that the Italians are better at singing Rossini’s music], and propose an alteration, his answer would inevitably be, with a shrug, ‘Mais, Monsieur, on ne fait pas ça à [sic] Paris (But, Monsieur, we just do not do that in Paris),’ which answer, in a Frenchman’s opinion, amounts to argument, proof, and conviction.”\textsuperscript{127} “Il Fanatico” believed that the French would not consider having an Italian singer performing Rossini’s work in Paris.

The “fanatic” vehemently protested Castil-Blaze’s adaptation of Der Freischütz.\textsuperscript{128} Without acknowledging Castil-Blaze by name, the critic took offense at the production of the


\textsuperscript{128} Benjamin Walton posits that Castil-Blaze’s Robin was part of the positive, critically unappreciated, aspect of accepting and appreciating German romanticism in Paris. The work was a popular success with 133 performances in its first year. See Benjamin Walton, “Romanticisms and Nationalisms in Restoration France” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2000), 94–95.
French company’s version, where the German devil was dressed in a Scottish kilt. He superciliously described why the French audience felt entitled:

No undertaking which arises in other countries, however grand the conception and happy the execution of it may be, is thought to be a true bred son of Gallia to be perfect, until it has been revised and altered by a native Parisian, and received the stamp of public approbation in the metropolis of France.\textsuperscript{129}

He further reviled the arrangement by proclaiming that if the company botched the performance of Rossini or Auber, they committed “\textit{felo de se},” or suicide. But, “Il Fanatico” considered the revision of \textit{Der Freischütz} as \textit{Robin des bois} as being in another league entirely. He protested that “when we witness Weber prostrate, shorn of his strength, like Samson, and mutilated by more than Philistine cruelty, we charge them with \textit{murder under trust}, and hold it to be our duty to lift up our voices and protest against the same.”\textsuperscript{130} English-language adaptations of foreign-language operas had been seen in New York theaters, but “Il Fanatico’s” extreme response introduced a new bias by a New York critic against the French adaptation, which had been received positively in 1827. This critic’s response resembled Hector Berlioz’s scathing review of \textit{Robin des bois} at the Paris Odéon (1824). Berlioz described Castil-Blaze as a “plunderer of the masterpiece” and the work as a “gross travesty, hacked and mutilated in the most wanton fashion.”\textsuperscript{131}

Nevertheless, the last performance of the French opera company’s season was assessed as

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
having a “crowded house, and as brilliant an audience as could be collected at this season of the year.” The New-York American critic’s concluding comment observed that

Apart from the music, which is presumed to be the principal attraction, the acting of this company, take them as a whole, is more animated, striking, and natural than any we have ever had on our boards. Without playing better individually than many of the old favorites of the public, their performance of scenes where they mutually depend upon and support each other, is such as our stage rarely offers.  

On the other hand, there was no summing up in the New-York Mirror, which had opened up yet another schism between proponents of Italian and French opera.

**Conclusion**

The cultural experiment of accepting foreign-language opera in New York had begun. The juxtaposition of Italian- and French-language operas— influenced by economic factors and tinges of nationalism—underscored a lively and competitive entertainment environment, one that was reacting to various factions of New York audiences. Some upper-class New Yorkers supported Italian opera, but knew that, in order to be successful, Italian opera had to appeal to the rest of English-speaking New Yorkers. Ahlquist refers to Italian opera as a “novelty” in 1825, but this chapter demonstrates that certain foreign-language operas were more “novel” than others. The Italian opera had been invited and sought after by some New Yorkers. NOFO, on the other hand, had arrived with little investment by New York theater managers and appealed primarily to the “foreign,” or French, portions of the New York community.

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133 Ahlquist, Democracy at the Opera, 42.
Over a four-year period, the French opera company offered New Yorkers a wide variety of works, bringing recent Parisian successes as well as older works to the New York stage. The company was sensitive to which works were successful, and *La dame blanche* was reprised each year. The presence and recurrence of these French works suggests that the company programmed the works of Isouard and Grétry for the expatriate French community, which might have known these older operas prior to emigrating after the downfall of Napoleon.

While evidence in the press demonstrates that there was an attempt to encourage New York audiences to embrace French opera, the persistent criticism from the subsequent years suggests that the company did not garner unanimous support. After its initial success in New York in 1827, the company’s subsequent tours dwindled in length from 1828 to 1830. Ironically, perhaps, those same years saw the company expand its activities in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston.

Finally, from the numerous observations about the audience in the English-language press, one imagines that the French community was educated and well-respected, if not quite accepted by some to shape New York’s cultural identity. Some of those taste-makers considered the French performers and the French community a minority influence and, by 1830, were discouraging their performances; however, the proportion of the French community that supported French opera for those brief seasons was greater than the number of English-speaking New Yorkers that had supported the longer Italian opera season by García. Nevertheless, there were those who considered the French company to have contributed in a positive way to New York’s desire for a “newly serious musical theatre” and “theatrical improvement.”

The *Euterpeiad* approved of their effort, saying that “Their presence here is evidently conducive to

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134 Ahlquist, *Democracy at the Opera*, 40.
the object of this work, the encouragement of musical taste.”¹³⁵ The contemporary press predicted that the French community, “fashion,” and “curiosity” would make NOFO a success in New York, and the approach of the ensemble company was consistently appreciated, even so far as overshadowing the existing theatrical stock companies at New York theaters. In addition, the naturalization of foreign-language opera in New York could not survive on the star system established by Stephen Price and the English actors. It would seem that opera performances required a holistic approach, where the singers, chorus, and orchestral musicians needed to be better than those found in New York theaters at this time. The French company provided a model for touring opera companies and raised the level of performance that could be and was demanded of the chorus and the orchestra.

Just as the French opera company concluded its 1830 performances in New York on 31 August, news of the July Revolution in Paris on 3 September—in which Charles X (1757–1836) was ousted in favor of a constitutional monarchy—reverberated across the Atlantic.¹³⁶ The residents of New York embraced the news, and the theaters quickly programmed works extolling the esteem that this New World city held for the Old World country. By the time NOFO subsequently returned to New York, interest in French opera had achieved a new status.

Chapter 2

Le Bleu, le Blanc, et le Rouge à New York

On 2 September 1830, the news collector for the Associate Morning Papers boarded the packet ship *Hibernia* and raised a series of flags, signaling that there was important news from Europe. The headline declared: “Revolution in France,” and news of the July Revolution saturated the press. The resulting fervor in New York was demonstrated in productions, events, and celebrations. In this chapter, I illustrate how New Yorkers came to understand the events and circumstances in Paris and discuss the participation, status, and influence of the French community within New York society. All New York residents, from every economic class, felt empowered by the July Revolution and wanted to celebrate the fortitude of the French people. Although NOFO was not in New York during the fall festivities honoring the French revolution, the events of 1830 influenced its programming during the 1831 summer season.

After reading about the events, the entire Park Theatre corps sang “La Marseillaise” in front of a backdrop of Paris before and in between the evening’s entertainments, with the French flag prominently displayed on stage. New plays were premiered within the week, recreating the current and previous French revolutions. On his birthday on 6 September, an exhibit of the revered General Marquis de Lafayette (1757–1834) was showcased along with the new play,

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1 Committee to Celebrate the Revolution of 1830 in France, New York, *A Complete and Accurate Description of the Procession Which Took Place in the City of New-York, November 26, 1830: In Commemoration of the Triumph of Liberty in France, With All the Odes Written on the Occasion: To Which is Prefixed a Brief Account of the Causes Which Led to the Memorable Events of July, 1830* (New York: Elliott and Palmer, 1830), 8.
3 3 September 1830, TCS 65 (Park Theatre), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
France and Liberty, which was written by an unknown New York playwright, who had based the work on the current events (see figure 2.1).\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{4} 6 September 1830, TCS 65 (Park Theatre), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Odell, Annals, 3, 485.
Figure 2.1: Partial broadside on “Birth-day of La Fayette,” Park Theatre, 6 September 1830 (after TCS 65 [Park Theatre], Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University).
Ten days later, *Past and Present, or, Scenes of the Revolution*, was premiered. According to Odell, the play was “a highly romantic one” that spanned the past forty years of French history, beginning in Paris in 1789, followed by the Prison of the Conciergerie in 1793, and concluding in Normandy in 1830. Acclaimed actor Clara Fisher (1811–1898) portrayed two characters: the student Julian in act 1; the lieutenant Julian in act 2; and Ferdinand, the son of Julian, in act 3. Soon after, the Park Theatre held a benefit in support of the widows and orphans of the July Revolution on 21 September, presenting *France and Liberty* and *Masaniello* as seen in figure 2.2.

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5 16 September 1830, TCS 65 (Park Theatre), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Odell, *Annals*, 3, 485–86.
Figure 2.2: Partial broadside “For the Benefit of Widows and Orphans of the Brave Frenchmen who Fell in the Glorious Revolution, of July 1830,” Park Theatre, 20 September 1830 (after TCS 65 [Park Theatre], Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University).
Outside the theaters, a public meeting of the “Original Working Men’s Executive Committee,” led by activist Robert Walker (fl. 1830s), proposed an event to honor the Parisian people on the “result of their noble devotion and sacrifices to the cause of the liberties of mankind.” Walker and the original attendants were activists in the Working Man’s Party, which advocated for the rights of the skilled artisans who created merchandise for the commercial elite as well as for the everyday laborer. At another meeting, on 12 November, a greatly enlarged committee, composed of local, state, and national politicians and upper-class New Yorkers, usurped the initiative of the Working Men’s Committee and determined that both a parade, on the scale of that for the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, and a ceremony at Washington Square were required to honor the event. Former President James Monroe (1758–1831), having recently moved to New York City to live with his daughter Maria Hester Monroe Gouverneur (1803–1850), was the distinguished figurehead for the event, although his participation was likely in name only. In a public letter, the committee proclaimed that “the late revolution in France, by the bravery, justice, and moderation which characterised it, is worthy of being celebrated by the

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7 Sean Wilentz includes this parade as an example of the ideological fragmentation of the New York artisan trade in which laborers’ adherence to republican ideals was being compromised by those holding power. Sean Wilentz, “Artisan Republican Festivals and the Rise of Class Conflict in New York City, 1788–1837,” Essays on Labor, Community, and American Society, edited by Michael H. Frisch and Daniel J. Walkowitz (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 39.
8 Committee to Celebrate the Revolution, A Complete and Accurate Description, 9, 55.
10 President James Monroe was the ideal figure to chair this meeting. Monroe had been Ambassador to France (1794–96) during the French Revolution. While in Paris, he and Elizabeth Monroe secured the release of the Marquis de Lafayette’s wife, Adrienne de Lafayette, from prison and aided in the Lafayette family’s escape from France. During the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, Monroe was sent to France in 1802 to negotiate the Louisiana Purchase, and he was reappointed as Ambassador to France. See Harlow Unger, “La Belle Américaine,” chap. 7 in James Monroe: The Last Founding Father (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2009), 109–27; “Some Outrages Had Been Committed,” chap. 10 in James Monroe, 159–93; and “Nothing but Simple Justice,” chap. 11 in James Monroe, 177–93.
freemen of this country, as a signal triumph of an enlightened people, who have merited the enjoyment of liberty by their gallant resistance of tyranny and oppression.”

Whether by the “devotion and sacrifices” of the artisans or by the “gallant resistance” of the politicians and elite, a city-wide parade and celebration were scheduled for 25 November 1830, New York’s Evacuation Day—the day that the British were driven out of New York City in 1783, during the American Revolution.

Mary Ryan describes the nineteenth-century American parade as a cultural performance in which the civic event unifies the participants in a common social identity. This New York City parade of 1830, which she does not mention, epitomizes her argument that parades were a “positive assertion of democracy.”

Ryan advances the view that the order of a parade procession indicated the social structure of the community and varied from one city to another. In New Orleans, civic officials and elite professionals led the parade, followed by artisans. In New York, the order typically was reversed: artisans led the way; civic officials and elite professionals closed the procession. On 26 November, however, civic officials, international dignitaries, the New York French community, and current and former members of the military preceded the artisanal societies. One observation described that—between the 20,000 parade participants, the spectators along the route, and those who gathered at Washington Square—

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12 An immense rainstorm postponed the festivities to the following day. See Committee to Celebrate the Revolution, A Complete and Accurate Description, 10; “Celebration of the Late Revolution in France,” Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer, 29 November 1830, 2; “Celebration of the French Revolution,” New-York Evening Post, 27 November 1830, 2; and “New York,” Le Courrier des États-Unis 3, no. 80 (1 December 1830): 480.
14 Elite professionals are defined as the non-manual labor professions, such as doctors, lawyers, clergy, and faculty. See Ryan, “The American Parade,” 140.
15 Ibid.
250,000 people were in attendance.\textsuperscript{16}

The business of the entire city was closed in order to allow residents to participate.\textsuperscript{17}

This was the second such event in the city’s history, the first having been the celebration for the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825.\textsuperscript{18} While the Erie Canal demonstrated the New World’s industrial and technological advances, this parade reaffirmed New York’s, indeed America’s, connection to its revolutionary brethren in Paris. The English-language press praised the event as a significant moment in history. The writer for the \textit{Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer} proclaimed:

\begin{quote}
. . . the inhabitants of this great commercial emporium would suspend their usual avocations, and unite in testifying to the world their respect for, and admiration of the conduct and moderation of the people of France, who, in three days, drove their oppressors from power—restored to the nation its rights—and proved to the world that they were not only desirous of being free, but that they correctly appreciated the inestimable blessings of freedom.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

He further maintained:

\begin{quote}
It was a proud day for New York, and still prouder one for the natives of France, who witnessed the enthusiasm which pervaded all classes of society while demonstrating their admiration for the cause of Liberty, and the French people.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} “Celebration of the Late Revolution in France,” \textit{Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer}, 29 November 1830, 2.
\textsuperscript{17} Committee to Celebrate the Revolution, \textit{A Complete and Accurate Description}, 10; “Celebration of the French Revolution,” \textit{New-York Evening Post}, 27 November 1830, 2.
\textsuperscript{18} The Erie Canal parade and celebration were held in November 1825. See Ahlquist, \textit{Democracy at the Opera}, 43–44; “Celebration of the French Revolution,” \textit{New-York Evening Post}, 27 November 1830, 2.
\textsuperscript{19} “Celebration of the Late Revolution in France,” \textit{Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer}, 29 November 1830, 2.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
In the *Courrier des États-Unis*, the New York–area French citizens and descendants asserted their pride and appreciation for the event, acknowledging all the participants:

>This celebration of liberty, in which all classes of society without distinction have taken part, and worthy of the glorious events that inspired them, as well as the sympathy of a great nation presented a spectacle as brilliant as curious by the bringing together of all the trades and of all the professions that were themselves represented in the immense procession that passed through the principal streets of the city.*21

The parade route began on Canal Street, wound its way south past City Hall, and then turned north, ending at Washington Square.*22 The buildings, participants, and onlookers were festooned with *le bleu, le blanc, et le rouge* flags, banners, and pins, which, on that day, visually united the two countries. The *Saturday Evening Post* writer observed that “the eye almost ached with beholding ‘this rainbow of the free,’ which has again been painted in all its glory on the clouds of the new revolution.”*23 Eight trumpeters opened the procession. The bands had been instructed to play “Hail Columbia,” which had been modified as a quick step, and “La Marseillaise.”*24 The grand marshal, Samuel Swartwout (1783–1856), the city's Collector of

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*21 “Cette fête de la liberté à laquelle ont pris part indistinctement toutes les classes de la société, et digne des événemens [sic] glorieux qui l’ont inspirée, ainsi que de la sympathie d’un grand peuple présentait un spectacle aussi brillant que curieux par la réunion de tout les états et de tous les métiers qui se trouvaient représentés dans l’immense procession qui a parcouru les principales rues de la ville.” “New-York,” *Le Courrier des États-Unis* 3, no. 80 (1 December 1830): 480.
*22 Committee to Celebrate the Revolution, *A Complete and Accurate Description*, 11.
Customs, led the procession behind a cavalry squadron and a band. Along with Swartwout’s aides, former New York Mayor Philip Hone (1780–1851) accompanied him as the Chairman of the Committee of Arrangements. An open carriage followed, carrying Samuel L. Gouverneur (1799–1865) and William M. Price (fl. 1800s–30s). Gouverneur, nephew and son-in-law of President Monroe, gave the “oration” during the Washington Square Ceremony, while Price delivered the official address from the people of New York to the people of France. Following the carriage came members of the local organizing committees, while the Park Theatre band and chorus marched alongside the then-current New York mayoral administration, the Lieutenant Governor-elect, members of congress and the state legislature, judges, and marshals.

After a division of elderly officers from the American Revolution, there came the French expatriates and their New York descendants, totalling five hundred men. Led by eight members dressed in the uniform of the French National Guard, former French officers Louis and Hyacinth Peugnet carried a tri-colored banner, ornately inscribed with “July 1776” on one side and “July 1830” on the other. The French community also included the French Consul, John M. Chapron, New York’s French-American citizens, and the French crews from ships docked in the New York harbor. Most of the French community belonged to the merchant class in New York, such as the successful dry goods importer Charles Brugiere (fl. 1800s–30s), who had arrived in 1823 via San Domingo and Philadelphia. Brugiere and Madame Brugiere (fl. 1800–30s) were prominent in New York society, where their dinners and balls were famous and


included New York’s first “fancy dress” ball in New York and the reception for the debut of María García in 1825.  

27 Notable French professors and amateurs marched with the French descendents. Conductor, composer, and pianist Denis-Germain Étienne (1781–1859), composer and pianist Charles Thibault (1792–1853), and conductor, violinist, and cellist Peter F. Gentil (?–1838) selected the French band of musicians.  

The Association of Printers of the Morning and Evening Journals was given the leading position within the artisan groups. The Parisian free press had been integral in circulating the issues of the July Revolution. Their display must have been dramatic; a team of four horses pulled two platforms of working printing presses, which were turning out the newly written “Ode for the Celebration of the French Revolution” by American poet and author Samuel Woodworth (1784–1842).  

Two young men ran alongside each platform, distributing copies of the “Ode” to the crowds as they came off the press. The music committee hoped that the entire procession and audience would join in the chorus of Woodworth’s text, which was sung to the music of “La Marseillaise” (see figure 2.3).  

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30 Entertainer and minstrel George Washington Dixon (1801–1861) also wrote new text published during this time to commemorate the July Revolution. George Dixon, *Dixon’s (the celebrated buffo singer) oddities* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Mack, Andrus & Woodruff, 1836), 3–4.  


Figure 2.3: Samuel Woodworth, “Ode for the Celebration of the French Revolution in the City of New-York,” 25 November 1830 (after Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.11800200).
Woodworth’s text describes the admiration and indebtedness that the United States felt for and to France. In verse two, Woodworth reminds us of France’s contribution and support during the American Revolution: “Columbia’s grateful sons can never / Forget that in her darkest hour / She owed to Gallic arms the power / To disenthrall her PRESS for ever.” Similar to the recent plays at the Park Theatre, the new text served to celebrate—and remind and educate New Yorkers about—the events of the French people, while the chorus contained an overt statement praising the role of the press: “Then swell the choral strain, / To hail the blest decree; Rejoice! Rejoice! / The PRESS shall reign; / And all the world be free.” Following the event, sheet music was printed and made available in an arrangement by organist and composer Peter K. Moran (1767–1831), as seen in figure 2.4.
Figure 2.4: Samuel Woodworth and P. K. Moran,
“The Occasional Ode, or the Marseilles Hymn”
(Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music,
After the procession arrived at Washington Square, all the bands assembled at the center of the park and “beat the roll” before and after the ceremony. The Park Theatre orchestra was onstage at Washington Square with manager Edmund Simpson, who led the crowd with Woodworth’s new ode. On the surface, this celebration epitomized Ryan’s “positive assertion of democracy”; yet some public and private accounts reveal underlying tensions among the participants and onlookers. As mentioned previously, the artisans, who initiated the event, were not content in their current political situations and disrupted the pomp and circumstance at Washington Square. Attendees heckled Samuel Gouverneur as he began his keynote speech, saying, “‘Raise your voice, and be damned to you!’ ‘Louder!’—Speak out!’—We don’t hear a word!” On the evening of the celebration, more details about the New York disputes could be seen in accounts of the dinners. The dinner of the elite interpreted the French revolution as inspiration; yet the working class embraced the revolution as a struggle, one that they could emulate. Labor leader Robert Walker argued, “[W]hile Europe is thus convulsed to its centre by the struggle of the oppressed against their oppressor, shall we the favoured sons of the western hemisphere allow ourselves to be despoiled of those rights which the Constitution of our Country guarantees us?”

In his book Men and Manners in America, the Scottish philosopher Thomas Hamilton (1789–1842) provided a first-hand account of the parade; he observed that the “operative class, or workies,” who initiated the celebration by the city, were overrun by the reigning “enviable class,” who had commandeered the arrangements of the procession. Hamilton asserted that some of the French expatriates were highly skeptical of this recent French revolution, having lived

34 Thomas Hamilton, Men and Manners in America, by the Author of Cyril Thornton (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1833), 67.
through the failure (as they saw it) of the first one.\textsuperscript{36} Even a contingent of the elite opposed the parade; the \textit{Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer} declared, “although a few individuals were secretly opposed to it, they were compelled by the irresistible force of public opinion, to smother their aristocratic murmurs, and yield quietly to the will of the people.”\textsuperscript{37}

Plays and music complemented the civic event, connecting America’s Revolutionary War with France’s July Revolution. At the Park Theatre, two new plays, \textit{Liberty or Death! Bunker Hill} and \textit{Three Days in Paris, or, Vive la Liberté}, were performed along with Woodworth’s ode “Hymn to Liberty” (see figure 2.5).\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36} Hamilton, \textit{Men and Manners in America}, 59–70.
\textsuperscript{37} “Celebration of the Late Revolution in France,” \textit{Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer}, 29 November 1830, 2.
\textsuperscript{38} 24 November 1830, TCS 65 (Park Theatre), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University; and William Hone and Myer Moses, \textit{Full Annals of the Revolution in France, 1830: to which is added, a full account of the celebration of said revolution in the City of New York, on the 25th November, 1830} (New York, J. & J. Harper, 1830), 131–32.
Figure 2.5: Partial broadside for “Liberty or Death! Bunker Hill in Commemoration of the Evacuation of the City of New-York By the British and of the Triumph of Liberty in France,” Park Theatre, 24 November 1830 (TCS 65 [Park Theatre], Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University).
At the Bowery Theatre, a painted screen portrayed General Lafayette with the newly appointed French king, Louis Philippe. The two figures were focused on a statue of George Washington as “the immortal patriot,” standing on a pedestal engraved with the inscription, “First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.” Above them, “Liberty” and “Immortality” were intertwined with the French tri-colored flag and the American Star-Spangled Banner. In their hands, they held laurel wreaths, one each over the years “1776” and “1830.” Another portion of the scene depicted Evacuation Day and showed the British fleet sailing from New York harbor. The evening’s entertainment was France Triumphant, or the Downfall of Tyranny along with a patriotic hymn, “La Parisienne,” by the poet Casimir Delavigne (1793–1843).  

The Park Theatre continued to program French and French-themed works. The double bill of Charles the Terrible and Three Days in Paris, or, Vive la Liberté followed later that week. A benefit for child actor Master Burke included Three Days in Paris with “The Marsellois Hymn of Liberty” on Thursday, 1 December. On Friday, a benefit for Park Theatre manager Edmund Simpson gave the fourth performance of Three Days in Paris with Delavigne’s “La Parisienne.” The Courrier encouraged New York’s French-speaking community to fill the seats for him. During the following year, 1831, the Park Theatre presented Boieldieu’s Jean de Paris (10 February and 27 May), a burletta titled Paris and London; Or, A Trip to Both Cities

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40 Odell, Annals, 3, 492.
41 Master Burke was a child actor who played a wide range of parts; he also played violin and was known to conduct; see Odell, Annals, 3, 490.
42 30 November 1830, TCS 65 (Park Theatre), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
43 1 December 1830, TCS 65 (Park Theatre), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
(11 March), *Masaniello* (10 May and 30–31 July), and the military spectacle *Napoleon Buonaparte* (30 July).  

**Conclusion**

In all, the events inspired by the news of the July Revolution disclose an unexplored connection between France, New York, and the New York French community. Despite the tensions surrounding the actual parade and the celebration of the Revolution, the French and French-themed works that accompanied them demonstrated an ideological affinity between France and the city. Thus, when NOFO returned to New York in August 1831 with its new plays, vaudevilles, and operas, both performers and works found a well-prepared, sympathetic welcome, one not limited to the French-speaking community.

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45 TCS 65 (Park Theatre), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Chapter 3

Vive la France! Vive la Révolution!
The New Orleans French Opera Company Tour of 1831

NOFO returned for its fifth season on 2 August 1831. At the outset, New York critics continued to encourage readers to attend the performances, welcoming the company not only as a successful musical and dramatic interlude between the regular seasons performed by the resident theater companies, but also as an educational opportunity for those learning French.¹ As in years past, the company went to Philadelphia to perform at the Chestnut Street Theatre; however, this season, it did not venture to any other Northeast city. Upon its return to New York in October, the remainder of its presentations were broadened to include works by non-French composers.

The conductor Martin-Guillaume Paradol and the orchestral musicians continued to make a favorable impression upon New York audiences.² The string section was strong, while aspects of the wind section were questioned.³ The overall musicianship was of such a caliber that local members of the NOFO orchestra were hired to accompany local concerts. At Niblo’s Garden, the violinist Mr. Segura (fl. 1830s) and trombonist Felippe Cioffi (fl. 1820s–40s)⁴ included the French company orchestra on a program conducted by Paradol on 25 August.⁵ At her first fall

concert on 3 November, soprano Madame Frances Brichta (fl. 1820s–30s) also incorporated NOFO instrumentalists to enhance a local orchestra; the program included the overtures to Rossini’s La gazza ladra and Guillaume Tell, as well as instrumental concertos and opera arias. In addition to praise for Paradol and the instrumentalists, the Company’s ensemble continued to be hailed for a style of performance that resident English companies should emulate—especially with regard to operatic works.

When one examines NOFO’s repertoire, the 1831 season was distinctive for a number of reasons. The political events of 1830 in Paris led to the production of new plays and vaudevilles that the company learned for its New World audiences. The criticism of those works by the critic of the Courrier des États-Unis reveals a unique viewpoint of the events in France, disclosing more details about the little-known New York French community. When operas were offered, New York critics exhibited one of the earliest incidences of drawing a contrast between a complete work and an adapted and abridged “Englished” version, comparing Daniel Auber’s popular La muette de Portici with two English adaptations by Henry M. Milner (fl. 1820s–30s) and James Kenney (1780–1849). Auber’s La muette was considered “revolutionary” for its plot as well as for its place in music history, where it is considered the prototype for French grand opéra.

7 “Englished” opera refers to German, Italian, and French works that were adapted and arranged for the London stage.
8 For more information on the definition of grand opéra and the historiography of the genre, see Herbert Schneider, “Scribe and Auber: Constructing Grand Opera,” in The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 168–70.
Reactions to the July Revolution on Stage: Political Plays and a Vaudeville

During the previous year in New Orleans, the company’s repertory incorporated patriotically inspired plays, vaudevilles, and operas that had been created for Parisian theaters in post–July Revolutionary France. New York audiences, especially the French community, looked forward to these productions. The writer for the *Courrier des États-Unis* pointed out that, because of their physical distance from the actual events, the images and dramatizations remained intriguing:

> The days of July can have the same drawback in Paris where they seem a little out of fashion in good company, but we others who still have the innocence to applaud at the word “liberty,” and to be moved by the view of the French flag, we were eager to see passed before our eyes some episodes of these great events.  

As seen in table 3.1, the French company performed six plays and vaudevilles written in the months after the July Revolution.

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9 NOFO performed plays and vaudevilles every season. I list them for the 1831 season, based on the information in the *Courrier des États-Unis*. In previous years, the *Courrier* mentioned the works only in order to review performers or include brief plot synopses.

10 “Les journées de juillet peuvent avoir le même inconvénient à Paris où elles semblent un peu passées de mode dans la bonne compagnie, mais nous autres qui avons encore l’innocence d’applaudir au mot de liberté, et d’être émus à la vue d’un pavillon tricolore, nous étions avides de voir passer sous nos yeux quelques épisodes de ces grand événemens [sic].”

Table 3.1: List of plays and vaudevilles from Paris written after the July Revolution and performed by the New Orleans French Opera Company, 1831.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Genre, acts</th>
<th>Playwright(s)</th>
<th>Premiere Venue / Date</th>
<th>1831 New York Premiere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La cocarde tricolore, épisode de la guerre d’Alger</td>
<td>vaudevile en trois actes</td>
<td>Théodore Cogniard, Hippolyte Cogniard, Jules Didot</td>
<td>Théâtre des Folies Dramatiques / 19 March 1831</td>
<td>23 Aug.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoléon à Berlin, ou la redingote grise</td>
<td>comédie historique en 1 acte, mêlée de couplets</td>
<td>Théophile Marion Dumersan, Henri Dupin</td>
<td>Théâtre des Variétés / 15 Oct. 1830</td>
<td>24 Aug.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations by the French-language press, expatriates, and residents provide different viewpoints of these works, which were originally intended for the Parisian audience.

The first patriotic work was the tableau épisodique 27, 28 et 29 juillet by the playwrights Étienne Arago (1802–1892) and Félix-Auguste Duvert (1795–1876). Arago and Duvert dedicated the play to the Parisians to whom France owed “la conservation de ses libertés” (the
In the three-act play, which was divided into the three days of the revolution, Arago and Duvert recreated the major events, much like those plays produced at the Park and Bowery Theatres the previous year, such as *Past and Present, or, Scenes of the Revolution, Three Days in Paris, or, Vive la Liberté*, and *France Triumphant, or the Downfall of Tyranny* (see chapter 2). As with many of the vaudevilles and plays, many of the “airs” were found in a published collection of *chansons, La clé du Caveau*, prepared by Pierre Caveau. In his chapter “The Music of the French Chanson, 1810–1850,” Ralph P. Locke explains that “French chanson writers had long been interested in creating a vibrant interplay among a chosen tune, its previous text, and new words. . . .” Arago and Duvert purposely chose familiar tunes to remind listeners of their preceding versions.

In their fictional reconstruction, the father, Raimond, provides the historical memory of the French Revolution. His children, Julien and Louise, embody the 1830 uprising of the French citizens, who were unemployed and struggling. At the end of the first day, Julien is killed at the barricades. During the second day (act 2), Louise, Raimond, and a chorus of Parisians convene to sing a new text to the well-known chanson refrain, “Elle aime à rire, elle aime à boire.” This chanson has had numerous nationalistic incarnations. The original music and text of the refrain were composed by Abbot Gabriel-Charles de L’Attaignant (1697–1779) in 1766 for the song

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14 The barricade was an important symbol and image of the July Revolution, but as Jean-Claude Yon notes, the setting of the barricade as an image of conflict quickly disappears as Arago and Duvert promote the recovery process. See Jean-Claude Yon, “La Révolution de 1830 au Théâtre ou le Triomphe de la Barricade Imprimée,” in *La barricade: Actes du colloque organisé les 17, 18 et 19 mai 1995*, Histoire de la France aux XIXe et XXe siècle 44 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1997), 90–91.
“Amour, laisse gronder ta mère.” In 1800, General Antoine Charles Louis Lasalle (1775–1809) fitted new text to the melody while at Napoleon’s table during the battle of Marengo; this text, entitled “Fanchon,” became a popular military drinking song. In a subsequent version, the tune was appropriated by the young soldiers of Empress Marie-Louise in 1814.\footnote{See Mouvement Eucharistique des Jeunes and Scouts de France, \textit{Diapason Turquoise: Carnet de 230 Chants avec Partitions et Accords}, vol. 1 (Paris: Les Presses d'Île de France, 2001), 35.}

Shown in example 3.1, this post–July Revolution entertainment united two generations of beleaguered French workers with a recognizable, crowd-pleasing, G-major tune.

\begin{align*}
\text{Example 3.1: Reconstruction of “Pendant la nuit, près de mon frère,”} \\
\text{from act 2, scene 7, 27, 28 et 29 juillet} \\
\text{to the \textit{chanson} refrain: “Elle aime à rire, elle aime à boire” from \textit{La clé du Caveau}} \\
\text{(after Pierre Adolphe Capelle, \textit{La clé du Caveau} [Paris: A. Cotelle, 1848], 194).}
\end{align*}
The boisterous rallying song is meant to inspire the current revolutionaries and remind them of previous victories. Louise opens by singing a text to strengthen the crowd’s resolve, pointing to the remnants of the French flag that were found near her brother Julien’s body.\[16\]

**Louise**

*Pendant la nuit, près de mon frère,*
J’ai, pour l’offrir à vos regards,
Rassemblé les lambeaux épars
De cette éclatante bannière.
S’il vous vit jadis triomphants [sic],
Il reparaît: prenez courage!

**Louise**

During the night, close to my brother,
I have, to offer it to your eyes,
Mustered the sparse scraps
Of this brilliant banner.
If it lived for you formerly jubilant,
It reappears: take courage!

In the second verse, Raimond recalls the glory of the flag from two earlier French Revolutionary events: the Battle of Jemappes in 1792 and the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805.

**Raimond**

Toi, qui brillais à mon aurore,
Drapeau d’Jemmappe [sic] et d’Austerlitz!
Que tes souvenirs soient bénis!
A mon déclin [sic] j’te r’vois encore!
A [sic] genoux, à genoux, enfans [sic]!
(Tout le monde se met à genoux et se découvre.)
Dieu soutienne notre courage!

**Raimond**

You, that shined to my dawn,
Flag of Jemmappe and of Austerlitz!
That your memories are blessed!
In my old age I see you again!
Kneeling, kneeling, children!
(Everyone kneels down and takes off their hats.)
God supports our courage!

The gathered crowd sings the refrain, in which the French flag is transformed like a rainbow after a storm.

**Chœur**

C’est l’arc-en-ciel après l’orage:
Il vient annoncer le beau temps.

**Chorus**

It is the rainbow after the storm:
It comes to announce beautiful weather.

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\[16\] “Pendant la nuit, près de mon frère” is found in act 2, scene 7, of 27, 28 et 29 juillet; see Arago and Duvert, 27, 28 et 29 juillet (Paris: J.-N. Barbe, 1830), 29.
In this 1830 Paris production, “Amour, laisse gronder ta mère” continued its military and political connection with another generation of French revolutionaries, its tune serving to remind its audience of past battles and to describe recent circumstances.

Yet the company’s 1831 performance did not satisfy the *Courrier* critic, who found the actors’ portrayals to be lacking:

... we saw people who smile after one another without understanding too much why, some gunshots fired in the air, when they were obliged to leave, a sentimental former grenadier who delivers sentences endlessly, and a student of the Polytechnic school who did not know his role and whose *energetic* rude remarks to the prompter must have offended the ear of the female audience members who understand French.17

Perhaps the company, which was so often praised for its unity, was not fully prepared on this opening night. It is also possible that the Park Theatre may have been conservative, and that the French expatriates might not have agreed with the spirit of the work.

Two of the new works included depictions of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821). During the Bourbon Restoration (1814–1830), staged presentations that included the character of Napoleon were forbidden. After the July Revolution, the new government of Louis Philippe (1773–1850) lifted the ban, and, as a result, the emperor was the main character in many new plays.18 In his chapter “Napoleon Takes the Stage,” Maurice Samuels describes the social

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17 “... nous avons vu des gens qui souriaient les uns après les autres sans trop savoir pourquoi, quelques coups de fusil tirés en l’air, lorsqu’ils avaient la complaisance de partir, un ancien grenadier sentimental qui débite des sentences à perte de vue, et un élève de l’école Polytechnique qui ne savait pas son rôle et dont les *énergiques* apostrophes au souffleur ont dû sonner assez mal aux oreilles des spectatrices qui comprenaient le Français.” “Opera Français. *La Fausse Agnes.*—27, 28, 29 Juillet.—*Le Diplomate.*—*Louise, ” Le Courrier des États-Unis* 4, no. 46 (6 August 1831): 275.
18 By the end of 1831, there were twenty-nine new plays about Napoleon and the Empire. See
responses by the Parisian post-July Revolution audience to these plays. At the time, French Romantic dramatists Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle, 1783–1842) and Victor Hugo (1802–1885) believed that the theater could address current issues by incorporating historical events.  

According to Samuels, the Napoleon-themed plays were intended to remind audiences of the ideals of the 1789 French Revolution. An inspirational version of Napoleon, who embodied “national pride” and “suffering,” was intended to unify the French. Samuels convincingly argues that the nostalgia for Napoleon reunited a splintered France during a time of political division and provided a way for the French to forgive one another after the horrors of their civil war. He was transformed into a patriotic symbol for France regardless of his actual transgressions. In 1831 New York, the *Courrier*, a pro-Bonapartist newspaper, lauded the staging of plays about Napoleon and disapproved of the former French government’s ban:

> All the theaters of Paris have staged the important figure of Napoléon. Schoolboy of Brienne, conqueror of Austerlitz, captive in St. Helena, all the phases of this admirable life have been reproduced with more or less pleasure in front of a public all the more eager for these performances that, for fifteen years, an easily offended government put all its attention in removing the slightest traces of so many grandeurs, without erasing the recollection from the memory and the heart of the French people.

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21 “Tous les théâtres de Paris ont mis en scène la grande figure de Napoléon. Écolier à Brienne, vainqueur à Austerlitz, captif à St-Hélène, toutes les phases de cette vie admirable ont été reproduites avec plus ou moins de bonheur devant un public d’autant plus avid de ces représentations que pendant quinze années un gouvernement ombrageux mettait tous ses soins à faire disparaître les moindres traces de tant de grandeurs, sans que le souvenir en put être efface de la mémoire et du coeur des français.” “Opera Français. *Napoléon, ou Schoenbrunn et St.-Hélène,*” *Le Courrier des États-Unis* 4, no. 47 (10 August 1831): 282.
The positive reception of the Napoleonic plays reinvigorated the patriotic feelings of French expatriates, some of whom had fought alongside the emperor.

On 5 August, NOFO performed the two-act *drame historique Napoléon, ou Schoenbrunn et Sainte-Hélène*. Playwrights Charles-Désiré Dupeuty (1798–1865) and Hippolyte-François Régnier-Destourbets (1804–1832) reproduced two moments from Napoleon’s life: in act 1, his triumphant Battle at Wagram; and in act 2, his exile to the isle of St. Helena. They adapted scenes from Count Émmanuel de Las Cases’s (1766–1842) *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* about the last years of the emperor, who was then at the mercy of his British captors.22 Samuels claims that by depicting a fictional Napoleon forgiving his opponents, the play furnished a dialogue for a divided country to envision forgiving its countrymen.23 The *Courrier* critic found the play to be highly emotional:

> It is not necessary to look for either ingenious intrigue, nor big dramatic conceptions; the goal of the authors was to present Napoléon and to move the spectators by the contrast of the highest glories and the greatest misfortunes; they succeeded: the first act reminds us of the most beautiful moments of the empire, the second act is poignant.24

From his pro-Bonapartist standpoint, the critic did not find the forgiveness that Samuels considers the central intent of the work. Instead, the writer found the depiction of the exile to be humiliating and capable of inciting militaristic sentiment:

Show us Napoleon the conqueror, defeated, dead, but hide from our eyes the painful agony and the cowardly insults of an English butcher. While unveiling so much baseness and betrayal—you arouse hatred, you call for vengeance, and on the eve before the battle against the English, the performance[,] in front of the army, of these two scenes between Napoleon and Hudson Lowe[,] would produce much more effect on the soldier than would the most forceful proclamation.25

This French expatriate remained strongly connected to Napoleon’s France. This perspective was maintained in his subsequent reaction to the play *Le fils de l’homme*, which fictionalized the life of Napoleon’s son, Napoleon François Joseph Charles Bonaparte (1811–1832).

The French company performed *Le fils de l’homme* on 6 August. The published edition named as its author Paul de Lussan, which was a single pseudonym for the dramatist Philippe-Auguste-Alfred Pittaud de Forges (1803–1881) and the novelist Eugène Sue (1804–1857).26 In the play, based on a quasi-fictional event and poem, “Le fils de l’homme” (1829) by poet Auguste Barthélemy, Napoleon’s son, the Duke, does not remember his heritage. Barthélemy had himself tried to give a book about Napoleon to the latter’s son, who was allegedly unaware of his father’s status.27 In the play, Georges, a tutor hired for the conservator’s daughter at one of the Austrian Emperor’s residences, covertly seeks out the Duke to remind him of his heritage. Georges provides clues, sharing with him images of Napoleon and having the chateau’s orchestra

25 “Montrez-nous Napoléon vainquer, vaincu, mort, mais cachez à nos yeux une douloureuse agonie et les lâches insultes d’un bourreau anglais. En dévoilant tant de bassesee et de perfidie—vous excitez les haines, vous appelez à la vengeance, et la veille d’une bataille contre les Anglais, la representation devant l’armée de ces deux scènes entre Napoléon et Hudson Lowe produirait bien plus d’effet sur le soldat que la plus énergique proclamation.” Ibid.
26 Samuels, “Napoleon,” 133n76.
27 Samuels, “Napoleon,” 134.
play patriotic music to help him recall his identity. When he hears the military song “La victoire est à nous,” the Duke begins to reflect:

Yes, I’ve heard that tune somewhere before . . . long ago, and then, it reminds me of lavish festivals, of bright uniforms, of songs of victory. . . Yes, but where? at what time of my life? . . . Oh! who will dissipate these shadows that surround me?

In the act of remembering, the Duke becomes an allegory for the French nation that needed to be reminded of the “glorious events of the past.”

The performance enlivened the New York French audience. An American audience member was observed by the *Courrier* writer to say, “Mais, disait-il, si l’image du fils de Napoléon excite à ce point l’enthousiasme des Français, que serait-ce donc s’il se présentait lui même!” (But, he said, if the picture of the son of Napoleon excites the enthusiasm of the French to this extent, how much more would it be if he presented himself!) Ignoring the intent of the play, the *Courrier* critic took offense at the fabricated depiction of Napoleon’s son:

The work “Fils de l’Homme” is therefore based on a materially false fact; no spectator is unaware of it, and nevertheless such is the interest that attaches to the name of Napoleon, to the future of his son, that one cannot attend the performance of this small drama

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31 Ibid.
32 Joseph Bonaparte (1768–1844), residing in Philadelphia, had hoped that his own nephew would have been restored to the throne with himself as regent. See Stroud, “Lafayette Changes his Position,” 140–49.
To further disprove the narrative of the play, the Courrier reprinted a letter from an eyewitness who had met Napoleon’s son in Vienna.

In these post–July Revolutionary works, Parisian dramatists were attempting to bring together a fractured France; the Courrier’s response, however, suggests that a sizeable pro-Bonapartist contingent in New York did not agree with the intentions of these new playwrights. When the company traveled to Philadelphia, they adjusted their production of patriotic plays and vaudevilles, omitting 27, 28 et 29 juillet and Napoléon à Berlin and performing instead Napoléon, ou Schoenbrunn et Sainte-Hélène (twice), Le fils de l’homme, and La cocarde tricolore for the French community in Philadelphia. Upon its return to New York, the company did not perform any nationalistic or political plays or vaudevilles, perhaps in order to focus on its operatic repertory.

**The Star System, the Repertory, and La muette**

In New York’s still nascent operatic environment, the 1831 NOFO tour generated discussions of performance practice and comparisons between English adaptations of French works and the originals. From its first season, the company had impressed New Yorkers with its

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33 “La pièce du *Fils de l’Homme* est donc basée sur un fait matériellement faux ; aucun spectateur ne l’ignore, et cependant tel est l’intérêt qui s’attache au nom de Napoléon, à l’avenir de son fils, qu’on ne peut assister sans émotion à la représentation de ce petit drame. . . .”


34 Detailed examination of the reception of these works in Philadelphia is outside the purview of this chapter, but a close reading of how these works were understood in that city, where Napoleon’s brother had been in residence, would bring further understanding of the French presence in early America. A list of the Philadelphia performances can be found in Chevalley, “Le Théâtre d’Orléans en Tournée,” 61–62.
ensemble approach and had been judged to be equal to opera companies in France’s larger provincial cities.35 Now, after an influx of “Englished” works, the critics were attuned to how the French company’s ensemble approach could influence the city’s English-language companies in a positive way.

The “Englished” works were performed by the English soprano Elizabeth Austin (c. 1800–c. 1835), who had been recruited from London by Francis Wemyss (1797–1859) for Philadelphia’s Chestnut Street Theatre in 1827. After her original contract with him, she was free to pursue her own engagements, which were facilitated by her companion and manager, F. H. F. Berkeley (1794–1870). Austin was one of the first “vocal-stars” to be engaged from London to tour the United States.36 Hailed as the best singer since Maria Malibran, Austin’s vocal range spanned three octaves and was appreciated for its “purity, sweetness, and flexibility.”37 Austin and Berkeley toured the Northeast for more than seven years, from 1827 to 1835, performing original English-language operas and introducing many “Englished” operas, including French works. In addition to attending to Austin’s schedule, Berkeley composed music and wrote music criticism for the New-York Mirror under the pseudonym “B.”38 By 1831, Austin had been heard in English adaptations of Boieldieu’s La dame blanche (23 April 1828)

36 For descriptions of the “star” system utilized by English touring companies in the United States, see Ahlquist, Democracy at the Opera, 29–30; and Preston, “Vocal–star Troupes,” in Opera on the Road, 7–43.
37 Austin had dazzled New York audiences at the Park Theatre since 2 January 1828; Odell, Annals, 3, 309.
38 Colonel Francis Henry Fitzhardinge Berkeley was the fifth Earl of Berkeley and would eventually become a member of the House of Commons. While “B.” is a known attribution for Berkeley, it is possible that he wrote under different pseudonyms at other times—perhaps “E.” for Earl. A thorough assessment of the Mirror’s music criticism has not been done to date. A chronology of Austin’s touring dates would help to establish when the pair was in New York and whether these dates correspond to with Berkeley’s publications in the Mirror. See Lawrence, Strong on Music, 66n5.
and *Le calife de Bagdad* (14 October 1829) in New York. In January 1831, she premiered the English version of Rossini’s *La Cenerentola*, which became one of her most popular roles.  

When NOFO arrived in New York that August, the company’s approach to its repertoire was appreciated by most New York critics; one spoke of a “finish and neatness to every thing they undertake.” The *New-York American* critic observed how this unified group provided an improved performance experience for New York audiences without a single singer “attempting to monopolize the favor of the audience.” He supported a “well drilled” ensemble rather than the entertainment of “one prominent actor inefficiently supported by those around him.” He encouraged New York theaters to exert a similarly cohesive “discrimination, discipline and liberality,” which might better foster a “legitimate drama [that] would once more permanently light up the stage instead of now and then twinkling in the shape of ‘a star’ upon its bosom[.]” He considered the French company’s presentations a more reasonable method and predicted that the “*Starring* system now so popular among us must ultimately go down.”

Comments by Berkeley in the *New-York Mirror* obliquely complimented the French company’s performance practice. He stated:

> We have often taken occasion to remark that the *forte* of this *troupe* is their excellent mode of getting up their pieces, affording an *ensemble* highly pleasing, and which covers a multitude of individual defects. It is obvious to every person commonly gifted with what is termed “an ear for music,” who witnesses these

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39 Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 10–12.
performances, that none of the singers are first-rate, and that some of them are detestably bad. . . .

In his assessments of the company’s production of Rossini’s *La gazza ladra*, Berkeley appreciated aspects of the French company’s depiction and quipped, “we were much pleased with the general performance of the piece, and filled with admiration at the fact of so many indifferent singers being able to produce such effects by their united efforts.”

In a subsequent *Mirror* article, another writer, not likely Berkeley, supported the “fire and spirit” with which each artist from the French company contributed to his part. He believed that this approach could be a “strong lesson to the actors of the English drama.” The critic continued by proposing that the “star system” was a detriment to “public taste and to the manager’s finances.” He claimed that the “singing [of] half a dozen ballads and bravuras, thrust neck and heels into a bad drama,” marred the narrative in favor of the solo songs. In its performances, the French company educated New Yorkers to consider opera as more than a concert with a featured singer.

In August, the company offered a collection of old and new works to its northern audiences: familiar operas (*La fausse Agnès*, *Jean de Paris*, *La pie voleuse*, and *La dame blanche*) alongside the premieres of three new works, Auber’s *La muette de Portici* (Paris, 1828), Grétry’s *Guillaume Tell* (Paris, 1791), and Rossini’s *Le Comte Ory* (Paris, 1828). After its return to Philadelphia, the company presented additional new works in October: Auber’s *Fra

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45 While Grétry had been heard in New Orleans since 1796, his *Guillaume Tell* had been only recently premiered there (1 January 1831); see Kmen, “Singing and Dancing in New Orleans,” 380.
Diavolo (Paris, 1830), Hérold’s La Clochette, ou le Diable page (Paris, 1817), and Mozart’s Les noces de Figaro (Vienna, 1786; Paris, 1793). With the exception of La fausse Angès, La dame blanche, La muette, Fra Diavolo, and Le Comte Ory, most of the operatic works reflected a dated repertoire, which was likely geared towards New York’s older expatriate community, though these operas proved to be unsuccessful with some.

The performance at the opening night of the French company was well attended by “foreigners and strangers,” with a larger number of women in the dress boxes than in previous seasons.46 The company began its New York season with Castil-Blaze’s pasticcio La fausse Agnès, which was based on the eighteenth-century play by Philippe Destouches (1680–1754).47 The Courrier critic found Castil-Blaze’s work on an older story to be passé, declaring “nous trouvons les Agnès de nos pères un peu devergondées; c’est ce qu’un Parisien appellerait rococo, autrement dit, perruque” (we find the Agnès of our fathers a little licentious; this is what a Parisian would call rococo, in other words, out of style).48 The critic never acknowledged the presence of the music of Italian composers within the work, but focused on the inclusion of the outmoded play.49 By the second week, however, the audiences for the French company were sparser, likely the result of poor performances and the absence of popular works. Even the


supportive Courrier des États-Unis noticed the problem.\textsuperscript{50} The unpopular works might have been scheduled because they were less demanding; another factor, however, was that the company did not have its primary tenor. Haut-contre Letellier had decided to skip the tour to remain in Louisiana, and his absence was noticed.\textsuperscript{51} The hall was virtually empty by the third week, and by the fourth week, the Courrier surmised that the company had lost some credibility, because they had rushed to learn their roles. The company also alienated audiences by not considering “le goû\textsuperscript{t} du public” (the taste of the public), when the Courrier claimed not to be interested in seeing Grétry’s out-of-date opera Guillaume Tell twice.\textsuperscript{52}

When the company returned to New York from Philadelphia for the second half of its tour, its productions and reception were more successful. Despite the change in venue to the Chatham Theatre, the New York press observed that the French company retained a “fashionable” audience:\textsuperscript{53} “This neat little theatre appears to be remarkably well suited for such an elegant amusement. The pit was comparatively well filled.”\textsuperscript{54} The company was praised for providing new works to New York audiences.\textsuperscript{55}

The premiere of Auber’s opéra comique Fra Diavolo elicited mixed responses from the audience. While the music and dialogue were described as having “great effect” and “sparkling” by the New-York American critic,\textsuperscript{56} he noted that the semi-scandalous scene in act 2—where the unsuspecting Zerlina undresses to her chemise before the hidden Fra Diavolo and Beppo—

\textsuperscript{50} “Opéra-Français,” \textit{Le Courrier des États-Unis} 4, no. 52 (27 August 1831): 309.
\textsuperscript{52} “Opéra-Français,” \textit{Le Courrier des États-Unis} 4, no. 52 (27 August 1831): 309.
\textsuperscript{53} The child actor Master Burke was performing at the Park Theatre. See Odell, \textit{Annals}, 3, 550-51.
\textsuperscript{56} “[No title],” \textit{New-York American} 11, no. 3995 (18 October 1831): 2.
embarrassed attendants in the boxes and amused many in the *parterre*, who were intrigued by her scant costume. The *Courrier* critic hailed the romantic dramatists and Victor Hugo, who “ont mis bon ordre à cette ancienne pruderie des spectateurs français” (put a stop to this former prudishness of French spectators).\(^{57}\)

Closer to the social and political dynamics of New York, both Grétry’s *Guillaume Tell* and Auber’s *La muette* portrayed populist fighting against oppressive regimes. While New York critics did not comment on *Tell*, they closely assessed Auber’s *La muette*, which, by 1831, had been performed in the city for nearly two years. The plot of *La muette de Portici* was based on the Neapolitan hero Tommaso Aniello (Masaniello), who organized an uprising against the Spanish in 1647. The premiere of *La muette* at the Paris Opéra on 29 February 1828, with music by Daniel Auber and libretto by Eugène Scribe (1791–1861) and Germain Delavigne (1790–1868), inspired social consciousness in Europe and abroad. Just after the July Revolution, the debut of *La muette* in Brussels has been documented as the catalyst for the popular uprising that established Belgium as an independent state.\(^{58}\) Within the cultural environment of New York City, the themes of self-sacrifice, rebellion, and freedom in *La muette* resonated too, as witness the city’s public celebration for the July Revolution the previous year.\(^{59}\) The *Mirror* reviewer acknowledged the worldwide impact of the work:


\(^{59}\) According to Anselm Gerhard, however, the libretto had undergone a “thorough-going depoliticization of the explosive material by concentrating on the complexities of the personal relationships, and furthermore so distributed light and shade that the faults of the governing class are excusable but those of the ravening crowd are not.” He further insists that Scribe’s and Delavigne’s libretto was “at bottom unambivalently antirevolutionary.” In New York, where even the early British adaptations elicited political reflections, Gerhard’s interpretation of *La muette* did not apply. See Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera*, 130.
[It] has probably created more sensation throughout Europe than any other opera. The existing discontents in France against bigotry and the Bourbons, the extraordinary nature of the piece, which is susceptible of great dramatic interest and scenic effect, added to the superb music of the composer, and the talents of the vocalists, caused an enthusiasm in Paris amounting to mania; and the same feeling, if possible, more exaggerated, attended its representation at Brussels, and, in a more modified form, in its progress throughout the German states.  

This New York writer astutely connected the themes of the libretto of La muette to the subsequent July Revolution, during which the French people successfully overthrew Charles X, as well as to the rebellion in Brussels and the pro-democracy consequences of the work in Germany. The repeated performances by both the English and French companies in New York City over the next few years demonstrate the relevance that the work had in the New World.

The story of Tommaso Aniello was first performed at the Park Theatre in November 1829 as an adaptation of Auber’s opera. Between 1829 and 1831, two different adaptations were presented to New York audiences. The stock company of Thomas Barry (1798–1876), Peter Richings (1788–1871), Mary Barnes (1780?–1864), and Mrs. Sharpe (fl. 1820s–40s), who played Masaniello, Alfonso, Fenella, and Elvira, respectively, premiered the first adaptation by London playwright Henry M. Milner’s (fl. 1810s–30s) three-act “musical drama” Masaniello; or, The Dumb Girl of Portici. The work soon became popular and was programmed regularly in the spring. Milner’s libretto for Masaniello contains lyrics for only five choruses; it is likely that the music for these choruses is taken from Auber’s work, but no music survives. As seen in

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60 This connection to contemporary political reactions to La muette comes oddly late in the opera’s production history. By December 1831, New Yorkers would have heard the “Englished” and French versions of La muette. Earlier responses were focused on the production and the work itself. “The Drama: The Park Theatre,” The New-York Mirror 9, no. 22 (3 December 1831): 171.

61 Odell, Annals, 3, 446–62.
example 3.2, Milner’s lyrics for the act 2 “Barcarolle” easily fit Auber’s music.


In his review, the New York Post critic wrote that the conclusion presented a “moral worthy of reflection”; he focused on the treachery of Masaniello’s own followers, who poisoned him in the midst of the conflict with the Spanish royalists:

It shows that ignorance and vice are inadequate in the appreciation of civil liberty; that patriots toil in vain to elevate to the condition of freemen beings who are the slaves of low and brutal passions, and that the first step towards national liberty is the disfranchisement of the people from the chains of ignorance and vice.62

In this comment, the New York Post posits an edifying viewpoint, suggesting that in a new country formed by a representative government, the writer focused on the dissension that emanates from and is carried out by an uneducated populace.

A year and a half later, in April 1831, NOFO presented the North American premiere of Auber’s La muette de Portici in New Orleans. Shortly before the premiere, the French-language

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62 B. S., [“no title”], New York Post, 11 November 1829, [2].
paper *L'Abeille* offered its readership a detailed plot of this much-anticipated opera. Following the first performance, the reviewer lauded the importance of music, which "peut exprimer les passions de l'ame [sic]" (can express the passions of the soul). In *La muette*, the *L'Abeille* reviewer found a clear representative of the power of music:

Now, the music of *la Muette* is one of those where expression, always new, leaves an indelible impression, one of those, finally, that one can hear, every time, with a new pleasure. What power in the art of the composer who knows how to make his soul retain the soul the misfortune of Fenella; the tender compassion of Elvire; and to illustrate [these] with more terrible colors, jealousy and remorse! Then, when these grand scenes of conspiracy, of furies, of popular vengeances come; ah! it is then that one conceives the power of music; and that one no longer doubts that its sublime language gives to the passions a new force; to the thoughts greater energy; and that one is astonished finally by unknown sensations that penetrate the soul.

In contrast to the New York reception of Milner’s adaptation, the initial reviews of *La muette* in New Orleans were more focused on the musical aspects of Auber's work than on analyzing the socio-political impact of the plot.

When the French company toured New York in 1831, the press was keenly aware that

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63 “La Muette de Portici,” *L'Abeille*, 28 April 1831, [3].
64 “Or, la musique de *la Muette* est une de celles où l'expression, toujours neuve, laisse une impression ineffacée, une de celles enfin, que l'on peut entendre, chaque fois, avec un nouveau plaisir. Quelle puissance dans l'art du compositeur qui sait faire retenir dans l'ame [sic] l'infortune de Fenella; la tendre compassion d'Elvire; et peindre des plus terribles couleurs, la jalousie et le remords! puis, quand viennent ces grandes scènes de conjuration, de fureurs, de vengeances populaires; ah! c'est alors que l'on conçoit le pouvoir de la musique; et que l'on ne doute plus que son sublime langage ne donne aux passions une nouvelle force; aux pensées plus grande énergie; et que l'on s'étonne enfin des sensations inconnues dont elle pénètre l'ame [sic].” R., “Communiqué: La Muette De Portici,” *L'Abeille*, 3 May 1831, [3].
they were hearing Auber’s *La muette* in its entirety for the first time.\(^{65}\) The initial reviews of the opera were flattering.\(^{66}\) The *Mirror* critic provided context by reviewing the composer’s operatic career and summarizing the current trends in French, German, and Italian opera. Since he preferred the music of Rossini, Weber, and Mozart, he immediately asked which of Auber’s operas were original in style or reminiscent of others. The overture of *La muette*, for example, had been heard frequently in recent years, along with overtures by Mozart and Weber. The critic considered the German overtures to be of greater “weight”; however, he maintained that Auber’s overture retained “a respectable place among compositions of the highest grade.”\(^{67}\)

Performances of operatic overtures were commonplace in an evening’s entertainment by the 1830s, often heard between an unrelated opera and farce. In 1830, the *Mirror*’s critic moaned that the overtures to Boieldieu’s *Le caliph de Bagdad*, Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro*, Auber’s *La muette de Portici*, Weber’s *Der Freischütz*, and Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* had become outdated from their “continual and hacknied [sic] use.”\(^{68}\) Nevertheless, in 1831, the *Mirror* recounted an impression of excitement and considerable dissonance at the opening:

> The "overture to Masaniello" is well known to our readers. It contains great masses of discords ingeniously worked together at the commencement, and highly descriptive of tumultuous excitement, and the bold and dashing march with which it concludes, is as beautiful melody and as highly embellished with instrumental points as the quick movement of any overture that we can call to mind.\(^{69}\)

\(^{65}\) “[No title],” *Courier and New-York Enquirer* 6, no. 519 (16 August 1831): [1].


\(^{68}\) E., “The Drama. The Opera,” *The New-York Mirror* 8, no. 16 (23 October 1830): 126, also found in Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 95.

The critic further contrasted Auber’s technique to Boieldieu’s, determining that Auber had surpassed Boieldieu in “vigor and power,” although he could still benefit from Boieldieu’s “regularity of idea and smooth modulation.”

The *Courrier’s* critic wished that *La muette* could have been heard earlier in the company’s season. He noted that the scenery and “décorations” were beautifully rendered, with special attention to the act 3 market scene and the act 5 revolt. He praised the chorus with some exceptions, recommending, for example, that the choral prayer in act 1 be sung “moins fort” for greater effect. The tenor St. Aubin portrayed the hero Masaniello, and his acting was commended for its verisimilitude of emotions: “there was a prostration of mental energy in the mad scene, relieved by frantic bursts of passion, which proved that he had considered the business.”

Unfortunately, St. Aubin had to learn the score in just a few days, and the music was too much for his “weak voice.” Madame St. Clair, as Princess Elvire, generated conflicting reviews. While the *Mirror* dismissed her singing, the French-language *Courrier* praised her “pure and facile” voice, especially in the first-act aria, “Plaisirs du rang suprême.” Madame Berdoulet Paradol portrayed Fenella. The *Mirror* critic declared his preference for two other dancers, Mrs. Barnes and Madame Celeste, both of whom had danced the role of Fenella at

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70 Ibid.
the Park Theatre since 1829.\textsuperscript{75}

The same critic offered a detailed observation of the company’s musical performance:

This opera was produced with an excellent \textit{ensemble}, and we never recollect hearing such a noise made by a similar number of persons—but still it was an effective noise—call it singing we cannot, but it was a species of passionate shouting, very well adapted to the subject of the piece, and assisted by Auber's powerful instrumentation, proved eminently effective.\textsuperscript{76}

He described the French as an overly dramatic people, whose mode of communication would be unfamiliar to New York audiences. He further defined the people of Paris as the embodiment of animated and even exaggerated characteristics:

In all Frenchmen there is a vivacity and strenuous mode of delivery, accompanied by vehement and sometimes grotesque gesture, which leads strangers to believe that they are often suffering under excitement, when the contrary is the fact; but give one a little touch of the heroic, something about \textit{la gloire}, \textit{la beauté}, or \textit{la Paris}, the latter of which includes both the former in his patriotic and comprehensive view of the question, and he shall act a perfect madman without the least trouble to himself, and without a vast deal of deep feeling either, but nevertheless he shall convince you that he is in earnest.\textsuperscript{77}

Finally, he tried to explain the French style of communication: it might seem foreign and somewhat shallow to American audiences, but to the Frenchman it could seem sincere. The reviewer appears to have considered the exaggerated effects employed by the French Opera Company ultimately beneficial in conveying the patriotism of the plot. His recommendation that

\textsuperscript{75} “The Drama. The Park Theatre, \textit{La Muette de Portici},” \textit{The New-York Mirror} 9, no. 7 (20 August 1831): 55.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
this spirit be employed by English-language troupes is important in view of the key role played by NOFO in influencing contemporary performance practice.

The results of Auber’s La muette lasted well after the French company departed that fall. On November 28, the Park Theatre offered the second adaptation of Masaniello. With the acclaimed Scottish tenor John Sinclair (1791–1857) as Masaniello, Mrs. Sharpe as Elvire, and Mrs. Barrymore as Fenella, the cast performed James Kenney’s version that had premiered at Drury Lane Theatre on 4 May 1829, which had spoken dialogue and interpolated music by Thomas Cooke and Barham Livius (?–1865). The production was predicted to have “as great a run as Cinderella” for its comprehensive approach to the orchestra, sets, dancers, and costumes, although critics missed Elizabeth Austin as the princess. The New-York American critic observed that the primary actors—Thomas Barry (1798–1876) and Henry Placide (1799–1870)—and the manager Edmund Simpson participated in the numerous crowd scenes, enhancing the action; NOFO was credited with demonstrating this method of staging.

By November 1831, Simpson and Barry prepared their own version of Masaniello with Auber’s original music and new music by a New York “amateur” who had assisted in the recent arrangement of Rossini’s Cinderella. In the meantime, however, Park Theatre co-manager Stephen Price returned to New York from managing London’s Drury Lane Theatre. He insisted that the Park Theatre offer Kenney’s Masaniello, in which Sinclair had played the title role. While it included more music from the original work than Milner’s version, New York critics were not satisfied. The New-York Mirror reviewer disliked how much new music was

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introduced by Barham Livius, referring to it as “miserable trash,” but made an effort to accept the many modifications that London productions made upon continental works. He believed that individual pieces could be introduced, or altered, because he agreed that “in the production of foreign works, because the idiom of the languages and discrepancy of manners between a French and English audience, render such alterations necessary to insure success.” In this case, he considered the aria “My sister dear” an allowable and “beautiful” addition. Yet he strongly argued for the preservation of Auber’s music in the productions at the Park Theatre, saying that the reduction of La muette to a “musical melo-drama” rendered the music “completely ruined.”

As Preston has observed, musical interpolations in “Englished” works were a common and expected practice; however, in this instance, in which a local composer had arranged and adapted Auber’s music for the Park Theatre, several central pieces were omitted.

In Kenney’s adaptation of La muette, the Mirror critic missed the act 2 duet “Mieux vaut mourir que rester misérable” (Better die than remain in misery) between Masaniello and Piétro, which he had heard in NOFO’s productions. He considered the piece to exemplify the revolutionary spirit, especially in the section that opens “Amour sacré de la patrie” (Sacred love of the fatherland), whose text had been borrowed from the sixth verse of the “Marseillaise.”

Perhaps in response to the New-York Mirror’s desire to have Masaniello’s and Piétro’s act 2 duet included in the Park Theatre production, an “amateur” published an arrangement that was “translated and adapted for the Anglo American Stage” (see figure 3.1). In it, the “amateur”

81 The aria, “My sister dear,” written by James Kenney and sung by tenor Thomas Cooke, was composed with music adapted from another Auber opéra comique, Le concert à la cour (Paris, 1824).
83 Preston, Opera on the Road, 15–16.
84 The duet was frequently sung at political meetings in France. See Schneider, “Scribe and Auber: Constructing Grand Opera,” 180.
adheres closely to Auber’s score, but with the following alterations:\(^{85}\) the piece is transposed from D major to C major, and the first polyphonic interplay between Masaniello and Piétro is removed from the section that begins “O ray of former glory.”\(^{86}\)

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\(^{85}\) This duet is a modified rondo, which was prominent at a time when Rossini’s five-part form was gaining acceptance within opera duets. Meyerbeer called “Mieux vaut mourir” a duet “coupe française.” Steven Huebner, “Italianate Duets in Meyerbeer’s Grand Operas,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 8, no. 3–4 (1989): 247.

Figure 3.1: Amateur, “Better to Die: a Celebrated Duett in the Opera of Masaniello” (from Pictorial Sheet Music Collection, American Antiquarian Society).
Additional “amateur” arrangements were published; sheet music was printed of Elizabeth Austin’s version of Elvira’s aria, “Plaisirs du rang,” with the French lyrics in superscript.\textsuperscript{87} A distinct difference between the published score and the sheet music, titled “The pride of rank and greatness,” lies in the ornamentation of the soprano’s melody. Auber’s original score provided two options for the singer (see example 3.3a). The “amateur” also supplied multiple melodic options: the core melody and two others, one of which was presumably sung by Austin (see example 3.3b).\textsuperscript{88} The first ornaments on Scribe’s phrase, “Vous n’êtes rien,” or the “amateur’s” “charm not the heart,” are identical, but with their positions reversed. In the original score, the simpler melody was placed on the main staff, with the more florid ornaments included as an ossia (see example 3.3a). In the sheet music, the “amateur” printed the florid ornaments on the main staff, with the simpler melody as the ossia (see example 3.3b). The musical flourishes on the words “de mon bonheur” and “the heart with bless” are more numerous. The “amateur” gave two alternatives to Auber’s core melody, both at least partly different from Auber’s ornamented model.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{87} Elizabeth Austin sang the role of Elvire on 21 June 1832 for Jones’s benefit at the Park Theatre. See Odell, \textit{Annals}, 3, 557.
\textsuperscript{88} Auber, \textit{La Muette de Portici}, 1, 86.
\textsuperscript{89} While it is outside the scope of this project, it would be interesting to examine other American printed versions of soprano arias by Elizabeth Austin, Mary Anne Wood, and other contemporaries to discern if each singer had a preferred style of performance, and to compare their styles with those of their European contemporaries.
Example 3.3a: “Plaisirs du rang,” Elvira’s act 1, aria, La Muette, mm. 20–24
(after Auber, La Muette de Portici, vol. 1, 86).

Example 3.3b: “The pride of rank and greatness,” “Amateur,” mm. 20–24
(from Pictorial Sheet Music Collection, American Antiquarian Society).
During the fall, the *Euterpeiad* published the “The Market Chorus” from act 3, and the *Courrier* printed the “Barcarolle” from act 2; these pieces highlighted the revolutionary and nationalistic aspects of the work. ⁹⁰ When the company returned to New York City from Philadelphia, the *Courrier* published Delavigne’s “La Parisienne.” ⁹¹ This new development was still another recognition of the growing accessibility of French-language music in New York and of the contribution of the company to that process.

The company also presented popular works by non-French composers to broaden its offerings and to appeal to its aforementioned “alienated” audience. First it produced Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in a French translation. The press was dubious about the company’s ability to perform the work and reminded their readers that the García company had premiered the work to great acclaim. The work was fairly done, however, and the orchestra was praised. ⁹² In addition, the company offered a French version of Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro*. The *Courrier* recalled for the New York reader how “revolutionary” this work was in 1784 as a satire that was “en signalant avec une audace, bien dangereuse alors, les ridicules et les vices de la société, des magistrats, et des grand seigneurs” (signaling with audacity, dangerous enough then, the

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⁹¹ “La Parisienne” and the “Barcarolle” mark the earliest instances in which the *Courrier* printed music in their journal. After the company left the city, the *Courrier* continued to print music, including Auber’s opening couplet sung by Henriette, “Si je suis infidèle même après ton trépas pour me punir dit elle Julien tu reviendras” from *La Fiancée*; the chansonette “Et, c’était lui” by Auguste Panseron (1795–1859); and the romance “Le temps n’est plus” by Amédée de Beauplan (1790–1853). See “La Parisienne,” *Le Courrier des États-Unis* 4, no. 68 (22 October 1831): 410; “La Fiancée,” *Le Courrier des États-Unis* 4, no. 74 (12 November 1831): 447; “Et, C’Était Lui,” *Le Courrier des États-Unis* 4, no. 77 (23 November 1831): 472; “Le Temps N’Est Plus,” *Le Courrier des États-Unis* 4, no. 82 (10 December 1831): 496.
ridiculous things and vices of society, magistrates, and great lords).\footnote{“Opéra Français,” \textit{Le Courrier des États-Unis} 4, no. 70 (29 October 1831): 419.}

After five years of successful tours by NOFO, the \textit{Courrier} proclaimed that New York could support its own, permanent French company. And in the middle of the 1831 tour, NOFO play and vaudeville actor Firmin Prud’hommee (fl. 1830s) announced that he was taking steps to establish a resident French theater and began to circulate a subscription list that requested thirty dollars for 120 performances. The French-language paper excitedly reported that if Prud’hommee was successful New York would be “comme les plus grandes capitales de l’Europe, outre plusiers théâtres nationaux, un opéra italien et une comédie française” (like the major capitals of Europe, in addition to several national theaters, an Italian opera and a French theater).

Prud’hommee planned to return to France and recruit members for his company.\footnote{“[No title],” \textit{Le Courrier des États-Unis} 4, no. 62 (1 October 1831): 371.} His ambitious ideas seemed bold, considering that the attendance and reviews of the company’s 1831 tour had been inconsistent, the latter even from the French-language newspaper.\footnote{Prud’hommee may have remained in New York. He performed in a concert at Niblo’s Garden with Louis Major, Cesare Casolani, Klausman, and S. Hutet in 2 July 1833. “Niblo’s Garden,” \textit{The Evening Post}, 1 July 1833, 3.} In the end, his plan did not come to fruition, and a designated French theater was not established in the city until 1866.\footnote{The Fourteenth Street Theatre became the Théâtre Français on 25 May 1866. Mollie B. Steinberg, \textit{The History of the Fourteenth Street Theatre} (New York: The Dial Press, 1831), 21.}

The New Orleans–based company’s productions gained the attention of a very special New York resident—librettist and entrepreneur Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749–1838). At the beginning of the NOFO season, Da Ponte wrote a letter lamenting the company’s repeated “successful” seasons and entreating opera impresario Giacomo Montrésor (fl. 1830s) to bring an Italian opera company to New York.\footnote{Lorenzo Da Ponte, \textit{History of the Italian Opera Company, imported to America by Giacomo Montresor, in August}, 1832 (New-York: Lorenzo Da Ponte, 1833), 7–18.} This letter, combined with the forthcoming formal
organization of the Italian Opera Association of New York City in 1832, began a decade and a half of attempts by New Yorkers to attract and support a resident Italian opera company.\footnote{Ahlquist, \textit{Democracy at the Opera}, 211n19.}

**Conclusion**

NOFO’s 1831 season was not a complete triumph. Noteworthy for its marked change in repertoire, it introduced New York audiences to the latest trends in dramatic and operatic works, which reflected the social and political climate of Paris. Although the company was not very successful in attracting audiences, its ensemble approach continued to be appreciated by New York critics, who could now compare NOFO performances to the recent productions by the “vocal stars” in “Englished” operas. In the case of NOFO’s full production of Auber’s \textit{La muette de Portici}, New York audiences and critics became aware of the inadequacies of an abbreviated and adjusted “Englished” version, and ultimately realized how much they had missed of Auber’s music.
Chapter 4
Exploring National Styles: 1832–42

The excitement from and the response to NOFO’s 1831 tour served as a catalyst to motivate various entrepreneurs within New York’s opera scene. Since 1825, New Yorkers had heard an astonishing variety of operatic styles—German opera, Italian opera, French opera, English opera, and “Englished” opera—in three languages: Italian, French, and English. As Ahlquist has demonstrated, for opera to be successful, it required an “interdependence of culture and commerce” to thrive.1 English and “Englished” operas were easily embraced in both categories; Italian operas had the desirable cachet of culture, but the managerial aspects were lacking; and French operas, as performed by NOFO, were economically successful and appealed to New Yorkers in general and to the French community in particular during its summer seasons.

The difference in 1832 was the direct competition with which each operatic style was presented to New Yorkers. Until now, each style had been presented to New York audiences with limited challenges to each other. In following years, however, closer scrutiny and comparison were made in performing Italian- and English-language operas, while French opera by NOFO disappeared as the company performed one summer season in 1833 and then did not return until 1843. This absence of French performers did not mean, however, that there was a lack of French opera in the city. In fact, works premiered in Paris were regularly performed in translation by English companies. Although it has been suggested that New York society was “consciously distancing itself from its European roots,”2 I posit that critics and managers were observing the arts in Europe closely as the 1830s opera scene emerged.

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1 Ahlquist, Democracy at the Opera, 48.
2 Ibid., 82.
Primary sources from this decade reveal a debate among New Yorkers on the establishment of a permanent opera company. First, I examine a *querelle de New York* from 1832 to 1835 that played out between proponents of the second wave of Italian companies and those of the local English companies, the latter with imported “vocal stars.” Second, I give special attention to the performance and reception of works premiered in Paris, “Englished” in London, and performed in New York; Giacomo Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable* provides an informative case study.

*La Querelle de New York, or, Attempting to Establish an American Musical Style through Italian or “Englished” Operas, 1832–35.*

As NOFO was presenting its 1831 season, a number of prominent New Yorkers took significant steps toward reintroducing Italian opera to the city. Professor, entrepreneur, and librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte wrote a letter entreating French tenor and impresario Giacomo Montrésor to assemble a complete Italian opera company for New York. At the same time, a group of business and civic leaders formalized the Italian Opera Association of New York City, which began four years of organized attempts to establish a resident Italian opera company and build an Italian opera house.

Da Ponte campaigned to establish “the ‘sweet and celestial harmony’ of Italian music” at the behest of a group of men from New York and Philadelphia. In his letter to Montrésor, he punned on the Italian words for cats and French, bemoaning the recent NOFO seasons:

... you must know that every year a company of *Gatti*, no *Galli*

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4 Ahlquist, *Democracy at the Opera*, 211n19.
...migrate from New-Orleans to New-York, to Philadelphia, to Boston, to Baltimore, and perhaps to some other cities, and after a round of a few months, return to their home with pockets full of silver, accompanied by the praises of those who admire a French howl, or the squall of a fighting cat.  

While there are no known records of Da Ponte’s reaction to NOFO’s seasons, he was likely miffed that the company had performed a French adaptation of Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro* (though with his libretto) during its 1831 tour. Moreover, Da Ponte berated the American press, stating “it pains me to read the praises bestowed upon these bunglers, by a venal press, or the long eared Midasses [*sic*], which even in America, may be found in no small numbers.”

From the hiring of company members to repertory, Da Ponte provided detailed instructions to Montrésor. He specified the following singers: a prima donna, a prima buffa, a primo basso, a comic basso, two tenors, and a young woman for pants roles. Additionally, he strongly recommended bringing chorus singers who could also dance, for “we have many [dancers] here that are good, but when they sing our words, they rend the ears of those who hear them.” Furthermore, he spelled out the instrumentalists that would be needed: “a first rate violin, a good oboe, and a master of the piano forte.” He also suggested that a set designer, supplies of violin strings, and music paper be brought. In addition, Da Ponte supplied a list of operas that he thought would appeal to New York audiences: he nominated Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* and Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *La gazza ladra*, all of which had been performed in the city by both the Garcia Company and NOFO. He also proposed bringing works by Giovanni Paisiello (1740–1816), Giovanni Battista Martini (1706–1784), Domenico

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Cimarosa (1749–1801), Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi (1728–1804), and Antonio Salieri (1750–1825). In 1783, Salieri, Cimarosa, and Paisiello had worked closely with Da Ponte and the newly revived Italian company in Vienna under Joseph II.\(^8\) Perhaps the octogenarian wanted to hear the operas with his libretti just one more time. He included the stern command, “If you cannot do this, remain in Italy,” but predicted that Montrésor should “come fearlessly to America, and the prospect before you and your companions is brilliant.”\(^9\) As we shall see, though, Montrésor faced skepticism by many who were not convinced of the worth of Italian-language opera.

The performances by Montrésor’s Italian Opera Company prompted a public discussion about the establishment of an American school of music as well as a national dramatic theater. A dominant voice was the Englishman Colonel F. H. F. Berkeley, who had been writing music criticism and coordinating the performances of English soprano Elizabeth Austin since 1827. At the end of the 1832 spring season, Berkeley offered a blunt assessment of the status of opera at the Park Theatre. Undoubtedly aware of the efforts of Da Ponte and the Italian Opera Association of New York City, Berkeley began a campaign against a permanent Italian (or French) opera company and/or venue. Sensitive to the goals of theater managers, Berkeley declared that general audiences—both in the United States and in England—thwarted the composer’s or arranger’s efforts to present the “best” music. Instead of presenting foreign-language operas with their original music, he declared that more successful adaptations were those that interpolated “light” music by Rossini and Weber, set to English lyrics.\(^10\) Therefore, managers who catered to public demands were less inclined to challenge them with “refined and


beautiful music”; instead, they pandered to the portion of the audience that he described as the “peanut-eating, apple-munching, and orange-sucking friends.”

In a subsequent review, Berkeley advocated again for opera to be accessible to the majority of New York audiences by having performances in English. He preferred the English and “Englished” works, which were performed with spoken dialogue to avoid “the heavy and continual intervention of recitative.” He challenged American theater managers to have more “nerve” in competing with Italian companies and their repertory of “great masters.” Combining his continental observations with his own bias for English works, Berkeley conveyed that Parisians had incorporated Italian operatic approaches within their own “native compositions” as well as presenting translations of “the best of the Italian masters in their national theatres.” Without being explicit, Berkeley referred to the works of Italian and German composers that had been adapted by French critic and composer Castil-Blaze, whose pasticcios and arrangements included music by Cimarosa, Meyerbeer, Mozart, Rossini, Weber, and others, and adaptations of Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Weber’s *Der Freischütz*, all heard with French texts.\(^\text{11}\)

Ultimately, he admitted that the value of either translating or adapting Italian opera was to “[e]ncourage merit of whatever country, never forgetting that its application to your own is the worthiest motive by which you can be governed.”\(^\text{12}\) Within a few months, he would retract this openness toward Italian opera.


In the midst of Montrésor’s first season, Berkeley published an article titled “On the State of Music in America” for the *North American Magazine*. In it, he argued for the United States to imitate the English school of music. Noting that American literature was built upon English models, he posited that American music must follow the same path. In his evaluation of the dramatic arts, he conceded that the English did not have a dominant musical history compared with their continental counterparts. To compensate for the deficit of original works, therefore, Henry Bishop had translated and adapted many Italian, French, and German works for the London stage. While Berkeley had appreciated Italian opera, he considered its language to be a barrier and the recent New York season of Italian opera to be a “[c]uriosity.” He believed that a solid foundation for operatic assimilation must be in “plain comprehensible English.” Although Berkeley was thirty-eight when he wrote his recommendations, he recalled similar arguments by such Englishmen as Joseph Addison (1672–1719) and George Gordon Byron (1788–1824), who had disparaged the introduction of Italian opera in England. Addison wrote essays that rejected the conventions of opera in the early eighteenth century, and Byron wrote a satire of the theater, *Hints from Horace*, that included a description of the plight of the unwilling concertgoer who only attended musical events under the pressure of prevailing societal taste. Berkeley quoted Byron:

> Hence the pert shopkeeper, whose throbbing ear
> Aches with orchestras which he pays to hear,
> Whom shame, not sympathy, forbids to snore,
> His anguish doubled by his own ‘encore;’
> Squeezed in ‘Fop’s Alley,’ jostled by the beaux,
> Teased with his hat, and trembling for his toes;

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13 Although Montrésor and company were performing in Philadelphia at the time of Berkeley’s January article, it is clear that the circumstances were in response to the recent recruitment and performances of the Italian Opera Company in New York.
Scarce wrestles through the night, nor tastes of ease
Till the dropp’d curtain gives a glad release:
Why this and more he suffers—can ye guess?—
Because it costs him dear, and makes him dress.  

(Byron, *Hints from Horace*, lines 309–16)

Ultimately, Berkeley proposed that a foreign-language opera house should not be attempted until resident English-language opera companies existed in America’s principal cities. If an English-language opera house were established first, he believed that a foreign-language opera venue would be more successful. If not, he predicted that the foreign-language opera would only be supported by an artificial foundation of musical understanding. Berkeley’s article sparked a rebuttal by a knowledgeable musical “amateur,” “J. T.,” who was offended by Berkeley’s pro–English opera stance and considered it to be “a manifesto of an open war [against] the Italian Opera.”

Whoever J. T. was, he was obviously a well-educated commentator who compared Berkeley’s operatic affront to eighteenth-century Paris, where supporters of Christoph Gluck (1714–1787) and Niccolò Piccini (1728–1800) had debated the pre-eminence of French vs. Italian opera. He declared that the current *querelle* in New York was between the “English school of *Glees*” and the “Italian dramatic school of music.” J. T. argued against the establishment of a local English school of music, dismissed the works of Bishop, and preferred operas with music by their original composers. Italian opera, he said, achieved educational and

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16 J. T., “The Italian Opera—An Amateur to the Editor of the North American Magazine,” *The North American Magazine* 1, no. 4 (February 1833): 235. “J. T.” remains unidentified. Perhaps he was John Thomas, the editor of the *Euterpeiad* from January to April 1831.
aesthetic goals. J. T. wished to “foster native genius” and to cultivate an American musical style, not just imitate another country’s music. He contended that music, as a “universal” language, did not require composers to simply imitate the music of the country with which they shared a language; American composers could learn from Italian opera despite the language barrier. With regard to understanding the sung text, he queried: “how many words does [one] comprehend of an English song. . . ?” Like Berkeley, J. T. cited Paris as an exemplar that had integrated non-native opera. He further argued that French composers were able to cultivate their own musical style even after Italian opera had been introduced to Paris. In all, J. T. believed that Italian opera introduced “true ideas of the beautiful and sublime” and would be instructive to American audiences and composers.17

Berkeley responded negatively to J. T.’s contention that Italian opera had a positive impact on other cultures. Always practical, he recounted that the Italian opera house in London had been unsuccessful, expensive, and only appealed to the “enormously rich aristocracy and . . . foreigners.” Furthermore, he argued that Italian opera houses were all subsidized by the government in Germany, France, Spain, Russia, and Portugal and not sustained by the general public. He stated that in America, neither people nor the government would support a “novelty” that they could not understand.18 Berkeley concluded by claiming that despite the efforts of manager John Davis, NOFO, which had performed primarily for the New York French community, was never able to make a profit.19

This New York querelle established the aesthetic and practical issues that surrounded the integration of foreign-language opera. As I argue below, New York’s theater managers

17 Ibid.
19 No financial details have been discovered to substantiate this claim. Ibid.
purposely programmed English and “Englished” opera works to compete with those of the Italian opera companies. The issues surrounding operatic production in New York not only confirmed the competitive, capitalist, Jacksonian reaction to opera, but also a desire on the part of some residents to see the latest operas from London and Paris, where the preferred style of opera was determined at the box office, not by an aesthetic directive.

**Park Theatre, 1831–32**

The 1831–32 season at the Park Theatre was replete with continental operas performed in English adaptation: Boieldieu’s *Jean de Paris* and *Le calife de Bagdad*; Rossini’s *La Cenerentola* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*; and Weber’s *Der Freischütz*. In addition, the 1830 revolutionary events in France continued to inspire dramatic works. The Park Theatre premiered *Napoleon Buonaparte* on 15 December 1831. First presented at Covent Garden, the New York presentation of the “New Grand Military Spectacle” had been in preparation since July, when it was announced that new scenery and costumes would cost $6,000. Besides the nineteen generals, the cast included a military band and nearly two hundred extras. As discussed in chapter 3, the Park Theatre presented James Kenney’s adaptation of *Masaniello* regularly through the winter and into the spring of 1832. In late January, the story of rebellion continued to command “full houses” at the theater. Even without a “vocal-star” as Elvira, the “magnificent music” intrigued audiences and critics, who admitted that they needed to hear it repeatedly to recognize the full worth of it. For the spring, the Park Theatre management programmed

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familiar “Englished” operas and vivified their repertoire with new works premiered in Paris: Rossini’s pasticcio Ivanhoé (Paris, 1826), Auber’s La fiancée (Paris, 1829), and Boieldieu’s La dame blanche (Paris, 1825). Of these, the Boieldieu and Auber operas had been presented by NOFO in 1829 and 1827, respectively.

On 27 February, Rossini’s Ivanhoé was premiered as The Maid of Judah, in an adaptation by Michael Rophino Lacy (1795–1867). Antonio Pacini (1778–1866) had assembled the music for Ivanhoé with Rossini’s participation. New York critics had a tepid response to the work and its performance. While they thought that the music was acceptable, they were disappointed that this version omitted familiar aspects of the story by Walter Scott; they ranked it as inferior to Rossini’s La Cenerentola. The Mirror critic found the music to be uneven, noting that some of the work was “heavy” and lacked the series of “gay, soft, and tender melodies” with “light and brilliant accompaniments” that were found in Cinderella.

On 7 April, New York audiences were offered the two-act comic opera The National Guard, by dramatist James Planché (1796–1880), which was the “Englished” version of Auber’s La fiancée. Berkeley reminded readers of the successful performances of La fiancée by NOFO, which “admirably performed” the principal characters the previous summer (20 August 1830). Auber’s music was categorized as being from the “old French school” and praised for its simplicity of melody and instrumental accompaniment. In his comparison of NOFO performance to the current one, Berkeley regretted that the music from La fiancée had been

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“sadly mutilated” and “shorn of much of its original beauty.”

Although he had advocated for “Englished” adaptations, apparently Berkeley did not approve of this adaptation. In fact, composer Thomas Cooke (1782–1848) had introduced many new songs and omitted much of Auber’s music. 

On 21 May, the Park Theatre company presented an adaptation of Boieldieu’s La dame blanche as The White Lady, or The Spirit of Avenel, with a libretto by John Howard Payne (1791–1852) and music by both the composer and others from the “Italian School.” NOFO had performed La dame blanche every summer season since the company inaugurated its New York tours in 1827. The cast for The White Lady contained the “elite” of the Park Theatre Company, including Elizabeth Austin, who had returned to reprise popular roles. Before the production, a critic from the Mirror prepared his readers for the music, assuring them that the main pieces by Boieldieu were retained, as were the finales. He predicted that the “introduction of such a classical composition to our boards is an event of importance to amateurs, and forms a feature, even in this age of musical improvement.” Berkeley observed that business-minded New Yorkers found the act 2 auction scene appealing, for it was “so well understood and so common in this emporium of trade.” The Scottish air “Robin Adair” gathered approval from the other Mirror critic, who admired Boieldieu’s technique in including it throughout the opera; he further

28 B., “Fine Arts. The Lyrical Drama.,” The New-York Mirror 10, no. 3 (21 July 1832): 22; also found in Preston, Opera on the Road, 13.
31 B., “Fine Arts. The Lyrical Drama.,” The New-York Mirror 10, no. 3 (21 July 1832): 22; Preston, Opera on the Road, 33.
commented on “the soundness of his harmony, and the mildness of his modulation, [which] come in quick succession of each other, and with the happiest effect.”

Although the “Englished” operas had been considered an educative place where audiences could easily understand the plots and experience and appreciate Italian music, Berkeley let New York audiences know that they were not hearing the original work. Moreover, a detailed review of the reception of the “Englished” operas demonstrates that New York critics appreciated the musical techniques of Auber and Boieldieu as well as Rossini and Weber. Berkeley’s complaints about the musical interpolations this season may have been more acute due to the recent performances of the complete works by NOFO.

An international cholera outbreak affected New York from late June to late August 1832 and nearly half of the population—100,000 people—left the city. The theaters languished. Even the successful NOFO remained in New Orleans to avoid the epidemic. By September, the actress Fanny Kemble (1809–1893) commented on the recovering metropolis:

The town, as I see it from our windows, reminds me a little of Paris. Yesterday evening the trees and lighted shop windows and brilliant moonlight were like a suggestion of the Boulevards; it is very gay, and rather like a fair. . . . [The women are very pretty,] with a great deal of freshness and brilliancy,” [and dressed] in the extreme of the French fashion.

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35 Ahlquist, Democracy at the Opera, 83.
36 Burrows and Wallace, Gotham, 591–93.
37 Chevalley, “Le Théâtre d’Orléans en Tournée,” 64.
38 Fanny Kemble, “Recollection of a Girlhood” (5 September 1832); as found in, but not verified from, Odell, Annals, 3, 602–3.
When the 1832 fall season arrived, a flurry of operatic activity ensued at the Park Theatre, where the English adaptations of Auber’s _La muette de Portici_ and _La fiancée_ were revived, and a newly arrived Italian opera company prepared for its New World debut.\(^{39}\)

**Montrésor’s Italian Company, 1832–33**

Giacomo Montrésor arrived in New York with a large Italian company in early August.\(^{40}\) Landing on Staten Island to avoid the cholera epidemic in Manhattan, Montrésor brought an ensemble that consisted of more singers and instrumentalists than Da Ponte had recommended: fifteen principal singers, six chorus members, seven instrumentalists, an opera director, a chorus director, a set painter with three assistants, and a costume designer.\(^{41}\) A member of the recently formed Italian Opera Association went to evaluate Montrésor’s company and gushed about its “eminent talent.” By mid-September, the company had readied the Richmond Hill Theatre, the former mansion of Aaron Burr that was located outside of the main theater district in Manhattan.\(^{42}\) Seating modifications were made: the boxes were fashioned for families; covered

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\(^{39}\) “The Drama. The Park Theatre,” _The New-York Mirror_ 10, no. 10 (8 September 1832): 78.

\(^{40}\) “[No title,]” _Evening Post_ (9 May 1832), 2; Ahlquist, _Democracy at the Opera_, 123; Preston, _Opera on the Road_, 107–9.

\(^{41}\) “The Italian Opera,” _Spirit of the Times_ 1, no. 34 (4 August 1832): 2; Preston, _Opera on the Road_, 107.

\(^{42}\) The critic at the _Spirit of the Times_ expressed that the Park Theatre would be the “best house.” He noted that there were objections to the Bowery Theatre by some of the subscribers and that the Richmond Hill Theatre caused “much [negative] murmuring.” In the end, the company performed at the Richmond Hill and Bowery Theatres. See “The Italian,” _Spirit of the Times_ 1, no. 36 (18 August 1832): 2; Mary C. Henderson, _The City and the Theatre: The History of New York Playhouses: A 250 Year Journey from Bowling Green to Times Square_ (New York: Back Stage Books, 2004), 65.
seats with backs were added to the pit; and the boxes were connected to the pit. All seats in the house were priced at one dollar, with an anticipated nightly take of eleven hundred dollars. On 6 October, the company opened with Rossini’s *La Cenerentola*, which was a bold choice, for the exceedingly popular work had been performed by the English troupe at the Park Theatre since January 1831. Berkeley openly questioned the company’s management:

> Why institute a comparison with the opera so high in favor with the New-York audience, unless that comparison was sure to be triumphant? The prejudice is very strong to believe in Italian singers we know, but the people have ears; and the Cinderella of Austin and Hughes, the Prince of Jones, and the Baron of Placide, are ringing in them still. Call you this management?  

The critic from the *Spirit of the Times* responded to the opera similarly, but appreciated the “gutsy” choice, which demonstrated the management’s “magnanimous resolution to ‘sink or swim’ as their merits were appreciated.” The critic at the *Courrier des États-Unis*, “G. D.,” pointed out the “recklessness (témérité)” of the company in choosing *La Cenerentola*; yet he observed that the Park’s version was not the original, and that this performance afforded the audience the opportunity to hear the work anew, not as a “novelty (nouveauté).” The cast was strong except for the soprano Albina Stella in the title role, which cast doubt upon whether the company would be successful. The company saw a marked decrease in attendance at the second performance.

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43 “The Italian Troupe,” *Spirit of the Times* 1, no. 40 (15 September 1832): 2. Dizikis says that tickets in “boxes and parterre were $1.50, the pit and gallery were $1.00”; Dizikis, *Opera in America*, 74.  
45 “The Opera,” *Spirit of the Times* 1, no. 44 (13 October 1832): 2.  
For different reasons, the next New York premiere also challenged audiences and critics. On 18 October, the company presented Saverio Mercadante’s (1795–1870) *Elisa e Claudio* (Milan, 1821), an Italian work unknown to New York audiences and critics. Compared to *La Cenerentola*, Mercadante’s opera was more “sévère” and less “faciles,” but the debut of soprano Adelaide Pedrotti (fl. 1830s) overshadowed the rest of the performance. Berkeley reviewed the performance positively, but noted that the finale, which he described as “beautiful and melodious,” was not written by Mercadante but by Bellini. As a staunch supporter of “Englished” operas, he accepted and praised this adjustment for its intrinsic value and hoped that he would “hear no more nonsense about original purity” in productions. After the company scheduled fifteen performances of *Elisa*, the French critic disapproved by saying, “si l’on ne veut s’exposer à user tout-à-fait cet ouvrage, il est temps [sic] de nous offrir quelque chose de nouveau” (if one does not want to risk wearing out this work fully, it is time to offer us something new). Montrésor, like García, did not have a large repertoire to offer New York audiences.

On 5 November, the company premiered Rossini’s *L’italiana in Algeri* (Venice, 1813), which was received with reserved approval. The *Courrier* critic criticized Montrésor for offering this opera that was—in his opinion—one of Rossini’s weakest. He admonished the director, who should not have assumed that New Yorkers “ne sont pas tellement barbares que nous ne sachions apprécier ce qui est fraîment beau et bon” (are not so barbaric that we do not

49 Berkeley does not identify the finale.
52 “The Italian Opera,” *Spirit of the Times* 1, no. 48 (10 November 1832): 2.
know not how to appreciate what is really beautiful and good). The critic questioned offering this early work of Rossini when the Italian repertory was so full of more appealing works.\textsuperscript{53}

The company followed this with the New York and American premiere of Vincenzo Bellini’s two-act \textit{melodramma Il pirata} (Milan, 1827).\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Il pirata} had been positively received in London (April 1830) and Paris (February 1832).\textsuperscript{55} Many critics admired a work that was so “original” and different from Rossini’s compositions;\textsuperscript{56} New York critics, however, considered the work to be musically challenging for New World audiences who had never heard fully orchestrated recitative.\textsuperscript{57} One critic observed that viewers were “at first amazed and lost.”\textsuperscript{58} Many suggested that \textit{Il pirata} required multiple hearings.\textsuperscript{59} In a letter to the editor, an audience member wrote “you must look for hours on a Raphael, a Correggio [sic], a Titian, before you find out all their exquisite beauties.”\textsuperscript{60} Berkeley cautioned that the complicated score “will afford the

\textsuperscript{57} New York audiences had heard some accompanied recitative when Manuel Garçia’s Italian Opera Company had presented Rossini’s \textit{Otello} on 7 February 1826, but not to its fullest effect. Garçia had reduced the work from three to two acts and omitted much of the recitative. In addition, audience attendance had been poor for these two performances as a result of direct competition with the well-known actor Edmund Kean, expensive ticket prices, and a flu epidemic. See Nelson, “The First Italian Opera Season in New York City,” 212–20.
\textsuperscript{60} “The Opera. Extract to the Editor, dated New York, Dec. 22, 1832,” \textit{The Philadelphia Album and Ladies’ Literary Portfolio} 6, no. 52 (29 December 1832): 416.
professor profitable amusement, and the well-informed amateur delight.”

The Albion critic, using the pseudonym “Arpeggio,” praised Bellini’s recitativo accompagnato:

[Instead of being in recitative accompanied only by the grumbling of a couple of basses and a piano-forte, as in most Italian Operas, [the recitative] is accompanied by the whole band, and contrary to the custom of Italian companies, we find as much pains bestowed upon the composition of the recitative as upon the bulk of the Opera; this causes the piece to go off with uncommon eclat and lightness.]

In his article “Italian Romanticism and Italian Opera: An Essay in Their Affinities,” Gary Tomlinson recounts that Bellini wished to accurately portray the drama by removing the musical bounderies between aria and recitative. Yet verisimilitude was not of consequence to some New York audiences. The critic for the Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer reviewed the work negatively, describing it as being “deficient in melody” and “too scientific.” The preference for memorable melody was clear in his statement that “Nine-tenths of those who patronize the opera prefer the simple and effective music of [Mercadante’s comic opera] Elisa e Claudio to this more grand and scientific composition of Il Maestro Bellini.” This comment suggests that innovations in opera, even Italian opera, were neither completely understood nor wholeheartedly supported by New York audiences at this time, thus betraying their nascent focus on simple, independent numbers with memorable melodies.

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64 Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer, 8 December 1832, after Cropsey, “American Premieres of Bellini’s Lesser-Known Operas,” 439.
Montréosor’s company performed in New York through early January, departing for a winter season at the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia. Returning to New York in April, it began a second season at the Bowery Theatre, where Rossini’s *La Cenerentola*, *L’inganno felice*, Mercadante’s *Elisa e Claudio*, and Bellini’s *Il pirata* were reprised. On 16 April, Rossini’s *Otello* was presented; it had not been heard in New York since the García Company offered it in 1826. The company struggled but concluded strongly with four performances of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Borrowing a technique from the “Englished” operas, soprano Adelaide Pedrotti substituted Rosina’s singing-lesson aria from act 2 with an interpolated aria from *Masaniello*, Elvira’s “Mi pizzica mi stimola,” written by Signor G. Pons (fl. 1820s–30s). The critic for *Traveller and Spirit of the Times* chastised the company for making the replacement, saying, “the Company ought to show others a good example, by producing Operas in their pure ungarnished state. . . .” The receipts from *Il barbiere* were credited with keeping the company solvent even though the ticket prices had been lowered to attract a wider audience.

Montréosor’s New York season, like García’s, presented a limited number of works. During the fall’s thirty-five performances, only four operas had been offered. Berkeley questioned Montréosor’s choice of repertoire, saying:

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66 Sheet music for “Mi pizzica mi stimola” states that it was written for English soprano Elizabeth Austin in 1830. “[Advertisement],” *Commercial Advisor*, 10 June 1830, 4.
68 Over the course of the season, the ticket prices were lowered at least twice and the seating organization changed. At the outset, advertisements printed that the first and second row boxes and the orchestra were $1.50 and the third-row boxes and pit were $1.00. By the last performances, all boxes were $1.00; the pit was $.75; and the gallery was $.50. Ibid.; “Italian Opera,” *Albion* 1, no. 18 (4 May 1833): 143; “Amusements. Italian Opera House,” *American* 13, no. 4305 (1 November 1832): 3; “Amusements. For the Benefit of Signor Fornasari. Italian Opera House,” *New-York American* 14, no. 4361 (4 May 1833): 3.
In a country as young in music as America, it may be a matter of doubt whether the omission of some of the earlier authors be wise on the part of the manager; and whether, in leaping over the heads of Cimarosa, Mozart and Rossini, and fixing upon Mercadante and Bellini, he does not resemble a schoolmaster placing Sallust and Terence in the hands of a boy who has not completed Caesar and Cornelius Nepos. . . . 69

He recommended that the company include more works with “lively melodious music,” with “interesting and clear plots.” He considered the New York audience as an “infant to nurse,” who “will take honey in preference to olives.” 70

One New Yorker claimed that only expatriates and international visitors appreciated opera, and everyday audiences were perceived by the critics as requiring considerable musical education. He recalled that local audiences were inclined only to applaud at a “piece of powerful physical exertion”; yet he had seen “soft, delicate, exquisite little touches which united passion, music and feeling, the very soul of the art itself, passed over in comparative neglect and ignorance.” The writer, however, was heartened that young listeners were showing an interest in music and Italian opera, thereby “sowing the seeds of a taste which the next age will show in great abundance.” 71

Montrésor’s Italian Company arrived at a challenging time for the city; New Yorkers were recovering from the cholera epidemic and cautious about venturing out in large groups. 72

Despite these issues, the Italian Opera Association organized its next endeavor—the construction

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69 The critic is confusing Rossini’s serious operas, which have accompanied recitative, and his comic operas, which have recitativo secco. B., “Fine Arts. The Italian Opera.—Il Pirata,” The New-York Mirror 10, no. 24 (15 December 1832): 190.
72 Ibid.
of a permanent Italian opera house. During the course of Montréal’s season at Richmond Hill Theatre, $100,000 was pledged for a designated venue.\textsuperscript{73}

\textbf{The Park Theatre, 1832–33}

New York had competing opera companies for the first time, with the Park Theatre company offering many “Englished” operas to rival the Italian company at the Richmond Hill Theatre. The \textit{Spirit of the Times} critic declared that the Italian company had to overcome the “favorites” that currently were being presented at the Park Theatre: Rossini’s \textit{The Maid of Judah}, Weber’s \textit{The Huntsman}, and Boieldieu’s \textit{John of Paris}.\textsuperscript{74} The \textit{Courrier} critic described the emerging conflict between the two operatic companies:

\begin{quote}
The Italian opera, so ardently desired, so long awaited, was finally opened, and the director, far from suspecting that the tunes of the grand Master reawaken some jealous rivalries, offered us \textit{La Cenerentola [sic]}. All of the sudden the stage was transformed into a battleground, and the fighters, even the backers entered into the fray. The gentle pitch of harmony was followed by the sharp cries of envy. A storm was brewing, threatening and terrible.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

During the spring of 1833, the Park Theatre brought back their successful “vocal star.” In March, Elizabeth Austin announced that she was going to retire at the end of the April. During her farewell performances, she reprised many of her roles in the “Englished” operas: \textit{Cinderella},

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Niles} “The Opera,” \textit{Niles’ Weekly Register} 43, no. 1104 (17 November 1832): 180.
\end{thebibliography}
The White Lady, The Caliph of Bagdad, and Masaniello. In addition, she sang Pamina in the premiere of Mozart’s The Magic Flute on 17 April. The “Englished” version contained music from Auber’s Le dieu et la Bayadere and two of Mozart’s other operas, Così fan tutte and La clemenza di Tito. Austin’s farewell extended into June, when she reprised her role as Zerlina in Reynoldson’s arrangement of Auber’s Fra Diavolo (see figure 4.1).

78 Preston, Opera on the Road, 13.
Figure 4.1: Partial broadside for *Fra Diavolo* at the Park Theatre, 26 March 1833 (from TCS 65 [Park Theatre], Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University).
NOFO, 1833

Returning to an opera-rich environment, NOFO performed for fifteen nights at the Park Theatre from 5 to 28 August. The professionalism of this touring stock company was ever-appreciated. The company reprised many works: *La dame blanche; Jean de Paris; La fiancée; Le barbier de Séville; Le maçon; Marie; La pie voleuse;* and *Joconde.* New company members were judged through the performance of these familiar operas. In the opening production of *La dame blanche,* Berkeley reviewed the singers for the *Mirror.* Most notably, he disliked the tonal quality of new tenor Léon Amédée, who sang in the “French school” with a falsetto at all times. The *Courrier* critic also noted that Amédée’s voice was not “très puissante,” but that he sang with taste. Berkeley appreciated the dramatic aspect of the French technique as having “fire and vivacity” and commented positively on NOFO’s training and belittled the vocal-star practice on the American stage, describing it as having

>. . . [a] few stars shining in isolated pieces of music, in half got-up, wholly-murdered operas, with a quarter-drilled chorus, a band, making a vast deal of noise, but no music, and the supernumeraries running about, like dogs who have lost their masters in a crowded city.

Berkeley, however, acknowledged improvements in the recent production by the Park Theatre of *The White Lady,* to the credit of the French Company. Now he claimed that the Park Theatre

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79 “[No Title],” *New-York American* 14, no. 4434 (1 August 1833): [2].
82 “Opéra Français. La Dame Blanche—Rabelais,” 374–75.
83 B., “French Opera,” 54.
corps sang “trebly as strong” as the French chorus, but that the dramatic presence of the ensemble and instrumentalists from New Orleans still outpaced the New York performances.84

NOFO only offered two new operas: Auber’s Le philtre (Paris, 1831) and Hérold’s Zampa (Paris, 1831). Of Zampa, a critic observed that the absent local “amateurs” missed hearing a “rich treat.”85 Interestingly, the patriotic plays and vaudevilles performed the previous season were no longer a part of NOFO’s touring repertory.86 The New York press did not review NOFO as extensively as in previous years, although the Courrier critic said that the company was no less strong.87 The scant references to this tour suggest that the company was no longer as important to New York critics as before; or perhaps the new Italian Opera House and the debate between advocates of Italian opera and opera “Englished” had redirected their attention.

The Italian Opera House, 1833–35

When the Italian Opera House opened at Leonard and Church Streets on 18 November 1833, it was a tangible sign of the New York bon ton’s commitment to opera in a foreign language. Members of the Italian Opera Association purchased proprietors’ boxes at $4,000 and $6,000. Their investment allowed them free tickets to any performance, or a percentage of the proceeds from renting them out. The boxes, individually and lavishly decorated, were accessible through a private lobby and direct entrance from the street. Not surprisingly, the ticket prices were the highest in New York that season. The most expensive seats were in the first tier on sofa seats at $2, and the least expensive seats were in the gallery at 75 cents.88 The Courrier critic enthusiastically supported the endeavor, writing “c’est l’Opéra de Paris ou celui de Londres”

84 Ibid.
88 Ahlquist, Democracy at the Opera, 123–25.
(this is the Opera of Paris or London). He nostalgically described his experience at the Italian Opera House, saying “Ces chants, cette salle, ces toilettes, mes gants blancs, ma lorgnette, cette bagarre de voitures, tout cela me rappelait tellement l’Opéra de Paris et de Londres que je m’endormis en Europe” (These songs, this room, these clothes, my white gloves, my opera glasses, this fray of carriages, all this reminded me so much of the Opera of Paris and London that I fell asleep in Europe).  

The Italian Opera Association of the City of New York asked impresario Vincenzo Rivafinoli (fl. 1830s) to lead the new company—much to Montrésor’s chagrin. Instead of looking solely to Italy for performers, Rivafinoli also acquired fourteen new company members from Paris. The new Italian company was also augmented by holdovers from the Montrésor company, but it did not have an appealing vocal star to attract audiences. The company gave almost eighty performances. The repertoire was dominated by Rossini: La gazza ladra, La Cenerentola, La donna del lago, Il turco in Italia, and Matilde de Shabran. They also mounted Cimarosa’s Il matrimonio segreto (Vienna, 1792), Giovanni Pacini’s (1797–1867) Gli arabi nelle Gallie (Milan, 1827), and Carlo Salvioni’s L’acquisto per raggiro, ossia La casa da vendere (Turin, 1826).

Memories of Auber’s operas appeared in the criticism of the company’s repertoire. Of Rossini’s La donna del lago, the New-York Mirror critic was surprised at the absence of Scottish

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90 Six new members were recruited from Italy; see “New York Italian Opera,” American Musical Journal 1, no. 4 (March 1835): 91.
91 Montrésor himself, bass Luciano Fornasari, tenor Giovanni Battista Montrésor, soprano Adelaide Pedrotti, bass Giuseppe Corsetti, and the orchestra director and violinist Michele Rapetti were not included in the Rivafinoli Company. They left to tour points south and returned as members of the Havana Opera Company in 1835. Preston, Opera on the Road, 109, 111.
92 Salvioni was the chorus director for both the Montrésor and Rivafinoli companies. Preston, Opera on the Road, 110.
themes in the story based on Walter Scott’s *The Lady of the Lake*. He mused that he might be “heretical” in his taste but had hoped to hear Scottish melodies like “Robin Adair,” which Auber had included in *La dame blanche*. In Pacini’s *Gli arabì nelle Gallie*, the critic noted that the composer employed a technique when the Vicomte d’Arlincourt went mad that was reminiscent of Auber’s use of the “Barcarole” when Masaniello went insane.94

Bringing Italian opera to New York audiences was expected to transform the culture of New York audiences. The *Mirror* critic hoped that the “best traits in the character of other great communities” could be absorbed from the dulcet melodies and harmonies of Italian opera. He cited an anonymous writer who had described Americans as “‘Anglais renforçés,’ or ‘reinforced’ or improved Englishmen.”95 The Italian Opera House was a sign of the cultural advancement and investment embraced by the city; however, the perceived exclusivity of the venue created a rift among existing opera-going audiences. The subscribers’ elaborate dress and the ticket prices of the Italian opera produced “distinctions offensive to our republican notions.”96 Former New York Mayor Philip Hone (1780–1851) commented on the acceptance and rejection of the Italian entertainment. He owned one-third of a subscriber’s box and admitted that it “form[ed] a sort of aristocratical distinction.” As Ahlquist has detailed, the members of the Italian Opera Association were businessmen who knew how to run a business. Yet in this instance, other factors such as performance practice, popularity of works, and competition were out of their

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94 Pacini wrote *Gli Arabì* prior to *La muette*; at the time of this project, an examination of Auber’s knowledge of Pacini’s work has not been undertaken. “The Italian Opera. Gli Arabì nelle Gallie,” *The New-York Mirror* 11, no. 32 (8 February 1834): 255.
Retrospectively, the *American Musical Journal* critic called the Italian company “very mediocre” and undeserving of the inaugural season of the Italian Opera House. Conductor and violinist Emilio C. Halma (fl. 1830s) guided the orchestra, which was criticized for overshadowing the voices. The critic at the *Ladies’ Companion*, by contrast, believed poor management and extravagant spending to be the downfall of the company, and a published accounting of Rivafinoli’s expenses demonstrated that the support for Italian opera was not enough to overcome the cost. But instead of closing the doors, the New York Opera Association replaced Rivafinoli as manager with bass singer Antonio Porto (fl. 1830s) and G. A. Sacchi (fl. 1830s), the previous season’s treasurer.

For the second season, a motley collection of Italian and English singers was heard: soprano Clementina Fanti (fl. 1830s), Rosina Fanti (fl. 1830s), contralto Julia Wheatley (1817–1875), tenor G. B. Fabj (fl. 1830s), bass Antonio Porto, F. Sapignoli (fl. 1830s), L. Monterasi (fl. 1830s), and Stefano Ferrero (fl. 1830s). Sadly, the company was acknowledged as “being barely tolerable.” The orchestra was praised as the only redeeming aspect of the enterprise. The company performed Bellini’s *La straniera* (Milan, 1829) and three operas by Rossini: *Mosé in Egitto* (Naples, 1818), *L’inganno felice* (Venice, 1812), and *Eduardo e Cristina* (Venice, 1819). The *Courrier* critic was supportive of the Italian company’s endeavors, observing that the opening night of Bellini’s *La straniera* was fully attended by “le monde fashionale de New-

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100 Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 112.
Yet after presenting three new operas over a period of two months, the Italian Opera House closed its doors because the company’s expenses exceeded its revenue. The management was only able to reopen the theater in January 1835, when subscribers were able to cover the deficit. In the spring, Rossini’s first French opera, *Le siège de Corinthe* (Paris, 1826), was offered to moderate-sized audiences. The lackluster seasons at the Italian Opera House were further dulled by the intense competition the company faced from the Park Theatre troupe.

### The Park Theatre: 1833–35

**Mary Anne Paton and Joseph Wood**

In September 1833, just before the new Italian Opera House opened and after the NOFO company left New York, the Scottish soprano Mary Anne Paton Wood (1802–1864) and her husband Joseph Wood (1801–1890) debuted at the Park Theatre. Mary Anne Wood was as skilled an actress as she was a singer, and she built a fervid following. The Woods made their debut in the “Englished” adaptation of *La Cenerentola*, which was also Montréal’s first production. Michael Rophino Lacy had arranged the title role for Mary Anne Wood in April 1830. The Woods toured North America three times: from 1833 to 1834; from 1835 to 1836; and finally in the fall of 1840.

While soprano Elizabeth Austin had performed adaptations of French works after NOFO had premiered them, the Woods introduced newly premiered French works from Paris—via

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106 Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 21.
107 Odell, *Annals*, 3, 656–58, 673; Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 21, 381n42.
London (and ahead of NOFO)—to the New York stage. Although it was once thought that the Woods incorporated Italian works into their repertory to compete with the Italian Opera House, in truth, of the three new works they introduced during their first two tours, two were Parisian in origin (see table 4.1).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reprised Operas</th>
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<tr>
<td>Auber</td>
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<td>Masaniello</td>
<td>Gustave III</td>
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<td>Fra Diavolo</td>
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<td>Jean of Paris</td>
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<td>Mozart</td>
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<td>Marriage of Figaro</td>
<td>Robert the Devil</td>
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<td>Rossini</td>
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<td>The Barber of Seville</td>
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<td>Cinderella</td>
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<td>Ivanhoe</td>
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Table 4.1: A list of “Englished” Operas performed by Mary Anne and Joseph Wood.

During their first tour in 1833–34, the Woods introduced “Englished” versions of Giacomo Meyerbeer’s Robert le diable (Paris, 1831) and Auber’s Gustave III (Paris, 1833) prior to the New York premieres of the original French versions. While both these productions contained interpolated Italian numbers, they introduced New Yorkers to the latest operas from Paris.

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109 Austin performed in “Englished” versions of Auber’s Fra Diavolo (New York, 20 June 1833) and La muette de Portici (New York, 1832?); Boieldieu’s La dame blanche (New York, 23 April 1828) and Le calife de Bagdad (New York, 14 October 1829). As found in Preston, Opera on the Road, 12.
110 Preston, Opera on the Road, 20, 110.
111 Odell, Annals, 3, 664, 668, 673; For information on the adaptation of Auber’s Gustave III in London, see Fuhrmann, “In Enemy Territory? Scribe and Grand Opera in London,” 101–5.
The arrival of Giacomo Meyerbeer’s international success, *Robert le diable*, was eagerly anticipated. After the 1831 Parisian premiere of *Robert le Diable*, three different arrangements appeared in London: a non-musical version at the Adelphi Theatre; Michael Rophino Lacy’s *The Fiend Father* at Covent Garden; and Henry Bishop’s *The Demon, or The Magic Branch* at Drury Lane.112 The Woods performed Henry Bishop’s arrangement of *Robert le diable* at Drury Lane in 1832. Bishop’s adaptation was more faithful to Meyerbeer’s work, whereas Lacy’s version substantially altered the musical content. Yet Lacy’s work was the more successful in London. In April 1834, nearly two and a half years after the opera’s Parisian premiere, the Woods performed Lacy’s adaptation of the opera (see figure 4.2).113

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Figure 4.2: Partial broadside for the Park Theatre performance of Robert the Devil, 12 May 1834 (TCS 65 [Park Theatre], Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University). An amalgam of Bishop’s and Lacy’s titles was printed on the broadside, with Lacy’s name spelled incorrectly.
The troupe scheduled ten performances of Robert, which was hailed as having been “brought out with great splendour and effect” and as “entirely successful.”

Lacy had refashioned the Parisian work for the Covent Garden Theatre before the official score was published, organizing a composite of numbers by popular Italian opera composers as well as some of Meyerbeer’s original music. Prior to its performance in New York by Mary Anne and Joseph Wood, the critic at the New-York Mirror described Lacy’s adjustments to Meyerbeer’s Robert le diable in London. The critic endeavored to be supportive of Lacy but knew that New Yorkers had not yet been able to appreciate the international phenomenon:

... Lacy managed the carpenter’s work extremely well, he was obliged, from not having the original matter, to cut, and join, and compose, and fit a little bit here, and a little bit in there, of green stuff taken from his own workshop, until at last it bore about as much likeness to “Robert le Diable,” as the Schuylkill does to the Hudson: both are rivers—both were operas—and there the resemblance ends.

The critic acknowledged the craftsmanship of Lacy’s production, but recognized that, like the Schuylkill and Hudson rivers, one opera was a pale version of the other. The New-York Mirror critic craved the original work by Meyerbeer “with its astonishing dramatic and musical interest, preserved and presented to the public ungarbled and unimpaired.”

Lacy’s abridgement of Meyerbeer’s work was interspersed with musical material from popular Italian operas. Mary Anne Wood revealed her vocal prowess as Isabelle with a finale

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118 Ibid.
taken from Rossini’s *La donna del lago* (1819). As Robert, Joseph Wood sang a martial aria from Rossini’s *Otello* (1816) and a two-verse ballad, “Isabel Loved Isabel,” that the *Albion* noted was based on a “touching aria” from Vincenzo Bellini’s *Il pirata*.119 As an indication of the ballad’s popularity, piano-vocal sheet music of “Isabel Loved Isabel” was published touting Joseph Wood’s acclaim with the image of Mary Anne Wood as Isabelle on the cover (see figure 4.3).120

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120 Digital copies of the piano-vocal sheet music of “Isabel Loved Isabel” can be found at the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music and at the American Memory Collection, Library of Congress. Two different versions were published in 1834, one adapted and arranged by J.M. Maeder and published in Philadelphia, the other adapted and arranged by an unknown composer, likely Michael Rophino Lacy, and published by Thomas Birch, New York. The Philadelphia version is in G major, while the New York version is in A major. Only the copy of the New York version found at the American Antiquarian Society provides the image of Mary Anne Wood as “Isabel” on the cover. These 1834 publications correspond to the tours of the Woods in New York.
Lacy’s aria “Isabel Loved Isabel” was derived from Bellini’s tenor aria “Tu vedrai la sventurata.” The melody, sung by Gualtiero after he has killed Imogene’s husband, Ernesto, is taken from the cabaletta of Gualtiero’s aria. Instead of relishing his victory, Gualtiero mournfully sings that he hopes Imogene might forgive him for this deed. On the surface, the pieces have the same basic meaning: both tenors—Robert and Gualtiero—sing about an unattainable love. Yet the circumstances differ. Gualtiero’s aria is punctuated by a deep melancholy, reflecting how he has jeopardized his relationship with Imogene. In Lacy’s “Isabel
Loved Isabel,” Robert yearns for Isabelle. Robert’s song appears at the opening of Lacy’s act 3, scene 1, when Robert is gazing upon the sleeping Isabelle after he has used the magic branch upon Isabelle as she prepared for her wedding day.\footnote{121}

Harmonically, Lacy’s adaptation of Bellini’s aria is straightforward, with moderate melodic and dynamic alterations. Example 4.1 shows the concluding phrase from both pieces. Lacy’s version is lowered a minor third, from C major to A major. While this transposition may be intended for amateur performance or the singing range of the tenor available, the key change also reflects the less emotionally fraught text. In \textit{Il pirata}, Bellini portrays Gualtiero’s pain and sadness by setting “mio tradito amor” (my loved one betrayed) in the falsetto range and by emphasizing the syllable “-men-” in “tormenti” (see boxes A and B). In “Isabel Loved Isabel,” Lacy softens the tone of the piece by eliminating stressed pitches and re-composing the title phrase on a lilting, dream-like melody with few notes that ascend into the traditional falsetto range of an 1830s tenor. Lacy’s arrangement replaced Meyerbeer’s brief \textit{cavatina} for Robert from the act 4 finale, “Ah! qu’elle est belle.”\footnote{122}

\footnote{121} Michael Rophino Lacy, \textit{Robert the Devil, or, The fiend-father, a grand romantic opera in three acts} (London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, 1857), 40–44.  
\footnote{122} Giacomo Meyerbeer, \textit{Robert le Diable}, vol. 2, ed. and intro. by Charles Rosen in \textit{Early Romantic Opera}, 19 (New York: Garland, 1980), 668–74. The text and tone of Lacy’s “Isabel Loved Isabel” is similar to those of Meyerbeer’s \textit{cavatine}. However, further comparison of the two pieces might reveal further details as to why Lacy chose to include the Bellini aria instead of the Meyerbeer.
Example 4.1: Melodic comparison between Bellini’s “Tu vedrai la sventurata,” mm. 104–11, and Lacy’s “Isabel Loved Isabel,” mm. 21–28

Following the Woods’ performances of Lacy’s adaptation, English singer, actor, arranger, composer, and impresario Thomas H. Reynoldson (1808?–1888) presented *Robert* as a
“melodrama” with Meyerbeer’s music at the Bowery Theatre later that summer.\textsuperscript{123} Still, the writer at the \textit{Albion} yearned for New Yorkers to “witness this noble production given as an opera in its original purity and splendour.” The reviewer praised Reynoldson’s adaptation for preserving Meyerbeer’s “best choruses.”\textsuperscript{124} Prominent choruses were a defining feature of \textit{grand opéra}. As James Parakilas has noted, the chorus is not only a part of the \textit{largesse} of the genre but also a dramatic character.\textsuperscript{125}

The \textit{Albion} published Reynoldson’s arrangement of the chorus “Sonnez clairons” from the act 2 finale, which included an “eccentricity of composition.” In the opera, Meyerbeer tuned four timpani to C, D, E, and G, to play the simple melody prior to the a cappella male chorus (examples 4.2 and 4.3).

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Example 4.2: “Quatre Cimballes UT, RE, UT [sic], SOL,”
\textit{Robert le diable}, act 2, finale, mm. 1–8

\textsuperscript{123} Reynoldson took his production to New Orleans and premiered his \textit{Robert le diable} at the Camp Street Theatre on 30 March 1845, preempting the French-language production of the opera at the Théâtre d’Orléans, which presented the original French version six weeks later on 12 May. Owing to the fierce rivalry between these two theaters, New Orleans audiences could attend one of fifteen performances of \textit{Robert}. For more details, see Kmen, \textit{Music in New Orleans}, 133–37.

\textsuperscript{124} “Bowery,” \textit{The Albion} 2, no. 26 (28 June 1834): 207.

As shown in example 4.4, the journal printed Reynoldson’s version for three voices and piano to entice New York “amateurs of music” and further described Meyerbeer’s use of timpani as “seldom met with, and worthy of observation.”¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Ibid.
Example 4.4: “Sound: Clarions Sound!” Reynoldson arrangement (after “Trio - Sound: Clarions Sound,” *The Albion* 2, no. 26, [28 June 1834]: 208).

By the fall of 1834, the *American Musical Journal* confirmed that Reynoldson had crafted a fuller rendition of *Robert le diable* that included more of Meyerbeer’s original music than Lacy’s version. The same article also criticized the previous productions, which had omitted the “finest morceaux” from the opera.¹²⁷

By the mid-1830s, the English opera companies prevailed in the battle between Italian and English companies. A comparison between their repertoires is illuminating. As seen in table 4.2, not one of the new Italian operas that was presented in 1832–36 was taken up by the English companies and reprised before New York audiences. By contrast, of all the “Englished”

¹²⁷ “Park Theatre,” *The American Musical Journal* 1, no. 1 (1 October 1834): 18. The following spring, Reynoldson brought his English version of *Robert* to the Camp Theatre in New Orleans; these performances preceded those at the Théâtre d’Orléans. See “Robert le Diable,” *L’Abeille*, 1 April 1835, [2].
Italian and French works cataloged, as many “Englished” French works were offered as “Englished” Italian works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Theatre (1831–33) (“Englished”)</th>
<th>Montréal Italian Company (1832–33)</th>
<th>Park Theatre (1833–36) (“Englished”)</th>
<th>Italian Opera House (1833–35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auber *Masaniello&lt;br&gt;The National Guard&lt;br&gt;Fra Diavolo</td>
<td>Bellini *Il pirata&lt;br&gt; Mercadante *Elisa e Claudio</td>
<td>Auber&lt;br&gt;Masaniello&lt;br&gt;Fra Diavolo&lt;br&gt;Gustave III</td>
<td>Bellini&lt;br&gt;*La straniera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boieldieu *The Caliph of Bagdad&lt;br&gt;*The White Lady&lt;br&gt;Jean of Paris</td>
<td>Rossini *L’inganno felice&lt;br&gt;*L’italiana in Algeri&lt;br&gt;*Il barbiere di Siviglia&lt;br&gt;Otello&lt;br&gt;*La Cenerentola&lt;br&gt;*Mosé in Egitto</td>
<td>Bellini&lt;br&gt;*La sonnambula</td>
<td>Cimarosa *Il Matrimonio segreto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozart *The Magic Flute</td>
<td>Rossini&lt;br&gt;*The Barber of Seville&lt;br&gt;*Cinderella&lt;br&gt;*Ivanhoe</td>
<td>Meyerbeer&lt;br&gt;*Robert the Devil&lt;br&gt;Mozart&lt;br&gt;*The Marriage of Figaro</td>
<td>Pacini&lt;br&gt;*Gli arabi nelle Gallie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rossini&lt;br&gt;*The Barber of Seville&lt;br&gt;*Cinderella&lt;br&gt;*Ivanhoe</td>
<td>Weber&lt;br&gt;*The Huntsman</td>
<td>Rossini&lt;br&gt;*The Barber of Seville&lt;br&gt;Cinderella&lt;br&gt;Ivanhoe</td>
<td>Rossini&lt;br&gt;*L’inganno felice&lt;br&gt;*Il Turco in Italia&lt;br&gt;*La Cenerentola&lt;br&gt;*La gazza ladra&lt;br&gt;*Mosé in Egitto&lt;br&gt;*Eduardo e Cristina&lt;br&gt;*La donna del lago&lt;br&gt;*Matilde de Shabran&lt;br&gt;*Le siège de Corinthe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rivalry detailed above between the Italian opera and English opera companies had many aspects. There were issues of language and class that left audiences and critics divided. While critics cited the lack of musical education in New York and America, the Italian companies must be held accountable for not making adjustments in their performances. New York audiences grew weary of the Italian companies, which only performed one work at a time. Although the Mirror critic reminded readers that London’s King’s Theatre offered only four Italian operas during a season, New York was not London, and the English opera companies churned out many more operas.\(^{128}\) In addition, New York audiences appeared to prefer “Englished” operas, which contained spoken dialogue with arias. When Montrésor offered Bellini’s *Il pirata*, audiences and critics, unaccustomed to the richly scored instrumental recitative that blurred the old recitative-aria dichotomy, reacted negatively. Finally, the “Englished” operas also kept New Yorkers *au courant* with the emerging operatic capital of Europe—Paris.

After the Italian Opera House closed in 1835, New York had a lull in foreign-language opera performances by an Italian (or French) company for nearly eight years. Some Italian singers—for instance, the tenor Giovanni Fabj—remained in New York and were heard at local concerts;\(^{129}\) the pro-Italian opera faction rejoined the audience at the Park Theatre, even if they were observed slinking back to their seats:

> Our musical *dillettanti*, who had lounged away some seasons in the privileged circle of the Opera House, content to overlook the mediocrity of the company which aspired to their applause . . . were at first reluctant to desert the beautiful temple which they had themselves erected to *la belle science* for the common and unfashionable boxes of a theatre; and as the distinguished leaders


\(^{129}\) Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 32, 43, 49, 52.
of the ton [sic], at last dropped in, one by one, their several appearances were marked by all that awkwardness and génie [sic] which attends the début of a young and blushing theatrical novice.\textsuperscript{130}

Ultimately, the Italian Opera Association sold the opera house to one of its original members, Oroondates Mauzan (1791–1846), and the American actor and theater manager James Henry Hackett (1800–1871) in December 1836. Hackett would change the name to the National Theatre and, in the latter half of the decade, English and “Englished” operas were successfully performed there.\textsuperscript{131}

\textbf{English and “Englished” Operas, 1836–42.}

After the Italian Opera House had closed, the opera companies at the Park and Bowery Theatres kept introducing “Englished” works from the Paris stage. In March 1836, each theater staged a different adaptation of Halévy’s \textit{La Juive} (Paris, 1835), which was currently in vogue in London; the Bowery presented the “grand melodramma” by William T. Moncrieff (1794–1857), while the Park presented an “operatick drama” by James R. Planché (1796–1880).\textsuperscript{132} Both works altered the ending of Scribe’s original libretto, which had both father and daughter martyr themselves by throwing themselves into a volcano. At the Park, Rachel is saved, but her father Eléazar is lost, whereas at the Bowery, both father and daughter are saved. According to the \textit{Ladies’ Companion} critic, the Bowery had the more successful production and performance

\textsuperscript{131} Ahlquist, \textit{Democracy at the Opera}, 127; Preston, \textit{Opera on the Road}, 21.
\textsuperscript{132} Odell, \textit{Annals}, 4, 80–81; Lawrence, \textit{Strong on Music} 1: 38.
because of its larger stage. As seen in figure 4.4, Planché replaced some of the original music with excerpts from Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Cherubini, Carafa, Auber, Rossini, and Bishop, the whole being adapted by Park Theatre orchestra leader William Penson (fl. 1790s–1840s). It was said that Planché had rewritten the role of the daughter for Mary Anne Wood, but that the “character” of Halévy’s music did not suit Wood’s vocal style.

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134 Odell, *Annals*, 4, 61; TCS 65 (Park Theatre), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Figure 4.4: Partial broadside for the Park Theatre performance of *The Jewess*, 11 March 1836 (TCS 65 [Park Theatre], Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University).
In spite of the Panic of 1837 and the resulting recession, English and “Englished” operas thrived at the National Theatre and Park Theatre. Perhaps inspired by NOFO and the constant discussion of uneven performances by the “vocal stars” with local stock companies, managers James Wallack (1794–1864) and Edmund Simpson distinguished themselves by improving the overall caliber of their singers. In two years, each manager had brought ten new vocalists to the New York stage.\footnote{136}

James Wallack, a well-respected theatrical star, was new to theater management in 1837, but he deftly constructed a substantial stock company. Engaging a soprano and a buffo from London, he combined them with his existing singers, who performed familiar English and “Englished” Italian works.\footnote{137} To compete, Simpson bolstered his operatic corps by acquiring Alsatian soprano Maria Caradori-Allan (1800–1865), who had performed for audiences in England, Italy, Germany, and Russia since 1822. A “star” vocal soloist to attract audiences, Caradori-Allan had a three-octave range with “great flexibility” and “perfect intonation”; she was considered as being the equal of Giuditta Pasta (1797–1865) and Maria Malibran.\footnote{138} Her New York debut as Rosina in The Barber of Seville brought out her training as an international singer when she sang “Una voce poco fa” in English with an encore in Italian, which achieved “most rapturous bursts of applause.”\footnote{139} The Park repertory was more extensive and included many “Englished” French operas. Not to be outdone, the Bowery Theatre offered Auber’s Le cheval de bronze (Paris, 1835). The popular fall spectacle cost $5,000.\footnote{140}

\footnote{136} Preston, Opera on the Road, 38–41.  
\footnote{137} Preston, Opera on the Road, 38–39.  
\footnote{139} C. “Madame Caradori-Allan,” The Knickerbocker 10, no. 6 (December 1837): 555.  
\footnote{140} Odell, Annals, 4, 234.
For his second season in 1837, Wallack assembled an even higher-quality stock company. His efforts were successful enough to allow him to overtake the Park Theatre as New York’s dominant venue for opera.\(^{141}\) Henry Wallack, James’s elder brother, recruited five singers from the London stage: Giuseppe de Begnis (bass, 1795–1849), Jane Shirreff (soprano, 1811–1883), and John Wilson (tenor, 1801–1849), along with Edward Seguin (bass, 1809–1852) and his wife Anne Seguin (soprano, 1814–1888).\(^{142}\) The trio of Shirreff, Wilson, and Edward Seguin captured the attention of New York audiences in the production of *Amilie; or, The Love Test* by William Michael Rooke (1794–1847).\(^{143}\) They also performed well-worn “Englished” works: *Barber of Seville*, *Cinderella*, *Fra Diavolo*, *La sonnambula*, *Marriage of Figaro*, *La gazza ladra*, and *Der Freischütz*.

During the following season, Shirreff, Wilson, and Edward Seguin performed in New York, Boston, and Providence, spending most of their time in New York. Their repertoire is an interesting reflection of the state of opera in the late 1830s.\(^{144}\) During their opening foray in October 1838, they limited their presentations solely to the English opera *Amilie; or, The Love Test*.\(^{145}\) When they returned for a month in December, the ensemble programmed a wider range of works, including the “Englished” versions of Bellini’s *La sonnambula* (eight times) and Auber’s *Fra Diavolo* (four times).\(^{146}\) By the spring, they expanded their repertory once again to include Rossini’s *Barber of Seville* and *Cinderella*, Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro*, Henry Bishop’s *Guy Mannering*, and *Love in a Village* by Thomas Arne (1710–1778). Finally, during their last month in New York, they presented *The Mountain Sylph* by John Barnett (1802–1890),

\(^{141}\) Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 31–33.  
\(^{142}\) Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 44–46.  
\(^{143}\) Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 40.  
\(^{144}\) For a detailed itinerary, see Table 2 in Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 58.  
\(^{145}\) Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 52, 62.  
\(^{146}\) Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 63.
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John of Paris by Henry Bishop (1786–1855), and Rossini’s La gazza ladra.\textsuperscript{147} The National Theatre was sensitive to the diverse operatic interests of New Yorkers, always presenting a combination of new works with familiar ones. And, of the familiar ones, they included the popular “Englished” operas from earlier in the decade.

Over the next seven years (1835–41), the English companies continued to offer premieres of “Englished” French works: Adam’s \textit{Le postillon de Lonjumeau} (Paris, 1836); Auber’s \textit{Le cheval de bronze} (Paris, 1835), \textit{Le dieu et la bayadère} (Paris, 1830), and \textit{Le domino noir} (Paris, 1837); and Hérold’s \textit{Zampa} (Paris, 1831).

\textbf{Conclusion}

In this chapter, I have closely examined New York critics, managers, opera companies, and their repertory, revealing a multiplicity of approaches to the establishment of a national opera in New York with respect to foreign-language works. I have also shown that some New York critics and audience members had a deeper knowledge and understanding of popular European operas than has been previously thought, especially with respect to Paris. Lorenzo Da Ponte was an influential advisor, but not, in truth, an effective guide or conduit for the several Italian opera troupes that performed in New York during the first half of the decade. He misread the preferences of New York audiences, who were keenly aware of the popular successes of Paris that had been quickly acquired and adapted for English-speaking audiences.

In the \textit{querelle} to establish a viable mode of operatic performance, the “Englished” operas triumphed. The effort to adopt Italian opera was valiant, but not sustainable in the face of intense competition by English-language theaters. Demonstrating the practical approach that

\textsuperscript{147} Preston, \textit{Opera on the Road}, 71–73.
Colonel Berkeley espoused, the Park Theatre presented the latest “vocal star,” one whose existing reputation attracted a continual audience, offered operas with an understandable text (with Italian interpolations), and kept New Yorkers *au courant* with popular European works. The Italian opera companies provided a limited and older Italian opera repertoire without a notable “vocal star.” Further, the *querelle* demonstrated just how much the history of Parisian opera weighed upon the minds of critics and managers. Berkeley and others admired the recent French adaptations by Castil-Blaze of Italian and German musical dramas, which made foreign-language operas more accessible to French audiences. By comparison, the champions of Italian operas sought to “improve” New World audiences and composers by exposing them to Italian works, similar to the Parisian adoption of Italian operas in the eighteenth century. Finally, the criticism of the Italian opera companies in the French-language *Courrier* echoed that of the rest of the New York press, though the critics supported the new Italian Opera House to the extent that it reminded them of Paris.

Although performances in French waned during the 1830s, French operas from Paris still managed to enter the repertory of the English companies in New York. Works from Paris were seen through the London lens of adaptation, but critics knew when they were hearing music by the original composer or by the adaptor, since they had heard the original French works performed by NOFO. Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable* exemplified the typical treatment of a non-English work: it was customized for a London vocal star and had arias and ensembles by Rossini and Bellini inserted. Some New York critics pined for the original music, but, without a viable alternative, their protests went unanswered until NOFO returned. As I document in chapter 5, the return of a restructured NOFO with an updated repertoire in 1843 reinvigorated New York audiences’ interest in foreign-language opera.
Chapter 5

The Return of Foreign-Language Opera: the French, the Italians, and the Dominance of the French Prima Donna, 1843-44

The year 1843 was remarkable; entertainments from the New and the Old Worlds became closely interconnected. One critic observed that “Paris and London seem as near to us now as Boston and Philadelphia of old. Who knows but a few years hence the Italian and French troupes will make their annual season visit to New York alternately with Paris and London?” New York had grown into an attractive destination for the European circuit of singers and virtuosi, who began to extend their tours across the Atlantic. New Yorkers remained au courant with the latest popular and fashionable entertainments of the European stage; European performers crossed the Atlantic to earn more money and expand their reputation. English and “Englished” operas still dominated the New York dramatic stage. Yet, by 1840, the Herald judged that New York’s musical entertainments were “ahead of London, and [would] soon rival Paris, Berlin, and Vienna.” While the effects of the national (and international) financial panic of 1837 lingered, a growth in the range of entertainments appeared, as did, in part, the reinvigoration of foreign-language opera in New York.

During this time of proliferating entertainment styles, NOFO and Italian opera companies returned. NOFO included a new “vocal star,” Julie Calvé, who was one of four French sopranos to sing in New York in 1843–44. Two others, whose names obscured their French heritage, had been trained in Paris but were entirely at home in Italian opera: Jeanne Anaïs Castellan

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2 Lawrence, Strong on Music, 189.
3 New York Herald, 22 October 1841, as quoted in Lawrence, Strong on Music, 139.
[Giampietro] (1819?) and Eufrasia Borghèse [Juliette Bourgeois] (fl. 1810s–50s). The last, Laure Cinti-Damoreau (1801–1863), was the most famous French singer of her time and made her career as the reigning soprano for Rossini, Auber, and Meyerbeer in the Paris opera houses.

In 1843, after a hiatus of ten years, NOFO returned to Niblo’s Garden for an extended summer season from 19 May to 2 August. Shown in table 5.1, its itinerary appeared to target cities with active French communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 May–2 August</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 August—?</td>
<td>Montreal, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–11 September</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 September–21 October</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Chronological list of NOFO’s tour, 1843.5

Several circumstances had accounted for the long absence from the Northeast. In New Orleans, the company had faced intense competition from two other theaters—the long-standing American Theatre (1824) and the newly opened St. Charles Theatre (1835). Both theaters had engaged the same itinerant Italian companies that had performed in New York.6 Furthermore, in 1837, shareholders in the Théâtre d’Orléans lost confidence in long-time manager John Davis, and replaced him with his son, Pierre.7 By 1843, the company members had deposed Pierre and had formed a union-like infrastructure called the Société des Artistes.8

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6 Kmen, Music in New Orleans, 140; Preston, Opera on the Road, 113.
7 Kmen, Music in New Orleans, 149–50.
8 Swift, “The Northern Tours of the Théâtre d’Orléans,” 157. Midway through the New York 1843 summer season, the Courrier announced that Pierre Davis had agreed to return to manage the financially troubled company, reengaging all the artists at his own personal expense; “Maintien du Théâtre [sic] Français de la Nouvelle-Orléans,” Le Courrier des États-Unis 16, no. 49 (22 June 1843): 208.
The news of NOFO’s return invigorated the French expatriates, who were overheard at Delmonico’s Restaurant buzzing with anticipation. The English-speaking press recognized the significance of the return of foreign-language opera, and the Herald critic endorsed the endeavor:

For eleven years, there has been an annual demand for the Opera! the Opera! . . . The light elegant pieces of the French, are just suited to the tastes of Niblo’s visitors; here have we the French Opera, which we ought to have had formerly instead of the Italian, and then it would have succeeded. The thousands of lovers of good music, will throng to the Gardens during the engagement of this charming novelty. . . . “Vive L’Opera [sic] Francaise [sic]!”

If given the opportunity, this writer suggested that French opera might have been more successful than Italian opera in founding an international opera scene in New York. For the next three years, NOFO continued to challenge the Italian opera companies’ status in New York culture.

Niblo’s Garden was a prime venue to reach a large and diverse audience. Coming after the disastrous 1842–43 season, which was described as financially one of the “worst theatrical season[s]” to date, New York managers were in search of attractive, respectable, and fashionable entertainment. When entrepreneur William Niblo (1789–1878) opened the garden as “Sans Souci” in 1828, he brought a substantial customer base of influential merchants from his successful restaurant and meetinghouse, the Bank Coffee House. By 1839, a stroll in the lush gardens was complemented by a visit to a large theater, where guests could attend the usual

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pleasure-garden fare of plays, burlettas, and illuminations, as well as balls and exhibits by the American Institute, which displayed the latest in American agriculture and manufacturing innovation. In short, Niblo’s Garden hosted a wide range of patrons from the city’s up-and-coming bon ton to its visitors.\textsuperscript{13} The long-standing admission price for all entertainments—regardless of production cost—was fifty cents.\textsuperscript{14} In her book \textit{Cultivating National Identity Through Performance}, Naomi Stubbs described pleasure gardens as venues that were geared toward those who were interested in “social mobility and advancement.” They provided a reasonably priced place for those who wanted to attend a nice venue.\textsuperscript{15} A description published in 1838 noted that Niblo’s Garden had a reputation that appealed to non-theater goers, middle-income patrons, and many visitors from outside New York, exposing its guests to a wide variety of entertainments.\textsuperscript{16}

Niblo had updated the theater’s interior in blue and maroon with gilding. The critic Nathaniel Parker Willis (1806–1867) remarked that one side of the theater opened out to the garden.\textsuperscript{17} NOFO’s opening coincided with the seasonal debut of Niblo’s Garden, which was described as being “in beautiful order. . . [where] the whole place, with its trees, and fountains, and flowers, harmonizes pleasingly with the attractions presented by the music and mirth of the saloon.”\textsuperscript{18} By programming French opera alongside English actors and a French acrobatic

\textsuperscript{14} Lawrence, \textit{Strong on Music}, 20–21.
\textsuperscript{15} Stubbs, \textit{Cultivating National Identity}, 68.
\textsuperscript{17} Nathaniel Parker Willis, \textit{Dashes at Life with a Free Pencil} (New York: Burgess, Stringer & Co., 1845), 15, 50.
family, the Ravels, Niblo was appealing to those who wanted to be challenged and educated as well as those who wanted to be entertained.¹⁹

When NOFO returned to New York, the resident English troupes were on tour.²⁰ Most of the New York press were thrilled to have it back. The Herald critic looked forward to attending every evening so as not to miss any production and thereby seeing “all the Parisian novelties in rapid succession.”²¹ As in previous years, their French-language entertainments were highly praised for their “beneficial” effect upon the audience and a positive sign of New York’s improvement and refinement.²² At this time, some considered the French language as “one of the most charming languages in the world” and “a passport into good society,” with some going so far as to believe that the language was a sign of the “superiority of their breeding.”²³ The Anglo American critic called William Niblo an “enterprising proprietor” for facilitating this elegance.²⁴ Not all, however, were enamored with the French company. An early detractor writing for the New World maligned the company as “mediocre” and without exceptional singers. This naysayer scoffed at the company’s admirers, proclaiming that they were indiscriminate and did not know the true caliber of the company. He claimed that the company’s productions were comparable to what you would see or hear at an outdoor Parisian café; however, his statements were quickly disproved when the company arrived with their featured vocal star, Julie Calvé.²⁵

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¹⁹ Odell, Annals, 4, 689–91.
²⁰ Lawrence, Strong on Music, 213.
²² “‘Theatre Francais,’ at Niblo’s,” The Anglo American 1, no. 5 (27 May 1843): 118.
²⁴ “‘Theatre Francais,’ at Niblo’s,” The Anglo American 1, no. 5 (27 May 1843): 118.
²⁵ The New World 6, no. 22 (3 June 1843): 668; “Niblo’s,” New York Herald, 10 June 1843, 2.
NOFO had learned from the recent operatic successes and failures in both New York and New Orleans that it needed a “star” in order to attract audiences and to compete with other opera companies. Calvé joined the company in 1837 as its new prima donna. Born in Rennes, Calvé was a pupil of the internationally renowned soprano Laure Cinti-Damoreau. Debuting at the Paris Théâtre de l’Opéra Comique in February 1835, Calvé established her reputation in New Orleans by singing such florid Italianate roles (like her esteemed teacher) as Rosina in Rossini’s Le barbier de Séville in French in November 1837. In addition, NOFO’s orchestra was hailed as “unequalled” and praised for its “care and precision,” especially in its performances of overtures. For its conductor, the company had hired the award-winning Parisian composer Eugène-Prosper Prévost (1809–1872) in 1838. Born in Paris, Prévost studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Jean-François Le Sueur (1760–1837) and had won the prestigious Prix de Rome with his cantata Bianca Capello in 1831. In New York, he led many well-known opera overtures as well as his own opera La Esmerelda (New Orleans, 1840).

NOFO’s summer season opened with the two-act vaudeville La nuit aux soufflets by Philippe-François Pinel (Dumanoir) (1806–1865) and Adolphe d’Ennery (1811–1899) and the one-act opéra bouffe Polchinelle (Paris, 1839) by Charles Duveyrier (1803–1866) and Eugène

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26 For more details about Calvé’s reception history, see Swift, “The Northern Tours of the Théâtre d’Orléans,” 156–93.
Scribe (1791–1861) with music by Alexandre Montfort (1803–1856). The theater had an audience of more than a thousand people, including many women. The large audience was identified as being “fashionable” and attracted by the music. Recognizing that many in the audience did not understand the dialogue, Niblo had the libretti of the operas translated for their use. With Calvé puffed as the “greatest hit” since Fanny Elssler, NOFO made a solid start.

Various recommendations emerged in the press regarding the frequency and variety of NOFO’s offerings. The critic of the Courrier des États-Unis was impatient with Niblo for delaying the performance of the evening-length operas. He believed that Niblo wanted to produce less expensive vaudevilles instead of more expensive operas. The Anglo American critic suggested that the company avoid presenting the same opera on “two successive nights” and provide “as many operas as possible,” recommending shorter one-act works such as Adolphe Adam’s (1803–1856) Le chalet (Paris, 1834), Ferdinando Paër’s Le maître de chappelle (Paris, 1821), Daniel Auber’s Le concert à la cour (Paris, 1824), François Boieldieu’s Le nouveau seigneur (Paris, 1813), and Hippolite Monpou’s Les deux reines (Paris, 1835).

Instead, NOFO staged longer works from the Paris Opéra Comique that featured its soprano.

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37 “‘Theatre Francais,’ at Niblo’s,” The Anglo American 1, no. 5 (27 May 1843): 118. Some of these works had been seen in New York when NOFO toured between 1827 and 1833.
Les opéras comiques à l’Amérique

The public did not have to wait long to see “les plus en vogue et les plus nouveaux” (the most in vogue and the newest) from Paris. Opera productions were predicted to be a greater attraction than vaudevilles for English-speaking audiences, which could not fully understand spoken texts; the productions therefore highlighted the music, which appealed “more fully to the senses.” Of the fifteen operas presented, eleven had been composed since NOFO was last in New York in 1833. The company offered works by French composers—new and old—as well as works by Gaetano Donizetti, who had been composing for Paris audiences since 1838.

The first two opéras comiques were Daniel Auber’s L’ambassadrice (Paris, 1836; New Orleans, 1841; New York, 1843) and Le domino noir (Paris, 1837; New Orleans, 1839; New York, 1843). After four consecutive performances of L’ambassadrice, the company was declared the current favorite, and the seats were filled. While sipping juleps and eating ices, the Anglo American critic proclaimed that Auber’s music was perfect for summer entertainments, for it was “light, delicious, and sparkling” and captivated the listener. The company followed L’ambassadrice with Auber’s three-act opéra comique Le domino noir. The Anglo American critic found the text of Le domino noir to be “charming” and described the music as “exquisite” and “one of the best compositions of Auber.” The Albion critic provided a

41 “Theatre Francais at Niblo’s,” The Anglo American 1, no. 7 (10 June 1843): 166; “‘Theatre Francais’ at Niblo’s,” The Anglo American 1, no. 8 (17 June 1843): 190.
42 “Theatre Francais at Niblo’s,” The Anglo American 1, no. 7 (10 June 1843): 166.
Parisian context, where *Le domino noir* had been a resounding success and “played for one hundred nights in succession.”

The critic at *Spirit of the Times* agreed with that of the *Courrier*, who dubbed Auber “ce Bellini français” and proclaimed that *Le domino noir* was a “grander work” than *L’ambassadrice*. The critic at the *Courrier* felt that the American press fully appreciated the performance of Calvé, especially in her act 3 air “Mes chères soeurs” and the following polyphonic hymn, “Qu’elle est gentille notre abbesse!” The *Albion* critic concurred that the largest applause was for the air and the hymn, and noted that the Aragonaise song “La belle Inês fait florès” in act 2 was “sung with spirit and deservedly applauded.”

The third of NOFO’s productions was Adolphe Adam’s three-act *opéra comique Le postillon de Lonjumeau* (Paris, 1836; New Orleans, 1838; New York, 1840 [in English], 1843 [in French]). New Yorkers had heard the “Englished” version of Adam’s *Le postillon* at the Park Theatre sung by John Wilson and Jane Sheriff in March 1840, at which time the press had disliked the translation by Gilbert Abbott à Beckett (1811–1856) and the music by G. F. Stansbury (1800–1845), claiming that none of the tunes was memorable.

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47 “Theatre Francais at Niblo’s,” *The Anglo American* 1, no. 7 (10 June 1843): 166.
49 At this time, it is unknown how much Beckett and Stansbury retained of Adam’s original music. Some adaptations barely resembled the original. *Knickerbocker*, May 1840, 449, as quoted in Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 99; Loewenberg, *Annals of Opera*, 782.
and Courrier critics acknowledged that NOFO’s performance was not prepared adequately and that the previous production was superior. \(^{50}\) Yet the Anglo American critic admired Adam’s music and wrote that it was “refreshing,” adhered “to the character of the words,” and displayed “a profound originality.” He highlighted the bass aria sung by Biju/Alcindor in act 2, “Oui, de choristers du theatre,” for its “instrumentation, its harmonic purity, and its excellent comedy.”\(^{51}\)

For Calvé’s first benefit, the opera performed Fromental Halévy’s \textit{opéra comique} \textit{L’éclair} (Paris, 1838; New Orleans, 1837; New York, 1843). At this high-profile production, the company promoted a still little-known composer. In addition, this work was an unusual choice, for Calvé’s role as Henrietta did not have a featured aria.\(^{52}\) The role of the tenor was discovered to have the “prettiest” music in the whole work, especially in his act 1 aria and act 3 romance. Unfortunately, the tenor was not remarkable.\(^{53}\) The critical response was equally perplexing, for while the French critic disliked the music, calling it “froide et triste,”\(^{54}\) the English-language press was enthusiastic about the work. The critic at \textit{Brother Jonathan} was captivated with the composer’s compositional technique, given that the opera has only four characters. The critic considered Halévy to be a “master of the science” of music, who excelled in conveying the momentum and emotion of each character with “tender and heartstiring [sic] harmonies.” Furthermore, he remarked that the composition—although for the dramatic stage—was written as much for the instruments, which, in some cases, overwhelmed the vocal parts.\(^{55}\) Calvé’s duet with Lecourt in the second act displayed more “force and effect” in her voice. The Albion critic


\(^{51}\) “‘Theatre Francais’ at Niblos,” \textit{The Anglo American} 1, no. 9 (24 June 1843): 214.

\(^{52}\) “Niblo,” \textit{Le Courrier des États-Unis} 16, no. 50 (24 June 1843): 212.

\(^{53}\) “The French Company at Niblo’s,” \textit{The Albion} 2, no. 26 (1 July 1843): 324.

\(^{54}\) “Théâtre [sic] de Niblo,” \textit{Le Courrier des États-Unis} 16, no. 54 (3 July 1843): 229.

\(^{55}\) “The Drama,” \textit{Brother Jonathan} 5, no. 9 (1 July 1843): 270.
highlighted the singing lesson and Calvé’s emphasis upon the text “Je t’aime, et pour la vie, Et je ne veux plus aimer que toi,” in which she “took the house completely by surprise by the power and fullness of tone with which she gave voice to the music.”\textsuperscript{56} The Anglo American critic, who claimed to have been at the premiere in Paris, described the music as “most exquisite, of a fine classical harmony, and of a distinguished and agreeable melody.”\textsuperscript{57}

The fifth work introduced by NOFO was Ferdinand Hérold’s \textit{Le pré aux clercs} (Paris, 1832; New Orleans, 1833; New York, 1843). The Albion critic acknowledged that many of the airs in the opera, which had never been offered in its entirety, were familiar to the New York audience since it had been adapted with English words and sung by sopranos Maria Caradori-Allan\textsuperscript{58} and Jane Shirreff and tenor John Wilson.\textsuperscript{59} Calvé still captivated the audience with her aria “Rendez moi ma patrie ou laissez moi mourir,” which resonated with both the English- and French-language critics.\textsuperscript{60} The Courrier critic was captivated by the opera, preferring it to Halévy’s \textit{L’éclair}.\textsuperscript{61}

NOFO then returned to a work by Auber—\textit{Les diamants de la couronne} (Paris, 1841; New Orleans, 1842; New York, 1843).\textsuperscript{62} Auber was considered the most successful of the

\textsuperscript{57}“‘Theatre Francais’ at Niblos,” The Anglo American 1, no. 9 (24 June 1843): 214.
\textsuperscript{58}Caradori-Allan had sung unidentified parts of \textit{Le pré aux clercs} during a concert in June 1838; Preston, Opera on the Road, 40; Lawrence, Strong on Music, 45.
\textsuperscript{59}In their second New York concert on 15 November 1839, Sheriff and Wilson offered three pieces adapted from \textit{Le pré aux clercs}; Sheriff sang the aria “Scenes that Ne’er from Memory Stray” and “Far from these sad towers,” while Wilson performed the recitative and air “Lovely Lady Mine,” which J. R. Planché adapted with music by William Hawes (1785–1846); “[Ad],” Morning Courrier and New-York Enquirer, 15 November 1839, 2; Loewenberg, Annals of Opera, 746.
\textsuperscript{61}“Théâtre [sic] de Niblo,” Le Courrier des États-Unis 16, no. 54 (3 July 1843): 229.
\textsuperscript{62}Loewenberg, Annals of Opera, 814.
French “modern composers,” and the Herald critic hailed Calvé as the best interpreter of Auber’s music. He appreciated her “Tyrolean bravura” in the second act and proclaimed that it alone was “worth double the price of admission.”  

Calvé shocked the audience during an early performance when she fainted on stage, recovered, and completed the evening “with increased brilliancy.”

The company concluded its season with two operas by Gaetano Donizetti: his first Parisian opera, *La fille du régiment* (Paris, 1840, New Orleans, 1843; New York, 1843), on July 19, and *Anna Bolena* (Milan, 1830; New Orleans, 1839 [in French]; New York, 1843 [in French]) on 2 August. The theater was filled with “vehement cheering” at the New York premiere of *La fille*. Although he found the overall music to be “thin throughout,” the critic of *Spirit of the Times* described the “immensely effective” manner in which the “military air (“Hail to thee?”)” was incorporated throughout the opera. While the two-act *opéra comique* did not offer any serious or educational work, it was exceedingly amusing. Calvé dazzled and “electrified” the audience. Having previously performed in regal, familial, or monastic roles, Calvé delighted New York audiences as the vivacious and daring Marie. With the “Salut à la France,” her acting impressed as much as her singing. The *Courrier* critic described Marie as a

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65 New York audiences had heard “Englished” versions of some of Donizetti’s Italian operas; the touring Italian soprano Maria Caradori-Allan sang a pastiche of *L’elisir d’amore* (Milan, 1832) at the Park Theatre on 18 June 1838. See Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 40; and Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 44.
66 At the New Orleans premiere, the southern audiences were enthusiastic, saying “Grâce à cet ensemble, la Fille du Régiment est l’un des plus amusans [sic] operas que l’on puisse entendre” (Thanks to this company, *La fille du régiment* is one of most entertaining operas that one can hear). See “Theatre d’Orleans,” *L’Abeille*, 9 March 1843, 3.
“plus gracieusement et plus comiquement mauvais sujet feminin” (most graciously and most comically bad female subject).\(^69\) At her last performance of Marie, Calvé received a bouquet with a large banner that read “Vive la Vivandière du 21ème.”\(^70\)

During the successful run of La fille, NOFO offered a benefit for conductor Eugène Prévost, in which he directed his own opéra-bouffon Cosimo. New Yorkers had rarely seen a composer conduct his own opera.\(^71\) The Courrier gave the music polite praise and said that Prévost had composed “un petit chef-d’oeuvre qui ferait honneur à nos plus grands compositeurs” (a small masterpiece that would honor our greatest composers). Unfortunately, the performance was poorly attended.\(^72\)

For Calvé’s second benefit, the company offered Anna Bolena, which was Donizetti’s first opera to be performed in the Parisian Théâtre-Italien, in 1831.\(^73\) Translated by Castil-Blaze in 1835 for the Le Havre theater as Anne de Boulen,\(^74\) the opera had established Donizetti’s international career. The Herald critic announced that Donizetti’s work was the “best opera produced this season” and observed that Calvé was appearing “for the first time in this city in an Italian Opera, with a French libretto.” He had obviously forgotten that NOFO had successfully performed operas by Mozart, Rossini, and Weber in French translations by Castil-Blaze a decade earlier.

\(^69\)”Niblo,” Le Courrier des États-Unis 16, no. 61 (20 July 1843): 257.
\(^70\)”Niblo,” Le Courrier des États-Unis 16, no. 64 (27 July 1843): 269.
\(^71\)”Niblo’s Theatre,” New York Herald, 31 May 1843, 2.
\(^73\)Loewenberg, Annals of Opera, 728.
earlier. The Herald critic looked forward to the act 3 mad scene and wrote: “we congratulate the amateurs of music on having an opportunity of hearing a grand opera, by Donizetti.”

The New York Herald critic appreciated the variety of the company’s repertory, commending them for presenting new works quickly, which, he believed, would otherwise “take three and four months producing.” Toward the end of the season, however, “A lover of music” wrote a letter to the Herald editor, questioning why NOFO had no sooner introduced a new opera than it had moved on to another one. Accustomed to the touring Italian opera companies who had repeated a few works over many months, his comment echoed other critics who wondered why the company quickly presented different works. The Herald critic responded, declaring that “the fickle public would have squeaked” if NOFO had offered a paucity of entertainments.

The Herald credited Calvé with the reinvigoration of opera in New York, saying that “[t]he present success of the French company is an additional corroboration of the determination of the lover of music to support a New York ‘Opera.’” Early in the season, some considered her second to sopranos Maria Malibran and Mary Ann Wood, however, the Anglo American critic considered Calvé as their equal. Although her voice was not powerful, Calvé impressed New York critics with her artistry, which an early review by the Albion critic described as having

76 “‘Niblo’s,’” New York Herald, 19 July 1843, 3.
77 “‘The Drama,’” Brother Jonathan 5, no. 5 (3 June 1843): 148.
78 “‘Niblo’s Garden, Mr. Editor,’” New York Herald, 23 July 1843, 3.
79 “‘Niblo’s.—Farewell Appearance of M’dselle Calve [sic],’” New York Herald, 11 September 1843, 2.
80 The article claims mistakenly that Calvé was the last student of Rossini and had won competitions at the Paris Conservatoire; this claim has not been verified by outside sources. “Mademoiselle Calve [sic], of the French Opera,” New York Herald, 25 May 1843, 2.
81 “‘Theatre Francais,’ at Niblo’s,” The Anglo American 1, no. 5 (27 May 1843): 118.
“an ease, grace, and finish in her vocalism that charms the listener. . . .”

In its criticism, the Courrier commented on the myriad descriptions of Calvé’s vocal style. At the beginning of her tour, he found the English-language (a.k.a. “American”) critics and audience overly focused on the strength and size of her voice, which they considered lacking. The Courrier critic compared her to soprano Mary Anne Wood, who, he considered to have “un volume de voix considérable, mais un style misérable.” He posited that a more nuanced assessment of Calvé (and other singers) should be offered because her study and artistic interpretation enhanced her innate capabilities.

Following its New York season, NOFO went to Montreal; it opened at the Théâtre Royal on 10 August before an audience that easily understood its French-language repertory. Although the local instrumentalists mangled the accompaniment, NOFO’s singers performed undeterred. In particular, the resident military troop relished the performance of La fille du régiment and applauded Calvé and the company “avec frénésie.” NOFO returned to New York on 6 September for three performances before leaving for Philadelphia to open on 14 September.

Talk of establishing a permanent French theater resurfaced throughout the company’s summer season. The Herald critic considered New York audiences’ attendance of NOFO’s performances as indicative of the city’s interest in a permanent French company. In fact, he reported that a significant number of New York’s bon ton chose to remain in the city in order to

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support the French opera “instead of spending their summer à la campagne.” The overwhelmingly positive reception of Julie Calvé and the company demonstrated the “determination of foreigners and Americans to support the French Opera.” The Herald critic credited Calvé with the new interest in French opera, saying:

Her performance in the last opera has charmed us out of cold criticism, and has established a permanent taste among us for the French opera; the experiment of a French troupe has succeeded equal to the most sanguine expectations of its best patrons. . . . At New Orleans it has succeed [sic] for the last twenty years, and why should New York be inferior to the South?" 

The Courrier critic had hoped that Niblo could have retained the company in New York to establish a permanent venue for French opéras comiques. The Bains de l’Arcade, between Chamber and Reade Streets, were recommended. Critic Nathaniel Parker Willis proposed that NOFO consider alternating between New York and New Orleans on a regular basis. The company had rewhetted New Yorkers’ interest in French opera.

Throughout its tour in New York and Montreal, the NOFO company had a compatriot in the concert hall, Parisian-trained soprano Jeanne Anaïs Castellan [Giampietro], who had arrived in New York in late June. Often billed as though she were Italian, Castellan also had studied with Cinti-Damoreau, doing so alongside Calvé. Castellan came to New York after presenting concerts in Mexico and New Orleans with her husband, the tenor Emilio Giampietro (fl.

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91 Willis, Dashes at Life with a Free Pencil, 15.
1840s).  

At her first concert at the Apollo Rooms on 27 June, “Signora” Castellan was joined by pianist Henry Christian Timm (1811–1892) and oboist G. Paggi (fl. 1840s), who were celebrated musicians on the New York concert scene. Castellan sang pieces from popular Italian operas: “Ardon gl’incensi,” from Donizetti’s Lucia di Lammermoor; “Son vergin vezzosa” from Bellini’s I puritani; and the rondò-finale from Bellini’s La sonnambula. The New York audience rose to their feet for “Ah! non giunge uman pensiero” from La sonnambula, in which “[Castellan] sparkled through the brilliant roulades of that joyous air.” New York’s musical community was well represented: theater orchestra leader and violinist William Penson (fl. 1830s–40s), conductor and violinist U. C. Hill (1802–1875), composer and critic Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781–1861), soprano Mrs. Sutton (fl. 1830s–40s), as well as NOFO soprano Julie Calvé, to name a few.

Castellan and Calvé were inevitably compared. Critics labeled Castellan, like Calvé, as the “new Malibran” and commended her vocal agility and her impressive three-octave range. She surpassed Calvé in vocal agility; however, in interpretation, Calvé excelled “in transfixing the attention of her auditors” and effortlessly sang her cadenzas. After her solo concerts, Castellan participated in a Philharmonic Society of New York concert that winter, where she reprised her performance of “Ardon gl’incensi” from Lucia di Lammermoor and the finale from La sonnambula.

As soon as NOFO had left New York in September, William Niblo took advantage of the “prevailing taste for music” and enlisted an Italian opera company that had been performing in

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92 “Signora Castellan,” Spirit of the Times 13, no. 18 (1 July 1843): 216.
93 “Castellan’s Concert,” Spirit of the Times 13, no. 18 (1 July 1843): 216.
94 New York Herald, 29 June 1843; as quoted in Lawrence, Strong on Music, 191.
95 “Niblo’s,” New York Herald, 10 July 1843, 2.
Havana for two years.\textsuperscript{97} Led by tenor Cirillo Antognini (1806–1855), it performed in New York from 15 September to 23 October.\textsuperscript{98} When the company debuted Donizetti’s \textit{Lucia di Lammermoor}, Italian opera was still hailed as superior to the French variety. The \textit{Herald} hoped that the “Italians have it in their power to cultivate to their own advantage,” but credited NOFO for cultivating a receptive environment for opera.\textsuperscript{99} The \textit{Herald} explained that Italian music was “breathed forth by beings who believed in the immortality of happiness” and “a divine science” that was innately “expressive, tender and pathetic.”\textsuperscript{100} In spite of his high praise for Italian music in general, the \textit{Herald} critic was dismissive of the Italian singers themselves.\textsuperscript{101} A correspondent from the Washington \textit{Daily National Intelligencer} claimed that only the first act of \textit{Lucia} and the orchestra were acceptable. He found soprano/contralto Amalia Majocchi-Valtellina (fl. 1840s) to be inadequate in her upper register and recommended Castellan as a replacement.\textsuperscript{102} While New York critics and audiences disliked Majocchi, they appreciated both the tenor Cirillo Antognini and the Havana Opera Company chorus, which they judged superior to that of NOFO.\textsuperscript{103} The \textit{Albion} critic was eternally positive about the Italian company and puffed that its first three weeks of performances were a “triumphant success,” claiming that the crowded audience was an indication of the company’s worth.\textsuperscript{104} Critic Henry C. Watson (1818?–1875) deemed the performance of \textit{Lucia} unacceptable and was disappointed that New Yorkers should hear it “in a style so unworthy.”\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{97} “Things Theatrical,” \textit{Spirit of the Times} 13, no. 29 (16 September 1843): 348.
\textsuperscript{100} “Italian Opera,” \textit{New York Herald}, 15 September 1843, 3.
\textsuperscript{101} Lawrence, \textit{Strong on Music}, 216.
\textsuperscript{104} “The Italian Opera at Niblo’s,” \textit{The Albion} 2, no. 40 (7 October 1843): 498.
\textsuperscript{105} Lawrence, \textit{Strong on Music}, 217.
The company moved on to present the American premiere of Donizetti’s two-act tragedia lirica Gemma di Vergy (Milan, 1834) on 2 October. While the Albion described the music to be tedious and unremarkable, the Anglo American dismissed the opera’s plot in particular and negatively assessed the treatment of librettos by Italian composers in general:

[T]hey care nothing that sound and scene should coincide, their main gist being beautiful melodies with exquisite accompaniments, fine concerted vocalism with elaborate instrumentation, a round or two of striking character, choruses stuck in to relieve the principal vocalists, and a powerful finale at the end of each act. . . .

Of Gemma, the critic revealed that Donizetti’s music, although attractive, borrowed heavily from other works, containing the “most impudent thefts and plagiarisms.” Donizetti, however, was the current darling of the operatic world, and, therefore, “fashion covereth a multitude of sins.”

During the period for which the Italian company was performing, Castellan continued to offer concerts. On 18 September, her third concert was amply attended at Washington Hall. It was observed to be filled with a wide array of social classes, which included . . . a perfect concentration of beauty and fashion, and talent and pride and superciliousness—the patrician and the plebeian—the rich poorman and the poor rich man—the purse-proud and the lowly—the ‘merchant prince’ and the humble artisan—Editors, penny-a-liners, newspaper, scrubs, and black-legs were all jostling against each other in the very hot and very highly scented atmosphere of Washington Hall. . . .

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106 “The Italian Opera at Niblo’s,” The Albion 2, no. 40 (7 October 1843): 486; as quoted in Lawrence, Strong on Music, 217.
108 Ibid.
109 Castellan had also gone to Montreal at the same time as NOFO; “Les Artistes Français a [sic] Montréal,” Le Courrier des États-Unis 16, no. 75 (21 August 1843): 313.
110 Brother Jonathan, 23 September 1843, 107, as quoted in Lawrence, Strong on Music, 191–92.
Castellan did not garner the same ubiquitous praise as before. The Tribune critic disliked her vocal approach and charged her with poor musical interpretation and an excess of ornamentation. In the end, he recommended that she return to Europe for continued tutelage.\footnote{\textit{Tribune}, 19 September 1843, as quoted in Lawrence, ibid.}

The Anglo American critic cautioned against pitting the concert hall performance against the full drama, since this might instigate an unhealthy competition:

\begin{quote}
It was a dangerous experiment to try musical attractions [concerts], which have so long been the staple commodity of entertainment in New York, against those of the classical drama, to which the public had so long been strangers, and which is now revived here under the auspices of the master spirit of the age.
\end{quote}

Castellan’s next concert on 29 September did not attract a full audience. In addition to a romance by Meyerbeer, her featured piece was a duet from Donizetti’s \textit{Gemma di Vergy}, which preempted the Havana Italian Opera Company premiere by three days.\footnote{“Music and Musical Intelligence,” \textit{The Anglo American} 1, no. 24 (7 October 1843): 576; “Chronique Musicales,” \textit{Le Courrier des États-Unis} 16, no. 94 (3 October 1843): 390–91.}

Two weeks later, Laure Cinti-Damoreau arrived in New York and began a year-long tour of North America. She was best known for the roles that she had created for Rossini’s operas at the Paris Théâtre Italien: Pamyre, Anaïse, Countess Adèle, and Matilde in \textit{Le siège de Corinthe} (1826), \textit{Moïse} (1827), \textit{Le comte Ory} (1827), and \textit{Guillaume Tell} (1829), respectively. In addition, she created the leading roles in such early French grands opéras as Elvire in Auber’s \textit{La muette de Portici} (1828) and Isabelle in Meyerbeer’s \textit{Robert le diable} (1831).\footnote{Cinti-Damoreau and Artôt travelled to Boston, Philadelphia, Charleston, Havana, and New Orleans during their 1843–44 tour. \textit{Grove Music Online}, s.v. “Cinti-Damoreau [née Montalant], Laure (Cinthie)” (by Philip E. J. Robinson), http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/05799 (accessed 28 August 2014).} Her views
on vocal technique were compiled into a treatise, *Méthode de chant composée pour ses classes du Conservatoire* (1849). Since 1835, Cinti-Damoreau had embarked on a concert career in Europe, which had been as successful, or more so, than her operatic one.

On 19 October, Cinti-Damoreau, joined by the Belgian violinist Alexandre Artôt (1815–1845), debuted at New York’s Washington Hall. The duo performed four concerts at Washington Hall and a farewell concert at the Park Theatre. Local luminaries did not miss the events. At their first concert, the audience was estimated at twelve to thirteen hundred people. In “full dress,” the French community greeted the celebrated artists with never-before-seen formality and respect. Former New York Mayor Philip Hone described Cinti-Damoreau as “one of the greatest singers of the present age.” Describing the French style of singing, the *Albion* critic highlighted the “flexibility,” “delicacy,” and “finish” of Cinti-Damoreau’s voice, which he considered “la perfection d’une instrument.” Nathanial Parker Willis described Cinti-Damoreau’s opening aria, “Fatal Goffredo” from Donizetti’s *Torquato Tasso* (Rome, 1833), saying:

> No such finished music has ever been breathed before upon American air, I am persuaded. With not a fourth of the power and volume of Castellan, and none of the passion-lava of Malibran, she reaches a finer fibre of the ear than either. The quality of her voice is exceedingly sweet, and the mingled liquidness and truth of her

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118 Philip Hone, MS Diary, 19 October 1843; as quoted in Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 192.

chromatic could never have been exceeded. The ladder of harmony seemed built a round or two nearer to heaven by her delicious music.\textsuperscript{120}

The \textit{Anglo American} critic changed his opinion of Cinti-Damoreau. He confessed that he was prepared to write that “the powers of her voice had somewhat abated of their former splendour,” yet, he conveyed that “We never before heard a vocalist who used so much ornament with so little labor, nor one whose voice was more flexible, elastic, and capable of prolongation and gradual attenuation of tones.” He said that Donizetti’s aria was the “sweetest” and Artôt’s \textit{Duo Concertante} for violin and voice was “the most artistical [sic] and difficult.”\textsuperscript{121} Artôt impressed the audience with an air and variation that showcased the virtuosic cadenzas of both musicians.\textsuperscript{122}

At their second concert, Cinti-Damoreau sang an English ballad and the first-act finale from Auber’s \textit{L’ambassadrice}. The \textit{Courrier} critic cautioned that Cinti-Damoreau’s version of Auber’s opera would not resemble the one recently performed by Calvé and NOFO. He noted that Auber had made innovations “aussi grandes qu’heureuses” that Cinti-Damoreau had sung the previous April at the Paris \textit{Opéra}.\textsuperscript{123} The Damoreau-Artôt duo performed only four concerts in New York before departing for Boston, and, after returning to New York, going on to Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{120} Willis, \textit{Dashes at Life with a Free Pencil}, 62.
\textsuperscript{121} “Music and Musical Intelligence,” \textit{The Anglo American} 1, no. 26 (21 October 1843): 620.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
A correspondent for the Washington *Daily National Intelligencer* described Cinti-Damoreau in context of the New World’s perspective on music, saying

Madame DAMOREAU comes to us rather late to create any remarkable sensation, as we are not partial in this country to the live classics; but the French have a genius at *renaissance*; and there is no knowing when French women cease to be charming. She is probably the living *artist*, as a *prima donna*, and if all our dollars were abstractly fond of musical execution, she would have little to do but open her throat and her pocket. \(^{125}\)

The *Courrier* critic bemoaned the reception that American and New York audiences and journalists gave to Cinti-Damoreau and Artôt. He further explained that “les Américains du nord” only viewed Europe through the influence of England, and were only aware of continental artists if their most recent performances had been in London. \(^{126}\)

In early 1844, Ferdinand Palmo (1785–1869) opened his Italian Opera House in the refurbished bathhouse that had been previously suggested for a French theater. It was smaller in size than Niblo’s Garden, seating only one thousand people. Talent was the primary concern of New York audiences, and the *Anglo-American* critic mused that “Supposing it to consist of *all* the company who sang at Niblo’s at the close of last summer, we know that they will not draw *here*; they did not draw *there.*” \(^{127}\) To bolster the cast, Palmo hired his own “vocal star,” the French soprano Eufrasia Borghèse, who was the original Marie in Donizetti’s *La fille de régiment* when it premiered in Paris in 1840. \(^{128}\) Borghèse, also billed as Juliette Bourgeois,


\(^{128}\) Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 262.
Euphrasie, or Euphrosine, had been singing in Havana for two years before returning to New York. Her acting, like Calvé’s, was seen to compensate for the deficiencies in her voice.

When it opened in the winter of 1844, Palmo’s company presented two seasons of contemporary Italian operas by Bellini and Donizetti. On 3 February, the company opened with Bellini’s *I puritani* (Paris, 1835), with the *Herald* observing that the audience was populated by all nationalities: “We saw Italian, Spanish, French, English, German, Dutch, Russian, Pole, Turk, Mexican, alike sympathizing with the divine creations of Italian genius.” The singers, however, were not uniformly praised, and the orchestra did not offer a balanced performance and was deemed “too boisterous.”

Next, the company presented the first New York performance of Donizetti’s *Belisario* (Venice, 1836). The critics vacillated wildly in their assessment of the performance and the work. On the one hand, Borghèse sang like an alluring “siren” and the melodies contained a “sylph-like sweetness”; on the other, her upper register was described as “a scream” and the tunes to be “jiggish.”

Donizetti was variously appraised: some considered him to be “a chemical anagram [sic] of all the essences of Mozart, Rossini, and Boieldieu,” while others rejected him and dubbed him “a musical freebooter.” Undaunted, the company followed with Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Naples, 1835). With Borghèse supplanting Majocchi as the soprano, a public dispute between the two divas erupted.

The friction in the press about the two sopranos spilled over to the fourth opera presented, Bellini’s *Beatrice di Tenda* (Venice, 1833). Exacerbating the tension, the company’s director, Attilio Valtellina

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130 Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 255.


134 Majocchi had premiered the role of Lucia the previous fall at Niblo’s. Odell, *Annals*, 5, 51.
1840s), cast Majocchi, his wife, as the lead. An explosion of editorials against Palmo’s company ensued on the grounds that the public spats of the singers overshadowed the purpose of the opera, which was “to create feelings of love and good-will through the medium of the art. . . .”\textsuperscript{135} By the end of the first spring season, Palmo had lost money; he tried to reduce Borghèse’s fee from $110 to $80 a performance, but Borghèse responded by leaving New York for the promise of more money in Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{136}

From 29 April to 10 June, the bass Giuseppe de Begnis (1793–1849) coordinated the Italian Opera performances at Palmo’s. The company presented Rossini’s \textit{Il barbiere di Siviglia}, Donizetti’s \textit{Lucia di Lammermoor} and \textit{L’elisir d’amore} (Milan, 1832), and Bellini’s \textit{La sonnambula}, with \textit{L’elisir} and \textit{La sonnambula} being performed in New York in Italian. And now the environment was contentious even though Borghèse had returned and Majocchi had not.\textsuperscript{137} Before leaving America, Cinti-Damoreau returned to New York and joined the Italian Opera Company, singing the roles of Isabella in Rossini’s \textit{L’italiana in Algeri} and Rosina in \textit{Il barbiere di Siviglia}.\textsuperscript{138} For the music lesson, Cinti-Damoreau and Artôt reprised the virtuosic \textit{Duo Concertante} for voice and violin that they had performed during their concerts.

Unfortunately, quarrels broke out among the Italian singers. Calling them a “miserable clique,” the \textit{Anglo American} critic described them as a “inferior grade of singers,” who had been so consumed by bickering among themselves that they had not rehearsed their roles for \textit{Il barbiere} and therefore ruined the performance.\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{135} For more details about the dispute, see Lawrence, \textit{Strong on Music}, 259–60; \textit{Anglo American} (23 March 1844): 526; as quoted in Lawrence, \textit{Strong on Music}, 260.
\textsuperscript{136} Lawrence, \textit{Strong on Music}, 258–61.
\textsuperscript{137} Lawrence, \textit{Strong on Music}, 261–62.
\textsuperscript{139} “Palmo’s Theatre,” \textit{The Anglo American} 3, no. 12 (13 July 1844): 286.
The Italian Company at Palmo’s Theatre reunited for a fall season in 1844. Borghèse was juxtaposed with a newly arrived Italian soprano, Rosina Pico (fl. 1840s–50s). Pico debuted in Luigi Ricci’s opera Chiara di Rosenberg (Milan, 1831), and the critics quickly judged that just as “Calvé had been superseded by Borghese [sic], so was Borghese [sic] now being superseded by Pico.” Soon thereafter, the two sopranos appeared together in the New York premiere of Donizetti’s Lucrezia Borgia (Milan, 1834). The fall season concluded with revivals of La Cenerentola and I puritani.

The winter season opened and closed during January 1845. The sole opera offered was Rossini’s Semiramide (Venice, 1823). Marking yet another New York premiere, it was a critical success but failed to translate into projected spring subscriptions. Some blamed the squabbling among the singers, but more significantly, the bon ton—tired of the disruptions—withdrew their support.

Conclusion

The 1843–44 operatic season signaled the return of full-length foreign-language opera to New York City, first by NOFO and then by the Italian companies. In this second querelle between the French and Italian companies, the French company continued to demonstrate its ability to produce a cohesive and engaging operatic entertainment. The company maintained a competitive edge because it recruited high-caliber singers, orchestral players, and conductor from Paris. In addition, it presented recent operatic successes from the Paris Opéra Comique. From the accessible, tuneful works of Auber to the more harmonically focused music of Halévy,

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140 Express (18 November 1844); as quoted in Lawrence, Strong on Music, 264.
141 Lawrence, Strong on Music, 264–67.
142 Lawrence, Strong on Music, 325–27.
New Yorkers were exposed to a wide range of French musical works. Furthermore, NOFO delighted its audience with its production of Donizetti’s *La fille*, which brought the Italian composer’s work for the Parisian theater to the burgeoning theater environment of New York, which was hungry for the latest music and performers from Europe.

The four Paris-trained sopranos contributed mightily to the operatic education of New York audiences. Although they were compared both to one another and to earlier sopranos, Calvé, Castellan, Cinti-Damoreau, and Borghèse packed the theaters and concerts halls with arias sung in French and in Italian. As the *prima donna* for Rossini’s Paris operas, Cinti-Damoreau’s influence upon Calvé, Castellan, Borghèse, and all sopranos from the *Conservatoire* demonstrates the familiarity that French singers had with both French and Italian styles of singing. As for the Italian companies, they quickly learned that they had to enlist better-trained singers in order to challenge the French-trained competition. Finally, when NOFO returned in 1845, they not only continued to expand New Yorkers’ understanding of foreign-language opera by bringing back its lauded performers, but also introduced a season of an audacious and difficult genre, *grand opéra*. 
Chapter 6

The New Orleans French Opera Company in New York City, June–September 1845: Performing “Modern Operas”

In the early summer of 1845, as New Yorkers were about to experience a new style of foreign-language opera, *Anglo American* journal editor Alexander D. Paterson (?–1847) prepared his readers by saying, “Immense preparations are being made, to give on a grandiose scale the most esteemed modern operas.”¹ In another extended summer season (see table 6.1), NOFO programmed a season of major works composed by French, Italian, and German composers who had resided in Paris.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 June–15 August</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 August–24 September</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 September–10 October</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
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<tr>
<td>14–18 October</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
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Table 6.1: Chronological list of NOFO’s Northeast Tour, 1845²

New York audiences witnessed seven *grands opéras* and three *opéras comiques* that had been premiered in Paris and had become wildly popular throughout Europe from 1828 to 1841. This tour represented a shift in repertory for the company, which had previously been known only for its productions of *opéras comiques* and *vaudevilles*.

Several operas in their 1845 repertoire had not been performed in New York City with their original French text and without musical substitutions: Gaetano Donizetti’s *La favorite* (Paris, 1840); Jacques-François-Fromental-Élie Halévy’s *La Juive* (Paris, 1835) and *La reine de Chypre* (Paris, 1841); Giacomo Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable* (Paris, 1831) and *Les Huguenots*

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² Mary Grace Swift, “The Northern Tours of the Théâtre d’Orléans, 1843 and 1845,” 168–85.
(Paris, 1836); and Gioachino Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell* (Paris, 1829). This chapter focuses on the musical performance and reception of these operas, as the New York press strove to understand and educate audiences about these major European composers and their works for the Parisian stage.4

Instead of documenting the 1845 season in chronological order, I discuss the works in terms of their composers: Auber, Donizetti, Halévy, Meyerbeer, and Rossini. I begin my investigation with a discussion of Rossini and Auber, who were the first to compose in the new *grand opéra* genre. Next, I present Donizetti and Halévy, who represent the next wave of composers to cultivate the new Parisian style. I have reserved Meyerbeer’s first French operas, *Robert le diable* and *Les Huguenots*, which assimilated the various European musical styles of the 1830s, for chapter 7.

In addressing the concept of “modern opera,” the *Anglo American* critic identified it as the “grand operas” that were performed “without dialogue speaking [sic]”:5 Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable* and *Les Huguenots*; Halévy’s *La Juive* and *La reine de Chypre*; Donizetti’s *La favorite*; and Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell*. This simple description reveals only one aspect of the operas that New Yorkers were about to hear. Little did the New York critics and audience know that they would experience a decade-and-a-half evolution of large-scale Parisian opera in a single summer season.

The New York daily and weekly newspapers and journals documented their impressions,

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3 Similar to its previous tours, the company also performed plays and vaudevilles. The *New York Herald* critic observed a difference in the acting technique of the company, claiming that they “acted with a precision and a truly French grace, which from its being national and natural, finds no imitator in our English actors.” “Theatricals. The French Company at the Park,” *New York Herald*, 19 June 1845, 3.

4 For a complete list of the 1845 season, see Appendix C: List of Operas performed by the NOFO, 1843 and 1845.

which included precise musical detail and knowledge of the European musical world. The New York press provided ample space to describe the French operas and composers. In addition to performance reviews, the Anglo American editor, Alexander D. Paterson, employed “G. C.” to write “Parisian critique musicale.” In lieu of simply printing plot synopses, the latter provided biographical and critical sketches about the composers and their published works. G. C., a self-described “enthusiastic amateur,” observed a “musical fever” among the “dilettanti” and “real lovers of music.”

Note that G. C. chose to label the “dilettanti” as lovers of Italian opera, thus differentiating between two prominent musical groups in New York: those who supported the Italian opera scene versus the “true” devotees of music.

The French-language daily newspaper Courrier des États-Unis eagerly anticipated the visit of the New Orleans company, proclaiming, “Nous nous bornerons à dire que jamais une compagnie d’opéra plus complète, plus riche en talens [sic] et en charmantes actrices, ne s’est encore produite sur aucun théâtre de New-York” (We will limit ourselves to say that never yet has an opera company presented in any theater in New York more complete productions filled with more richly talented and charming actresses).

Bénédict Henry Révoil (1816–1882), a New York professor of French language and literature, provided translations of the librettos for the public. The Evening Gazette praised Révoil’s translations and recommended them to all—even those who understood French—in order to provide a complete appreciation of the works.

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8. Ibid. In his translation of La muette (dated 4 August 1845), Révoil erroneously identified the performance as a New York premiere. NOFO had, however, already performed La muette in New York fourteen years previously, 15 August 1831. I wish to thank John Koegel, who shared his copy of Révoil’s translation of La muette with me. Daniel François Esprit Auber, La muette de Portici, libretto by Eugène Scribe and Germain Delavigne, trans. B. H. Révoil (New York: Herald Book and Job Printing Office, 1845).
The orchestra that accompanied the French opera company comprised an impressive forty musicians, with some recruited from New York’s burgeoning instrumental assemblage, many of whom were members of the third Philharmonic Society. For an opera orchestra, this number was truly impressive. In the mid–1830s, the average pit orchestra at the Park Theatre totaled eighteen players. In Philharmonic: A History of New York's Orchestra, Howard Shanet has stated that pit orchestras were small because the theatres could not afford the space or the money for a larger orchestra. For special occasions, such as the performance of Montresor’s Italian opera company in 1832–33, a larger orchestra had been employed. Nevertheless, this expanded ensemble had created acoustic problems for the vocalists. Thus, the twenty-five to twenty-seven musicians who accompanied the Italian opera were criticized by the Evening Star as “rather too powerful for the size of the house.”

In addition to the augmented orchestra, the Théâtre d’Orléans company reconfigured the interior of the Park Theatre, converting a portion of the pit into special stalles numérotees that were reserved for the season. Tickets to the orchestra level were a dollar: one could sit in stalles or out on the parquette. The second- and third-tier tickets sold for fifty cents and the gallery for twenty-five cents. The tickets, then, were relatively expensive, and NOFO performances were in fact the most expensive tickets at the time. At Palmo’s Opera House, a paired vocal concert and opera burlesque was offered for twenty-five cents a ticket per person.

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11 This number of instrumentalists was more common at a Philharmonic Society concert. In 1842, the Albion reviewer observed fifty-four instrumentalists. “The Drama,” The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics and Literature 1, no. 50 (10 December 1842): 591.

12 Shanet, Philharmonic: A History of New York’s Orchestra, 64.


and a private box for four people for two dollars. At Niblo’s Garden, a ticket for an evening of music, drama, acrobats, and a concert “a la Musard” was fifty cents.\footnote{Concerts “a la Musard” refer to open-air concerts on the Champs-Elysées made popular by Philippe Musard as artistic director; see \textit{Grove Music Online}, s.v. “Musard, Philippe (Napoléon)” (by Gérard Streletski, et al.), http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/19390 (accessed 28 August 2014).} Another concert “a la Musard,” at Castle Garden, was twenty-five cents. The Bowery Amphitheatre was charging twenty-five cents for boxes and twelve and a half cents for the pit. Vauxhall Garden Saloon presented a minstrel show for “one shilling,” or twelve and a half cents.\footnote{“[Advertisements],” \textit{New York Herald}, 15 June 1845, [3].}

After two weeks of performances, Henry C. Watson, editor of the \textit{Broadway Journal}, requested that the company adjust its ticket prices.\footnote{Vera Brodsky Lawrence identifies the \textit{Broadway Journal} music critic as Henry C. Watson; see Lawrence, \textit{Strong on Music}, 290.} He suggested that it was an “\textit{absolute necessity}” (italics in the original) for the visiting French opera company to reduce the prices for the orchestra level from one dollar to fifty cents. He not only projected that attendance would increase, but also that the composition of the audience would “assume a more lively and brilliant appearance” for the “hundreds of young men” who would happily attend in the pit and not go up to the second tier.\footnote{John Dizikes and Sarah Hibberd state that the tickets were inexpensive, but a more thorough examination of New York ticketing has yet to be undertaken. Dizikes, \textit{Opera in America}, 121; Hibberd, “Grand Opera in Britain and the Americas,” 415. The quotation from Watson appears in [Henry C. Watson], “French Opera at the Park Theatre,” \textit{Broadway Journal} 1, no. 26 (28 June 1845): 410.} Watson’s plea went unheard, for he repeated it:

\begin{quote}
Although the dress circle is frequently crowded at a dollar, and the upper tier filled to overflowing at fifty cents admission, yet the doomed parquette rarely contains more than forty persons, thus proving beyond dispute the wholesomeness of the advice proffered in our last number. If the price of admission to the parquette were reduced to fifty cents, the receipts of the house would be increased
\end{quote}
from fifty to a hundred dollars per night.\textsuperscript{19}

Watson’s suggestion again went unheeded. With the exception of the 1843 tour that charged $.50 for all, the company had employed a three-tiered pricing system since they had first arrived in New York in 1827. The tiered pricing of opera entertainments had been utilized in New York at other venues as well. In December 1844, for example, Ferdinando Palmo had instituted a three-tiered pricing for his opera entertainments: first-tier and parquette for $1, second-tier for 50 cents, and private boxes for four patrons for $6.\textsuperscript{20}

Despite their pricing policy, the company attracted a fashionable and full audience, which the press observed to have been invaded by “Gallic influences.” The \textit{Evening Gazette} described the environment at the theater after the opening performance of \textit{Guillaume Tell}:

French was sung on the stage and said off the stage at such a rate, that it was delightful to get out of the theatre, and be begged for a check by a ragged urchin in ragged English. If one asked another to stand aside, the askee [\textit{sic}] thought himself bound to reply “\textit{oui monsieur},” although he knew nothing else of the language; and he who could add “avec beaucoup de plaisir,” went into unrestrained grimaces of Gallic ecstasy [\textit{sic}].\textsuperscript{21}

The \textit{Albion} reviewer also recognized that the audience was composed of French citizens or descendants:

\textsuperscript{19} [Henry C. Watson], “Musical Department. French Opera at the Park,” \textit{Broadway Journal} 2, no. 1 (12 July 1845): 11.
\textsuperscript{20} Karen Ahlquist has surmised that Ferdinand Palmo instigated the three-tiered pricing structure for his Italian Opera Company in December 1844 in order to “broaden the audience base, allowing for those who could not afford $1 as well as for those who insisted on a private box.” See Ahlquist, \textit{Democracy at the Opera}, 132.
\textsuperscript{21} “The French Opera,” \textit{The Evening Gazette}, 17 June 1845, [2].
We observe that our leading French Families are the patrons of this attempt to introduce a French Theatre. It must be a delightful treat to them, and we doubt not but it will prove attractive to our fashionables also, when novelty shall be the order of the day with the management.22

Furthermore, the *Herald* called for a more diverse group of New York patrons to attend the performances and declared that “the vivacity and grace of the French stage is proverbial, and infinitely superior to the English.”23 This statement is striking in a city that was steeped in English-speaking theater and opera.

**Rossini**

The French opera company had intended to open their season with Auber’s *Les diamants de la couronne* with soprano Julie Calvé as Caterina; however, Calvé was poorly rested after traveling.24 Instead, the company mounted Rossini’s original four-act version of *Guillaume Tell* on Monday, 16 June 1845,25 in which they promoted the new tenor Gabriel Arnaud (fl. 1810s–40s).26

By opening their tour, albeit unintentionally, with *Guillaume Tell*, the company replicated the musical experience of Parisian audiences for 1845 New Yorkers, who were perplexed by this

26 “[Announcement],” *The Evening Gazette*, 12 June 1845, [2].
new opera genre that was sung throughout, appearing “surprised, uncertain, and un plu [sic] gauche at this uninterruption of chorusses [sic], abrupt melodies, and musical beauties of a new order on this side of the Atlantic.” The Courrier des États-Unis, whose reviewer claimed to have been at the Paris premiere of Guillaume Tell, made the same observation, remarking that the New York premiere of Guillaume Tell was similar to the Parisian one—“presque fiasco.” He recounted that “le public ne commença à le comprendre, à eu découvrir, à en sentir les beautés, qu’après une étude approfondie” (the public did not begin to understand it, to discover it, to feel its beauties, until after a deepened study). He opined that this awkward premiere was the fate of many works, including Les Huguenots by Meyerbeer.

In 1829, the Parisian audience, accustomed to Rossini’s lighter style as exemplified by La gazza ladra, Il barbiere di Siviglia, and Le comte Ory, had been challenged by the new style of Guillaume Tell. In his only review of Guillaume Tell, Hector Berlioz described the qualified success of Rossini’s last operatic work.

If we consider only the testimonials that it has earned, the applause that it has called forth, and the conversions that it has made, William Tell has unquestionably had an immense success—a success that has taken the form of spontaneous admiration with some and of reflection and analysis with many others. And yet one is obliged to admit that to this glory it has not been able to add that other glory of which directors, and sometimes even authors, are more appreciative than of any other—popular success, that is, box-office success. The party of the dilettanti is hostile to William Tell and finds it cold and tiresome.

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According to Richard Osborne, the Parisian public had been “polite, the press generous, but the work itself was destined to have a somewhat chequered history.”\(^{30}\) Likewise, New Yorkers were not accustomed to the new style of opera. In 1837, the revival of *Guillaume Tell* at the Paris Opéra with Gilbert Duprez singing the role of Arnold renewed interest in the work.\(^{31}\)

Although the French version of *Guillaume Tell* had not been performed, New Yorkers had heard some of its music previously. At the Park Theatre on 24 January 1831, they were presented with Michael Rophino Lacy’s well-known pastische of Rossini’s *La Cenerentola*, in which the act 2 chorus “Quelle sauvage harmonie” and the act 3 chorus “Toi que l’oiseau” were interpolated.\(^{32}\) Next, English adaptations of arias from *Guillaume Tell* were heard in New York City at the Park Theatre on 19 September 1831.\(^{33}\)

The *Evening Gazette* critic believed that this performance of *Guillaume Tell* was the American premiere “unless it has been given at Cuba or New Orleans.”\(^{34}\) In fact, NOFO had performed the American premiere of the French adaptation on 13 December 1842 in New Orleans,\(^{35}\) where Rossini’s last opera was not as popular as Meyerbeer’s French operas. As recounted in the journal *La Lorgnette*, the New Orleans critic discussed the reception of Rossini’s music within their operatic environment:

> Guillaume Tell [*sic*] is a masterpiece still unknown among us; and, although at Paris, its performances struggle every day victoriously against the magnificent inspirations of the Huguenots and of

\(^{32}\) Graziano, *Italian Opera in English*, xxii–xxii.
\(^{33}\) Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 152n4.
\(^{34}\) “The French Opera,” *The Evening Gazette*, 17 June 1845, [2].
\(^{35}\) “[Advertisement],” *L’Abeille*, 12 December 1842, 3.
Robert, Meyerbeer always reigns without rival on our stage. . . .

By 1845, Rossini was no longer actively composing in Paris and was living in Bologna. In the *Anglo American*’s “Portrait” of Rossini, G. C. began with a proverb acknowledging Rossini’s position as a composer—“A tout Seigneur tout honneur” (Honor to whom honor is due). He further provided a description of Rossini’s training, travels, and previous works. Nevertheless, not all New York critics showered praise upon Rossini’s last opera. The *Evening Gazette* provided a more negative assessment of *Guillaume Tell*, saying “we do not give this opera the commanding position among Rossini’s compositions which many, indeed most, seem to think it deserves.” The *Anglo American* critic explained that “it must be confessed that Rossini’s wonderful effort cannot be enjoyed nor appreciated at once.” He highlighted the well-known overture, saying that it was “beautifully given and enthusiastically received,” and he pointed out that if the complete score had been as recognizable as the symphonic opening, the opera would have been more successful. The overture had been recently performed at the second concert of the Philharmonic Society of New-York on 18 February 1843. New York diarist and musical dilettante George Templeton Strong (1820–1875) attended and wrote that the

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40 One of the earliest performances of the *Guillaume Tell* overture was during H. H. Gear’s Grand Concert at Masonic Hall in May 1831. The overture began the second half and “seemed to transport the audience, for it was followed by loud bursts of applause; and was enthusiastically encored by every voice.” Germanicus, “H.H. Gear’s Grand Concert at the Masonic Hall,” *The Euterpeiad; and Album of Music, Poetry & Prose* 2, no. 3 (1 June 1831): 31.
overture was positively received and “threw the audience into convulsions.”

The critics from the *Anglo American* and the *Evening Gazette* highlighted *Guillaume Tell*’s ensembles. The reviewer at the *Evening Gazette* praised the following pieces: in the first act, the duet “Ah! Mathilde, idole de mon âme,” for Tell and Arnold; in the second act, the trio “Ses jours qu'ils ont osé proscrire,” with Tell, Arnold, and Walter Furst; and the *petite duo* for Tell and Jemmy during the act 4 finale. Additionally, the *Anglo American* reviewer commended the act 2 duet “Oui, vous l'arrachez à mon âme,” the act 2 finale, the “prayer” of Guillaume Tell, and Arnold’s aria “Asile héréditaire.”

The company’s opening performance was riddled with illness and mishaps; soprano Marie Casini (fl. 1840s) and tenor Paul Coeuriot (fl. 1840s) suffered from sudden and violent sore throats, and a chorus of women entered at the wrong moment. The *Courrier* dubbed it “la Soirée aux Accidens [sic].” The *New York Herald* stated that the performances “failed to command that success which it would have deserved.” The *Evening Gazette* did not consider the French troupe to be adequate, stating that the work was “beyond the power of the company.” Henry Watson at the *Broadway Journal* never mentioned the opening gaffes, but he described the performance as “good,” the scenery as “beautiful,” and wrote that “due attention” was paid to “time and locality.”

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44 Ibid.
Daniel Auber, like Rossini, introduced new musical elements into his works at the Paris Opéra-Comique and Opéra, where, beginning in 1825, he and Scribe produced thirty-eight works in forty years. This summer in New York, the company performed three opéras comiques, Les diamants de la couronne, Le domino noir, and L’ambassadrice, and one grand opéra, La muette de Portici. Auber’s operas were identified as being both more “popular” than those by other composers and the most accessible to the audience.

Auber’s Les diamants de la couronne was the first work to be reprised, featuring Julie Calvé in her celebrated role as Queen Caterina. The critics praised Auber’s music as “singularly beautiful,” as well as “lively, sparkling, and without being common à la portée de tout le monde” (within reach of everyone). The entire work held the audience’s attention, engulfing them as it “breathes a soul of joyousness from beginning to end, and one that transfixes itself throughout the auditory, malgré eux” (in spite of themselves). The New York Herald observed the performance of Les Diamants de la Couronne on 20 June 1845:

A highly attractive cordon of beauty adorned the dress circle, nor was the parquette wanting in a group of the young, ardent, and enthusiastic of the other sex, who listened with critical acumen, and applauded most impartially—because they couldn’t help it.

The New York Herald critic praised Auber’s melodic approach; he highlighted the act 1 duet “L’heureuse conquête! Le joyeux repas,” between Catarina and Don Henrique, whose vocal

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49 “Park Theatre,” The Evening Gazette, 5 August 1845, [2].
lines “most tastefully unite in thirds and sixths” (see example 6.1).54

Example 6.1: “L’heureuse conquête! Le joyeux repas,” duet for Catarina and Don Henrique, from Les diamants de la couronne, act 1, mm. 1–12

He also appreciated the act 2 bolero “Dans les défilés des montagnes” between Catarina and Diana, which produced “a piquant effect,” and the act 3 cavatine, “À toi j’ai recours.”

The *New York Herald* critic ventured to say that *Les diamants* was “the best of Auber’s recent operas” but was not a part of “profound and classical music.” Yet he considered it a worthy entertainment:

[It] is of a nature that will not be denied sympathy, and cannot be confounded with the insipidity of common place, or the tiresomeness of stale truism, or the pomposity of affected grandeur, or the absurdity of unmeaning eccentricity.

Henry Watson concurred that the opera was “a series of brilliant thoughts, worked out in a masterly manner.” He acknowledged Auber’s style as “original” and that it appealed to listeners because his “melodies are indeed ravishingly beautiful; it is richly harmonised [sic], and its distinguishing characteristic is never lost sight of.”

Even though *Le domino noir* was the success of the 1843 season, the company programmed it only once during the 1845 tour. Perhaps because no introduction or explanation was needed, only Henry Watson reviewed the work and expressed that Auber was a “great and true artist,” who was underappreciated outside of Paris. He predicted that the “lovers of music in this country” would soon make him a “familiar household god.” *Le domino noir* was acknowledged as successful, “with delicious melodies, and clever concerted pieces, whose quaintness and originality possess a charm, which increases in power the more familiar the hearer becomes with the music.” Furthermore, Watson extolled the instrumentation as “light,

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56 Ibid.
sparkling, novel and ingenious, and [it] was executed by the orchestra in a manner worthy of its excellence.”

Toward the end of the season, NOFO performed Auber’s grand opéra La muette de Portici. In this work, Auber had constructed a large-scale opera in a new style for the Paris community. Henry Watson recalled that all of Europe was “spell-bound by the force of Auber’s genius,” and that “[La muette’s] melodies became at once, as it were, the property of every people. They were upon every lip; they were drummed upon every conceivable instrument, from the Grand Piano down to the Pandean Pipes or the Hurdy-Gurdy.” As discussed in chapter 3, the story of the mute girl from Portici was well known. However, the Evening Gazette critic believed that this instance was the first time that New Yorkers had the occasion to hear La muette without it being “mangled” or “disjointed.” His perception was understandable, since fourteen years had passed since NOFO had performed La muette in 1831. Furthermore, in the intervening years, New Yorkers had seen the work in many guises, from Henry Milner’s musical drama Masaniello to Fenella’s ballet scenes presented by touring dancers. The Anglo American praised the performance of La muette and its longevity on the stage, saying that “its melodies have not lost anything of their primitive charm, sweetness, and vigor.”

The Gazette critic looked forward to the original aria that had been replaced by Kenney’s interpolated song for Masaniello, “My Sister Dear,” which he knew was from another Auber

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59 “Musical Department,” Broadway Journal 2, no. 5 (9 August 1845): 76.
60 “Park Theatre,” The Evening Gazette, 29 July 1845, [2].
61 Madame Celeste performed the role of Fenella in the dramatic production of Masaniello at the Park Theatre in 1829–30. Swift, Belles and Beaux on Their Toes, 62–63.
opera (see figure 6.1).\textsuperscript{63} James Kenney (1780–1849) had successfully borrowed the melody, “Pourquoi pleurer,” from another Auber \textit{opéra comique}, \textit{Le concert à la cour} (Paris, 1824).

Figure 6.1: James Kenney, “My Sister Dear,” \textit{Masaniello} (after Pictorial Sheet Music Collection, American Antiquarian Society).

\textsuperscript{63} “Park Theatre,” \textit{The Evening Gazette}, 2 August 1845, [2].
It was often included as an interlude, but in the three-act version that was performed by English tenor John Sinclair, the song was included in act 2.

Henry Watson was particularly enamored by Auber’s choruses, highlighting “Venez amis” from the act 2 finale. In addition, he was captivated with the instrumentation at the close of act 2. He considered the concluding solos by the clarinet, flute, and bassoon to be of “an extreme beauty [that] has rarely, if ever, been equalled by any writer.” The Gazette critic lauded Auber’s incorporation of brass and woodwind bands where, in his opinion, the composer included them “without deafening the hearer.”

The patriotic theme of La muette remained apparent to Watson, who found the inclusion of the “Barcarole” to be effective in depicting the plight of the local fishermen:

In the public highway a conspiracy is being formed; man whispers to man, and a plot to overturn a powerful government is purposed and decided, while to all appearance the fishermen and their wives are merely amusing themselves, dancing and singing a light-hearted Barcarole. The bitter hatred and determined revenge, mingled with the assumed gaiety and the reckless merriment, are expressed by the music with a fidelity perfectly startling. While listening, we are one of the people; their wrongs are ours, and we feel an intense fearfulness lest they should be overheard, and their noble undertaking be disconcerted. Again, in the last Act, where Masaniello, delirious from poison administered by Pietro, rushes into the midst of the people, and in the interval of his madness chants forth the Barcarole, whose hidden meaning was the watchword of the revolution—how masterly a thought! how metaphysically correct.

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65 Daniel Auber, Songs, duets, concerted pieces, and choruses, in Masaniello, or, The dumb girl of Portici: a grand opera, in three acts (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1833), 6.
66 “Musical Department,” Broadway Journal 2, no. 5 (9 August 1845): 76.
67 “Park Theatre,” The Evening Gazette, 5 August 1845, [2].
68 “Musical Department,” Broadway Journal 2, no. 5 (9 August 1845): 76.
Watson pointed out the power of music to convey Scribe and Auber’s overarching message to their audiences. In his address, upon being elected to the Académie Française on 28 January 1836, Scribe described the importance of song-writers to culture, referring to them as the “auxiliary of history,” who embody the spirit of the people through music.\footnote{Letellier, Auber: Man and His Music, 31.}

In *La muette* and *Guillaume Tell*, Auber and Rossini, respectively, began the transformation of the Parisian stage with the musico-dramatic characteristics that constituted *grand opéra*: the serious—often populist—subject matter, the four- or five-act evening, the enlarged role of the chorus, and the ballet. New Yorkers heard these operas juxtaposed against the works of Donizetti and Halévy, which would attempt to achieve popular and critical successes for the Parisian stage.

**Donizetti**

The French company reprised Donizetti’s Parisian *opéra comique,*\footnote{Donizetti’s first work for the Paris Opéra was *Les martyrs*, a reworking of *Poliuto* with Scribe’s French text. See William Ashbrook, *Donizetti and His Operas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 428.} *La fille du régiment,* and premiered his *grand opéra* *La favorite.*\footnote{The American premiere of *La favorite* took place in New Orleans, 9 February 1843. See Loewenberg, *Annals*, col. 811–12.} Donizetti belonged to the second generation of popular Italian composers who came to reside in Paris after Rossini. In his mini-biography of Donizetti in the *Anglo American,* G. C. opened his article by quoting Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (c. 35–c. 100): “Cito scribendo non fit ut bene scribatur, bene scribendo fit ut cito” (Write quickly and you will never write well; write well, and you will soon write quickly). G. C. used this epigraph to characterize Donizetti, who was hurriedly turning out many works that were not always of the highest quality. He recounted that Donizetti’s hastily written music had a
disproportionate amount of flaws among the “splendid morceaux” and “charming melodies.”

One striking flaw was that “[i]n spite of himself he remembers so perfectly the melodies of Rossini, Halevy [sic], Herold, and others, that he cannot prevent himself from being inspired by them occasionally.” G. C. concluded by saying that “Donizetti cannot aspire to the First Rank, but posterity will place him among the very best of the Second, of composers.”

The New York critics’ assessment of La favorite paralleled the above assessment. Although a popular success with New York audiences, the critics differed about its worth. The New York Herald’s reviewer enjoyed the performance, describing the company’s performance as “une éclatante revanche.” He praised the choruses, “one or two romances,” and the fourth-act finale, singling out the third act as “most vociferously encored.”

The critic at the Anglo American praised La favorite and predicted that it “will make a furore.” The Albion critic was also pleased by the performance and singled out the choruses, explicitly the first-act “Doux Zephyr sois tu fidele” and third-act “Oh que du moins notre mepris qu’il brave.”

Watson at the Broadway Journal was more critical of the opera and did not agree with the audience, which “encored it upon each occasion.” Watson reserved his most negative remarks for the instrumentation, which he considered “very poor and thin” except when “some passages of exceeding beauty relieved what else would have been monotonous insipidity.” He enjoyed the “charming” second-act quartet, but disliked the ending, which he described as “strained” and “inharmonious.” The third-act chorus of Signori was “characteristic, spirited, and full of point,” but the finales were dismissed as “chiefly noticeable for great noise and want of

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clearness.”

Although Vincent Giroud has argued that *La favorite* displays “impressive stylistic unity,” its combination of Italian and French musical approaches troubled New York critics of 1845. Although he had praised the performance, the *Herald* critic dismissed Donizetti’s attempt to blend the Italian and French styles, stating:

> The principal defect is want of unity, an Italian air precedes a French chorus, and a French romance follows an Italian duet. But on the whole, the melodies are happily formed, and the instrumentation is generally judicious, with the exception of a too frequent use of the *piccolo* [sic] in the *stretti*, which decidedly is of very bad taste.

This critic astutely identified the opera’s compositional background. In fact, Donizetti borrowed much of the work from an unfinished *opera semiseria*, *Adelaide* (begun at Naples, 1834), and *L’ange de Nisida* (written for the Théâtre de la Renaissance, Paris, 1839). As the critic observed, the French-influenced works were found in the solo numbers.

A few weeks later, the *Herald* critic was again critical of Donizetti’s music. He stated:

> “La Favorite” attracted, last evening, a very numerous audience, with whom this opera really appears to be a great favorite. Of all the operas brought out by the French Company, this has the least intrinsic value, and it might be called a musical sacrilege to class it amongst “Robert la Diable,” “Les Huguenots,” “La Juive,” or “La Muette.” . . . The music does not possess a clearly pronounced character. It is neither French nor Italian, but a thing that is neither “man nor fish”—a kind of practical amalgam that we would like

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77 Ibid.
to be abolished. Donizetti then probably thought that all that was necessary to write a French opera was to introduce a few quadrilles, tunes set to French words, a dreamy romance and a noisy and cacophonical instrumentation. . . . We sadly miss in the Favorite the Principal ingredient of French music—originality of rythme [sic]. All French composers, even those great bores the composer of romances, try at least to introduce some new rythme [sic] into their effusions, although they seldom succeed in bitting [sic] originality on the nail, but not infrequently tumble, head uppermost, into the pool of eccentricity. But in the Favorite we cannot find the smallest attempt in that direction, with the exception of the martial air at the end of the first act. Everything is hackneyed, so cut after fore-existing patterns, that we could only compare it to the German nursery tale of the old coat, that was sold every year as new, by turning the inside out on every Christmas eve. The success, therefore, of the Favorite, in New York, over that of the above opera [sic], is a matter of regret, although not of surprise; for the musical taste in this country is formed by the Italian school, to which it strictly belongs, although it wants to pass itself off for something else, like the wolf in the sheep’s skin. Some of the melodies, however, are very pretty, and there is in them, as nearly in all melodies of Donizetti, much feeling—which cannot fail to move every heart in good tune.—Another reason of its success is the round manner in which it is performed. The bone and sinew of the company have leading parts, and all of them deport themselves remarkably.  

The company then reprised the opéra comique La fille du régiment. The performance was a success and concluded “amidst loud and protracted applause.”  

Although he believed that Donizetti paled in comparison to “the quaintness of Auber,” Watson at the Broadway Journal identified La fille as Donizetti’s particularly French work, where “there is a continued flow of delicious melody, varied and original in its character; the concerted pieces also exhibit an unusual degree of excellence, and the instrumentation is of a higher order of merit, being more richly and variously harmonized.” In contrast to his review of La favorite, the New York

83 “Musical Department,” Broadway Journal 2, no. 3 (26 July 1845): 41.
Herald critic was keen on hearing the vivandière’s “Salut à la France,” which he described as one of the “most popular and exciting songs ever written.”

Halévy

New York critics and audiences had heard little music by Halévy. In addition to the 1836 “Englished” adaptations of La Juive, Italian tenor Cirillo Antognini had sung several of Halévy’s arias during concerts in 1842–43. Similar to their rating of Donizetti, the New York critics did not endorse Halévy as a “first rank” composer, but did concede that he was a “genius and learned musician.” Although it was known that he was a professor at the Conservatoire de Paris, they offered conditional approbation of his compositional skills. Their primary concern was with Halévy’s harmonies and instrumentation. The Herald critic vacillated between considering Halévy “a genius” and a “great man” to being a “noisy instrumentalist” and “too studied.” He never disavowed Halévy’s technical skill but characterized his work as having a “very scientific orchestration . . . a small and common picture in a large and costly frame.”

Despite the criticism surrounding Halévy’s music, the critics enjoyed La Juive in some

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85 The drama of Halévy’s La Juive had been premiered in New York in 1836. Two versions of La Juive were performed at the Park Theatre and the Bowery Theatre in March. At the Park, they performed Planché’s version, which was performed at Drury Lane and included music by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Cherubini, Auber, Caraffa, Rossini, and Bishop—none by Halévy. The Bowery Theatre was performing another version of La Juive by Moncrieff. The rivalry between the two houses was competitive, and they even programmed the work on the same nights. It was noted that the Bowery production was more elaborate and more successful than at the Park. That summer, La Juive was reprised at Park Theatre. See Odell, Annals, 4, 61, 66.
86 Lawrence, Strong on Music, 170; “Concert of Madame Lagare and Monsieur Miro,” The Albion 2, no. 44 (4 November 1843): 547.
87 “Park Theatre – La Juive,” The Evening Gazette, 17 July 1845, [2].
manner. The Albion and the Anglo American critics were so enamored of the mise en scène that they made the claim that it was a “magnificent spectacle”\(^90\) and “a triumph of the art”\(^91\) unlike any other production seen in America. Watson at the Broadway Journal held up the production as an “imposing” “show piece.” He stated that “we doubt if it has ever been equalled upon the American stage.”\(^92\) The Anglo American critic further verified that the mise en scène was close to what had been seen in Paris or one of the larger French cities.\(^93\) The Courrier des États-Unis highlighted the impressive scenery and authentic costumes for La Juive and declared that the opening procession was “le plus magnifique spectacle qui se soit produit sur la scène” (the most magnificent spectacle that was produced on the stage).\(^94\) The Gazette wrote that “From first to last, every stage appointment was finished even to minutiae.”\(^95\) The Albion critic counseled the Park Theatre management to study the French company’s effects in order to emulate them in their own productions.\(^96\)

With regard to the music, every act was praised, from the gradiose procession and drinking chorus in the first act to the third-act banquet and the fifth-act finale.\(^97\) The critic at the Anglo American appreciated the instrumentation more than other critics; he agreed that Halévy’s melodies were not always “natural” or “spontaneous,” but that he had created some “inspired” beauties.\(^98\) The Herold’s critic praised La Juive as Halévy’s best work, in which the composer

\(^91\) “The Drama,” The Albion 4, no. 29 (19 July 1845): 347.
\(^92\) “Musical Department,” Broadway Journal 2, no. 4 (2 August 1845): 58.
\(^95\) “Park Theatre - La Juive,” The Evening Gazette, 17 July 1845, [2].
\(^96\) “The Drama,” The Albion 4, no. 29 (19 July 1845): 347.
relied more on “inspiration” than on “science.” Special approval was given to two tenor arias, Éléazar’s act 1 aria, “Oh! Ma fille chérie,” and his act 4 aria, “Rachel, quand du Seigneur.”

The Gazette critic considered the recitative “too long and heavy” and the instrumentation both “very noisy” and “without light and shade, bursting out in heavy unbroken masses of sound.” He singled out the use of piccolo and trombone in many recent compositions as “destroying the comfort of the audience and oppressing the singer.” Nonetheless, the Gazette critic appreciated the instrumentation supporting the opening and drinking choruses. In the fourth act, he found the instrumentation for the woodwind band to be “delicious” and “managed with skill worthy of Mozart.” He also credited the use of the “bassetto or corno anglaise” as a redeeming instrument in the orchestra, and praised the English horn introduction by Señor de Ribas (fl. 1840s–50s) to the fourth-act tenor aria as having been performed with “great feeling and purity of tone.”

The press also drew a comparison between Meyerbeer and Halévy. The New York Herald’s reviewer did not consider Halévy’s compositions to be of the same caliber as Meyerbeer’s. He observed that the sensation that La Juive caused in Paris was equal to that for Robert le diable and Les Huguenots.

We do not directly charge him with having imitated Meyerbeer, but we find in all his works a strong inclination to produce similar, if not the same effects, but different means. We find the same attempt of blending the classic with the romantic—but with, the

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101 “Park Theatre – La Juive,” The Evening Gazette, 24 July 1845, [2].
103 The New York Herald critic dismissed the praise from the Gazette Musicale as “puff,” because M. Schlesinger, the editor of the journal, was also the also the editor of the editions of Halévy’s operas.
difference, that Meyerbeer succeeded in giving it a compact unity, where on the contrary with Halévy, the line of demarcation is everywhere visible. His classical passages are monotonous without being romantic—and the romantic are eccentric, without being classical. The reproach of eccentricity has likewise been made against Meyerbeer, but he always finds sufficient excuse in the incidents of the plot—as, for instance in Robert le Diable; but Halévy’s eccentricity suddenly springs up where it is least expected, and least in its place.  

Furthermore the critic contended that *La Juive’s* success in Paris was buoyed solely by the “dazzling and unequalled” *mise en scène*. He justified this statement by recounting that the work was not successful in Germany and the smaller cities in France, where the full operatic experience was not possible. The *Courrier des États-Unis* was always mindful of the criticism in the other newspapers and journals and hoped “le prétentieux critique du *Herald*” would have more respect for Halévy as one of “les grands maîtres.”

Henry Watson at the *Broadway Journal* wrote the most critical assessment of Halévy’s talent. He disputed the *Courrier’s* account that Halévy should be considered a great composer. Watson concurred with the other critics that Halévy’s melodies were more studied than inspired and relayed that Halévy’s music had been labeled as “heavy and labored” outside of Paris. He conceded that there were some beautiful moments in *La Juive*. Nevertheless, he added that they were so scant that they did not make “the cumbersome whole the less endurable.” Watson echoed the sentiment that Halévy’s instrumentation was “noise” and believed his application of the orchestra was of the “worst possible school” and never allowed the ear to “repose.” To illustrate his point, Watson praised Auber, Hérold, and Meyerbeer, whose “musical chiaro oscuro

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105 Ibid.
“[sic]” was well-balanced and appealing, likening their works to the landscapes of the Italian Baroque painter Salvator Rosa (1615–1673).107

After their residency at the Park Theatre, the company moved to Niblo’s Theatre for an additional month. Their only premiere was Halévy’s third grand opera, La reine de Chypre. Similar to that in La Juive, the visual spectacle impressed New Yorkers; as the Herald reported:

> It would require a lengthened description to convey any idea of the magnificent, gorgeous, and costly dresses; nothing like them was ever witnessed in New York before; the armor of Mr. Garry for instance. The scenery was beautifully designed, indeed, the whole piece is well worthy of a visit; and Americans should not forget that the performance consists entirely of singing, so that a knowledge of the French language is not necessary to fully enjoy the delight afforded by the music of this popular spectacle.108

The Herald critic, however, was not flattering with his assessment of the music:

> . . . [W]e could only repeat the remarks we have made on a former occasion in speaking of this composer. Much science, little melody, very much noise, very little inspiration, much ponderosity, little grace, very much ennui, and very little of we don’t know what.

While some critics were unimpressed by the opera’s “long and scientific score,” the Anglo American critic admitted that the music would appeal to “artists and learned musicians.” He valued the work but knew that New York’s “million will like a little more spontaneity, more animation, and natural melodies.”109

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Conclusion

Assessing the summer’s entertainments, the Albion critic determined that the performances of NOFO benefited New Yorkers and were of a “higher tone calculated to improve the public taste.” The reviewer considered the theater’s ability to influence culture to be a worthy endeavor and commended the efforts as “progressive improvements that are almost imperceptibly taking place in dramatic representations.” He also judged that it was the joint responsibility of both the press and the theaters to educate the “[p]ublic to the beautiful in art . . . for managers are too frequently blind to their true interest, and will, at times, substitute worthless novelty for that which is alone the real attraction even with ‘the million’.” He regarded the programming at the Park Theatre integral to the “formation of a fine theatrical taste.”

Thus, nearly twenty years after the first Italian and French opera seasons in New York, we still find a New York critic advocating—and educating his readers on—foreign-language opera as a desired cultural fixture.

In volume I of her study of the musical aspects of George Templeton Strong’s diaries, Vera Brodsky Lawrence summarized the performances and reception of NOFO’s 1845 tour and judged that, except for the New York Herald writer, the critics were “running out of evaluative steam as the season progressed.” However, having looked at additional sources, I would argue that the press offered a rich commentary about the works. The New York press was invested in describing the works to their readers, and G. C. offered biographical information about and impressions of the non-French composers that were heard.

Moreover, there is an obvious tinge of patriotism in the writings of G. C., the “Parisian critique musicale” at the Anglo American. He noted with ultranationalistic sentiment that

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111 I was able to draw from ten sources whereas Lawrence’s contribution was based on only four.
Rossini, Donizetti, and Meyerbeer had adjusted their musical styles in the belief that the French language was more suited to dramatic and lyric expression in opera.

We shall conclude with a single remark. Rossini, Meyerbeer, Donizetti, after having obtained the most marked success in Italy, have all three come to establish themselves in France. Instead of the soft Tuscan language, they have preferred the French idiom as better adapted to lyric expression. They have more or less changed their style, and, submitting themselves much to the French taste, they have arrived at the highest degree of perfection which each of them is able to reach. This is glory for France, and in our quality of a Frenchman, we have pleasure in noting it. Our national pride will be pardoned if, we add that it is to a French Company that America owes the knowledge of “Guillaume Tell,” “Robert le Diable,” and “Les Huguenots.”

He proclaimed that NOFO brought a sense of French pride to New York through the operas of these non-French composers.

Curiously, the *Anglo American* editor, Alexander D. Paterson, printed a response to this article:

> We give free utterance to our valued correspondent’s concluding remark, because it contains a praise-worthy expression of his *amor patria*, but we would not be understood entirely to coincide with him in his deductions, from some of which, indeed, we certainly dissent.

Thus, we find Paterson distancing himself from the French patriotic bravado of G. C., which suggests that either he disputed the praise for the French musical traditions and/or did not agree about the caliber of NOFO. This distance will be widened in connection with the merits of

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113 Ibid.
Gabriel Arnaud, the company’s new tenor.

The 1845 summer season by NOFO deserves greater notice in the annals of New York operatic history. For the first time, New York critics were afforded the opportunity to experience the “modern operas” that had been produced in Paris, the capital of the European operatic scene; they were able to formulate their own assessments of those operas based on unabridged performances by NOFO. In one summer, New York critics and audiences heard and viewed the new melodic, harmonic, scenic, and structural changes that had been evolving in Paris since 1828. The early instigators of change were honored and assessed; Rossini was honored as “First Rank,” though his last opera, *Guillaume Tell*, was not uniformly praised, and Auber’s *grand opéra La muette* was hailed as an exemplary work that represented the populace through music. The more recent generation of composers from Paris was also closely scrutinized. New York audiences considered Donizetti’s works a success, but the critics disparaged his attempts at melding the French and Italian styles. Critics found fault with Halévy for his difficult musical harmonies but lavished praise (for the most part) upon *La Juive*. As for Meyerbeer, whose operas were being performed in New York for the first time, we will discuss them in some detail in chapter 7.
Chapter 7

Meyerbeer in New York: “How, therefore, could New York have remained behind?”

During the 1845 summer season, New Yorkers had the unusual circumstance of being able to hear not just one grand opéra by Giacomo Meyerbeer, but two grands opéras within a three-month period. Until then, Meyerbeer’s operatic works had been performed in New York only as English pastiches or excerpts in vocal concerts. Although NOFO presented other French grands opéras by Auber, Donizetti, Halévy, and Rossini, Meyerbeer’s two earliest French masterpieces attracted the most attention in the New York press. Because of Meyerbeer’s vast international fame, critics evaluated the composer, Robert le diable, and Les Huguenots closely.

Robert le diable was a triumph after it premiered at the Paris Opéra on 21 November 1831. Meyerbeer strengthened his international musical reputation with his eleventh opera, which was the first successful opera production after the tumultuous July Revolution in the newly decorated Paris Opéra. The Parisian opera audience—composed of légitimistes and Orléanistes—was reunited in “rapt appreciation.” Librettists Eugène Scribe and Germain Delavigne reframed this Faustian story within a French legend and portrayed the devil as confronted by a moral dilemma. Before long, Robert le diable influenced Parisian culture in

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1 “French Opera,” New York Herald, 10 July 1845, 2.
3 Sandy Petrey, “Robert le diable and Louis-Philippe the King,” in Reading Critics Reading: Opera and Ballet Criticism from the Revolution to 1848, ed. Mary Ann Smart and Roger Parker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 141.
4 Sarah Hibberd, “Cette diablerie philosophique: Faust Criticism in Paris c. 1830,” in Reading Critics Reading, 117.
contemporary literature, the visual arts, and even horticulture. The opera enjoyed continued success on the stage as well, achieving 758 performances through 1893.

Meyerbeer followed the extraordinary triumph of *Robert le diable* with *Les Huguenots* (1836), a historical opera based on the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of 1572. Meyerbeer forged a collaborative relationship with composer and librettist Eugene Scribe. Conventionally, the opera house had contracted with the librettist prior to the composer. Meyerbeer, however, interacted with and influenced Scribe in the development of characters and scenes.

By 1845, New Yorkers were eager to hear these two masterpieces. It had been fourteen years since the premiere of *Robert le diable* and nine years since the premiere of *Les Huguenots* in Paris. In this chapter, I discuss the performances and reception of both operas in New York City from their initial abridged performances in 1834 to the culmination of their eventual complete performances in 1845 by the New Orleans French Opera Company. I conclude with the New York press’s assessment of Meyerbeer’s compositional practices and legacy.

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5 Writers Honoré de Balzac, Alexandre Dumas (père), and George Sand refer to *Robert* in their works. Painters Edgar Dégas and François-Gabriel Lepaulle offer visual responses to the work. Most uniquely, a dark purple *rosa centifolia* with a green center was named *Robert le Diable*. Mark Everist, “The Name of the Rose: Meyerbeer’s *opéra comique, Robert le Diable,*” *Revue de Musicologie* 80 (1994): 212–13.


10 The New Orleans French Opera Company had been performing *Robert le diable* and *Les Huguenots* as part of its resident repertoire since 1835 and 1839, respectively.
Robert le diable: “How, therefore, could New York have remained behind?”

The English- and French-language press enthusiastically anticipated the New Orleans French Opera Company’s New York premiere of Robert le diable in 1845. The Evening Gazette claimed “the whole town will be curious to see this composition.” The self-conscious critic from the New York Herald was chagrined that New Yorkers had not seen the complete French version of Robert by flatly declaring:

The fame of this wonderful Opera—unquestionably the greatest and grandest work of the age, with regard to the production of novel and entirely original musical effects—has spread ad ultimum Thule, and the sensation it has everywhere made is without a parallel. How, therefore, could New York have remained behind?

The Herald’s critic hailed the forthcoming performance as “an important event in the musical annals of New York” and likened it to the international achievements of Mozart’s Don Giovanni (Prague, 1787) and Weber’s Der Freischütz (Berlin, 1821).

The theater for the New York premiere of Robert le diable was filled to capacity. As shown in figure 7.1, the Park Theatre promoted the production by stating:

This Opera which was Performed for over 200 Consecutive Nights, at the Theatre of the Royal Academy of Music in Paris, is got up in a style of Unsurpassed Grandeur, no care and expense having been spared, in order to render it worthy of the public patronage.

12 “French Opera,” The Evening Gazette, 1 July 1845, [2].
15 The New York premiere of Mozart’s Don Giovanni was on 23 May 1826 by the Manuel García Troupe. See Nelson, “The First Italian Opera Season in New York City,” 266–74. The New York German-language premiere of Weber’s Der Freischütz was 22 January 1842 by a German company composed of members from the local German community. See Lawrence, Strong on Music, 165–66.
Figure 7.1: Broadside for the third performance of *Robert le diable*, 9 July 1845 (after TCS 65 [Park Theatre], Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University).
The writer from the *Anglo American* described the Park Theatre as “crammed to suffocation” and complimented the New Orleans company’s production for “a style of splendour quite unknown before in New York.”\(^\text{16}\) The reviewer from the *Evening Post* noted that “Every part of the house . . . was filled; the first tier almost exclusively by ladies.”\(^\text{17}\) The critic from the *Courrier des États-Unis* also acknowledged the fashionable audience of hundreds of “les femmes belles et élégantes.”\(^\text{18}\) The French critic vividly described the opening-night atmosphere:

> In spite of a stifling heat, all this immense audience remained there, for nearly five hours, forgetting itself in front of this magnificent spectacle, at the heart of this harmony by turns joyous and moving, celestial and infernal.\(^\text{19}\)

The New York press acknowledged the opera’s length, challenging music, and elaborate staging. The *Anglo-American* writer stated enthusiastically that “This opera, the longest and


\(^{17}\) “The French Opera,” *The Evening Post* 18, 3 July 1845, 2.

\(^{18}\) Young women were a significant portion of the audience. The *New York Herald* observed the performance of *Les Diamants de la Couronne* on 20 June 1845: “A highly attractive cordon of beauty adorned the dress circle, nor was the parquette wanting in a group of the young, ardent, and enthusiastic of the other sex, who listened with critical acumen, and applauded most impartially—because they couldn’t help it.” See “Theatricals,” *New York Herald*, 22 June 1845, 2; “Théâtre [sic] du Park.—Robert le Diable,” *Courrier des États-Unis* 18, no. 54 (3 July 1845): 243. For more information on the participation of women in New York theater audiences, see Adrienne Fried Block, “Matinee Mania, or the Regendering of Nineteenth-Century Audiences in New York City,” *Nineteenth-Century Music* 31, no. 3 (Spring 2008): 193–216.

\(^{19}\) “En dépit d’une chaleur étouffante, tout cet immense auditoire est demeuré là, durant près de cinq heures, s’oubliant lui-même devant ce magnifique spectacle, au sein de cette harmonie tour-à-tour joyeuse et pathétique, céleste et infernale.” “Théâtre [sic] du Park.—Robert le Diable,” *Le Courrier des États-Unis* 18, no. 54 (3 July 1845): 243.
most difficult ever produced in this city, is the most attractive and perfect that can be seen.”

The critic from the Albion gushed, “The getting up of the opera, [sic] is perfectly unexceptionable; scenery, costumes and decorations all are in keeping; and as a mere spectacle, will doubtless attract large audiences.” He further reminded New Yorkers of the unsatisfying British adaptation performed by the Woods in 1834 and contrasted that version to the “superior” performance by the Théâtre d’Orléans Company, which “richly merit[s] the support of every person of taste in the city.”

The Herald writer was also in awe of the “great length” and “extreme complication” of the opera and its music, and discounted the possibility of shortening it without “serious injury to the work.” Furthermore, he remarked derogatorily about the English attitude toward Meyerbeer:

The grandeur and heavenly beauty of the music has universally been acknowledged, if we except that eminently musical country yclept England, which prefers Balfe and Sir Henry Bishop to Meyerbeer, and strange to say has not yet exhausted its budget of abuse and hard names applied in no slight measure to the author of the Huguenots.

This Herald reviewer disdained the modifications that English composers had made to Meyerbeer’s work and belittled London audiences for preferring them.

The New York press analyzed Robert’s Faustian story only superficially. Watson articulated the prevailing ideas toward the story:

The plot of the Opera is purely mystical, and is rendered still more

21 “The Drama. Park Theatre [sic].—French Opera,” The Albion 4, no. 27 (5 July 1845): 323.
23 Ibid.
mystical by a want of clearness in the working out. It is evidently designed after the plan of the ancient *mysteries* or *morality*es so much in vogue some three hundred years since. The author has evidently endeavoured to pourtray [sic] the two great antagonistic principles, Good and Evil, and to display their action, according to circumstances, in one human soul.²⁴

The *New York Herald* critic misinterpreted the plot by describing *Robert* as a “ghost story.”²⁵ By focusing on the spectral aspect of the plot, he overlooked the larger storyline of the complete opera and concentrated on the third-act cloister scene between Robert and the chorus of resurrected dancing nuns, which had been performed often in New York as part of English pastiches or recitals of compiled excerpts.²⁶

*Les Huguenots*

Unlike *Robert le diable*, Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots* did not traverse the Atlantic as an English pastiche; however, a few singers included parts of the popular opera in their concert programs. In 1842, Philadelphia soprano Sophia Melizet (fl. 1840s) performed an unidentified aria from *Les Huguenots* during a “Grand Concert” organized by Italian *basso buffo* Giuseppe de Begnis (1793–1849).²⁷ During the 1843 NOFO tour concert, soprano Lagier (fl. 1840s) and bass Bles (fl. 1840s) sang a scene from *Huguenots*.²⁸ Furthermore, Mlle Amélie (fl. 1840s) included

²⁴ “Musical Department. French Opera,” *Broadway Journal* 2, no. 7 (23 August 1845): 105.
the third act of *Les Huguenots* during her benefit.  

In reviewing *Robert le diable*, the New York critics also anticipated the premiere of *Les Huguenots* for local audiences. The *Herald* writer considered *Les Huguenots* to be a more “complicated” work than *Robert* but noted that it was not as taxing on performers. He observed that Meyerbeer gave the singers “some repose” between their pieces, unlike in *Robert*, in which Robert remained on stage for the entirety of act 1, Isabella for act 2, and Bertram for act 3.  

As the company readied the production of *Les Huguenots*, the *Herald* featured prominently an image of the ultimate scene of *Les Huguenots* with a description of the details of the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre on its front page (figure 7.2). The *Herald* critic predicted that “[t]his opera will surpass in splendour anything yet represented by the French Company in this city.”

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31 “Grand Scene from the Opera of Les Huguenots,” *New York Herald*, 10 August 1845, 1.  
New York audiences enjoyed Les Huguenots, which was performed four times and was selected as the work to be performed for the benefit of the company’s conductor, Eugène Prévost. The Evening Gazette acknowledged how little of the score had been heard in New York by any “save those who have been resident at Paris.” Following the first performance, the New York Herald critic recounted the audience’s enthusiastic response:

The expectations raised by the grand opera of Les Huguenots seem to have been very great, and if we judge by the feelings of the audience, which exhibited itself in unbounded applause, we may assert that they were not disappointed. Never since the company began to play at the Park, did that theatre re-echo with so many hurras [sic].

33 “Park Theatre. — Les Huguenots,” The Evening Gazette, 12 August 1845, [2].
The critics at both the *Evening Gazette* and *Broadway Journal* appreciated Meyerbeer’s incorporation of the Lutheran chorale “Ein feste Burg.” Watson considered the overture “masterly” and “a thought only with the scope of a master mind.” Likewise, the critic from the *Evening Gazette* referred to the overture as “a master piece [sic] of orchestral composition” and elaborated on the variety of ways Meyerbeer utilized the chorale throughout the score:

This chorale is worked into the score many times during the composition, sometimes in solo, sometimes in chorus, and once after the manner of the finale of Weber’s Jubel overture, the wind band gives forth its majestic and ponderous strains, while the strings rush impetuously through the scale, producing an effect almost terrible.

This musically knowledgeable critic pointed out another instance of this compositional technique: Carl von Weber’s integration of “God Save the Queen” into the coda of his *Jubel-Ouvertüre* (1818), composed for the Fiftieth Royal Jubilee for the reign of King Frederick Augustus I of Saxony (1750–1827). The *Gazette* reviewer highlighted the first-act romance for Raoul, “Plus blanche,” which Meyerbeer set together with a single viola d’amore. Reminiscent of a two-part invention of Bach (example 7.1), the viola part is less an accompaniment than a complementary polyphonic melody.

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35 “Musical Department. French Opera,” *Broadway Journal* 2, no. 7 (23 August 1845): 105.
Example 7.1: “Plus blanche,” *Les Huguenots*, act 1, mm. 19–26

The *Gazette* reviewer noted another unusual accompaniment in the opening act: the *chanson huguenotte* sung by Raoul’s confident, Marcel. Marcel, a former Protestant soldier, sings of the battle of La Rochelle, in which the Huguenots were triumphant. The critic considered Meyerbeer’s novel scoring of piccolo, bassoon, cymbal, and drums as “grotesque originality.”

The second act opens with a brief instrumental entr’acte in the gardens of the Chateau de Chenonceaux. Here, the *Gazette* praised New York flutist Alexander Kyle (c. 1810–1870), who “distinguished himself” in the performance of a birdcall solo. Furthermore, the critic admired the “charming and simple melody” in the second chorus, “Jeunes beautés.” He contended that the melody alone “would have satisfied most composers,” but Meyerbeer added a

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quick, undulating cello accompaniment, which the critic heard as “the rustling of the trees, and the murmuring of the stream spoken of in the chorus.”\textsuperscript{42}

In act 3, the duet “Dans la nuit” between Valentine and Marcel, in which Valentine discloses to Marcel the Catholics’ plot to ambush Raoul, was highly praised. The \textit{Courrier des États-Unis} critic described the dramatic confrontation as full of “eloquence and spirit.”\textsuperscript{43} The \textit{Evening Gazette} critic highlighted the instrumental solos, stating that “[e]very instrument in the orchestra here seems to a sing a melancholy melody of its own.” Here, again, the cello accompaniment was featured as “worth a fortune to any composer,” and the critic considered it to be “unsurpassed by any instrumentation in symphonic opera” and admired its subtle supporting role. At the conclusion of the act, a vocal septet accompanies the duel between Raoul and Saint-Bris. The \textit{Gazette} critic applauded this unusual ensemble for its “dramatic effect, striking harmony and masterly instrumentation.”\textsuperscript{44}

The fourth act of \textit{Les Huguenots} was the most remarkable to all the New York critics. The \textit{Gazette} critic extolled it as “unequalled in dramatic force by any opera extant.”\textsuperscript{45} In the final scene, the duet “O ciel! où courez-vous?” juxtaposes Valentine’s and Raoul’s personal desires and emotions with their larger societal obligations. Just as Valentine impetuously blurts “Je t’aime,” she and Raoul must act on the news that Valentine’s father, the Count of Saint-Bris, and a group of Catholic noblemen, are planning to massacre the Protestant population of Paris.

The critic at the \textit{Gazette} commented on fine moments in the fifth act, in which Meyerbeer had “not relaxed his efforts.” In the final trio, when Marcel marries Valentine and Raoul in a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42} “Les Huguenots,” \textit{The Evening Gazette}, 19 August 1845, [2].
\item \textsuperscript{43} “Les Huguenots.—Robert le Diable.—Bénéfice de Mlle Calvé,” \textit{Le Courrier des États-Unis} 18, no. 71 (12 August 1845): 314.
\item \textsuperscript{44} “Les Huguenots,” \textit{The Evening Gazette}, 19 August 1845, [2].
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Protestant cemetery, the critic noted the bassoon accompaniment to Marcel’s singing followed by the Lutheran chorale, which was “again worked in with prodigious effect.” In the original score, however, there is no bassoon accompaniment, but a bass clarinet, which sounds in the same range as a bassoon.\textsuperscript{46} In the midst of the trio, the Catholic murderers enter the church, and a choir of Huguenots are heard singing the Lutheran chorale.\textsuperscript{47} As in the overture, the chorale is integrated closely into the musical fabric of the final scene as the Huguenots are killed.

The \textit{Gazette} provided a highly musical assessment of \textit{Les Huguenots} for New Yorkers. The critic examined the unique role of instrumentation, highlighting Meyerbeer’s mastery in honing his craft in \textit{Les Huguenots}. He astutely connected Meyerbeer’s instrumental hallmarks within \textit{Robert} and \textit{Les Huguenots} by his highly individual treatment inclusion of the flute, bassoon, trombone, cello, bass, and tympani. In particular, he noted the instrumental association of the cello during the act 3 duet between Valentine and Marcel and, in \textit{Robert}, in the act 3 ballet scene between the nuns and Robert.\textsuperscript{48}

\textit{Les Huguenots} was the high point of NOFO’s performances that tour.\textsuperscript{49} The critic at the \textit{Albion} regarded its performance and reception as “surpassing every other effort” by the troupe. As with the troupe’s earlier tours, the press extolled the ensemble work of the company as “perfect.”\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{47} “Les Huguenots,” \textit{The Evening Gazette}, 19 August 1845, [2].
\textsuperscript{48} “Park Theatre. — Les Huguenots,” \textit{The Evening Gazette}, 12 August 1845, [2].
\textsuperscript{49} By the end of the nineteenth century, \textit{Les Huguenots} had been performed 225 times in the Crescent City. The work would become the standard bearer at the New Orleans French Opera House (1859–1919), where it was programmed early in the season to introduce the season’s new vocal stars or re-evaluate the talents of the past season. See John A. Belsom, “Reception of Major Operatic Premières in New Orleans During the Nineteenth Century” (Master’s thesis, Louisiana State University, 1972), 53.
\textsuperscript{50} “The Drama The French Opera.–Les Huguenots,” \textit{The Albion} 4, no. 83 (16 August 1845): 396.
Meyerbeer and Critical Perceptions, 1831–45

New York City, 1831–34

New Yorkers had a number of opportunities to read about and acquaint themselves with Giacomo Meyerbeer after 1831. The remarkable premiere and success of Robert le diable were recounted in New York via British publications. An article from the Court Journal of London detailing the Parisian premiere of Robert le diable was reprinted in three different American journals—the Atheneum, the Albion, and the New-York Mirror—from October 1831 to March 1832. Through this London filter, the writer described the music of Robert as “graceful and tender, impassioned, solemn or terrific, according to the situation or the feeling which the dramatist intended to illustrate.” He compared Robert to Meyerbeer’s previous operas, and he determined that Meyerbeer, previously considered an imitator of Rossini, had “boldly broken every shackle” of the “modern Italian school.” The London reviewer praised Meyerbeer for having assimilated the various stylistic traits of his cosmopolitan musical training:

In this opera, Meyerbeer has happily blended the excellences of the two first schools of music—the German and the Italian. He has judiciously preserved all the brilliancy, fire, richness, and happy caprice of the latter, with all the harmonic combinations of the former. He has not, like most eminent composers of the two schools, blindly adopted that excellence for which each is conspicuous, but has most skilfully availed himself of all the resources, both of the harmony and melody. The result has been most happy; —the public have not to complain that the music is too ponderous and scientific, nor can the profession reject it, on the plea of its being too popular, light, and devoid of science!

52 “Robert le Diable,” The Albion 10, no. 36 (11 February 1832): 281.
Although the Atheneum’s critic does not mention specific composers as influences, he describes how Meyerbeer combined German-inflected harmony with Italian-shaped melody. In this assessment, no French musical influence is acknowledged. Instead, the English writer addresses the French critics and stage with a twinge of sarcasm:

The French critics, who are rather given to hyperbole, have not missed this opportunity of lavishing the words enthousiasme—delire—rage—&c. &c. to describe the sensation which the opera has excited. Mons. Fétis [sic], Professor at “the Conservatoire,” an eminent composer himself, and one of the best judges of music, pronounces Meyerbeer’s work—“un de ces ouvrages qui suggit pour rendre l’auteur immortel.” Castil-Blaze, another great authority, expresses himself in the following terms—“La pièce a produit un effet prodigieux : jamais succès ne fut plus beau—plus éclatant.”

The representation of “Robert le Diable” forms an epoch in the annals of the stage. Nearly a year has been spent in preparing it, and no less than 200,000 francs have been laid out in its production. It is what the French aptly call un tour de force; for seldom, or never, have such efforts been made in favor of one composition.

The Courrier des États-Unis printed a thorough account of the libretto of Robert after the Parisian premiere, but limited the discussion of the music to a brief paragraph. The critic applauded the music as “gracieuse, puissante, forte, passionnée [sic], etrange [sic] et pleine

55 This viewpoint was also discussed in Paris. In La Revue de Paris, Joseph d’Ortigue (1802–1866) observed the combination of Italian and German musical influences in Robert, identifying “Il fond ensemble ces deux genres, ces couleurs différentes, et marie avec un rare bonheur Weber et Rossini, L’Italie et l’Allemagne” ([Meyerbeer] fuses together these two genres, these different colors, and blends with a rare success Weber and Rossini, Italy and Germany). Joseph d’Ortigue, La Revue de Paris, [n.d.] 1831; as found in Marie-Hélène Coudroy, La Critique Parisienne des "Grands Opéras" de Meyerbeer: Robert le Diable—Les Huguenots—Le Prophète—L’Africaine (Saarbrücken: Galland, 1988), 195.

56 “One of those works which render the author immortal” (provided by The Atheneum).

57 “The piece [the article translated pièce as piece.] has produced a prodigious effect; never was success more complete—more brilliant” (provided by The Atheneum).

The French-language newspaper did not offer any commentary about Meyerbeer himself.

Prior to Mary Anne and Joseph Wood’s 1834 New York performance, an article in the *New-York Mirror* of 1833 described in detail the English adaptations by Michael Rophino Lacy and Sir Henry Bishop. In its discussion of the composer, Meyerbeer was described as German; the article did not address his musical training.

**New York City, 1845**

The 1845 New York performances of *Robert* and *Les Huguenots* prompted mixed appraisals of Meyerbeer’s reputation and influence. The French- and English-language newspapers and journals documented Meyerbeer’s ascent to the pinnacle of the nineteenth-century opera scene with both positive and negative descriptions of his musical pedigree and his style. Their assessments both reflected and shaped the public’s perception of the composer. Meyerbeer advocates in the New York press considered him a “founder of the romantic school in music,” while his detractors considered his artistry “not of the highest order.”

An early review of *Robert* published in the *Herald* in 1845 reminded New Yorkers that the opera was already an international phenomenon. The *Herald* writer not only provided a positive assessment of Meyerbeer but also chronicled his training and previous works.

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63 In this and all other reviews from this season, New York critics did not address Meyerbeer’s Jewish heritage. This is unlike the racial discrimination that Meyerbeer faced in Paris. See Kerry Murphy, “Meyerbeer, Judaism and French Music Criticism of the 1830s,” *Context* 22 (Spring 2001): 1–18.
Comparable to the 1832 assessments of Meyerbeer, he told readers that Meyerbeer had studied with German composer, theorist, and teacher Georg Joseph (Abbé) Vogler (1749–1814), who had also taught Weber, but that his early operas were “not unfrequent [sic] attempts at a generally successful imitation.” The writer explained that Meyerbeer’s operatic ambition had prompted him to go to Italy to continue his studies, and he recorded Meyerbeer’s achievements with each opera. In *Il crociato in Egitto* (Venice, 1824), Meyerbeer had achieved musical “greatness” and “out-Rossinied Rossini himself.”\(^64\) In the *Herald* critic’s opinion, the international triumph of *Robert le diable* brought about Meyerbeer’s fame, and *Les Huguenots* demonstrated the composer’s skill that “united the elements of two different schools into a whole, firm and indivisible.”\(^65\) The *Herald* critic maintained that Meyerbeer was “too high in the musical world” to criticize. But, it was feasible to compare one work to another, and he considered *Les Huguenots* the “superior” work to *Robert le diable*, although he was not able to clearly articulate exactly what made *Les Huguenots* a better work “after a single hearing.” As in previous publications, this writer also described Meyerbeer to New Yorkers as a accomplished German- and Italian-trained composer.\(^66\)

The “Parisian *critique musicale*” for the *Anglo American* wrote from a complicated perspective because he dismissed Meyerbeer’s melodic gifts, but he conceded that Meyerbeer

\(^{64}\) “Theatricals: French Opera,” *New York Herald*, 3 July 1845, 2. Meyerbeer’s *Il crociato* was performed at the Théâtre-Italien and *Marguerite d’Anjou* was translated from Italian into French and performed at the Odéon. Both were well received by the French public. *La Nymphe du Danube* was a pasticcio comprised of self-quotations from Meyerbeer’s Italian operas. Although *La Nymphe* was never publicly performed, Meyerbeer gathered substantial attention from the Parisian press, which kept his name in the mind of opera-goers. See Everist, “Giacomo Meyerbeer, the Théâtre Royal de l’Odéon, and Music Drama in Restoration Paris,” 146.


was an influential and important composer on the Parisian operatic scene.\textsuperscript{67} The writer presented a more detailed chronology of Meyerbeer’s German and Italian musical education than was previously published in English, and provided an international reading list for the reader who sought to acquire “full and ample information concerning this composer.” His list included references to the \textit{Leipzig Gazette}, the \textit{Leipzig Conversations Lexicon}, François-Joseph Fétis’s \textit{Biographie Universelle}, an article by Louis de Loménie (1815–78), and \textit{Lettres à un Voyageur} by George Sand (1804–1876).\textsuperscript{68}

The \textit{Anglo American} reviewer was unimpressed by the melodies in \textit{Robert}. He labeled them to be “common and vulgar,” lacking “a similar and true inspiration,” and referred to them as “\textit{Pont-neufs}.”\textsuperscript{69} Later in the critique, he dismissed the oft-written claim that Meyerbeer’s music had “too much instrumentation” and “too much science.” Instead, he proposed that the dominance of harmony and instrumentation was a result of Meyerbeer’s lack of original melodic ideas.\textsuperscript{70} He opined, “There is never too much science when the genius of the melody governs profound knowledge, but when the inspiration of the heart is defective, the science only is apparent, and seems sometimes too heavy to fastidious judges or to ignorant amateurs.” In this manner, the reviewer further argued that Meyerbeer lacked “the constant power of fancy and

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\textsuperscript{67} “French Opera in New York,” \textit{The Anglo American} 5, no. 5 (24 May 1845): 114.


\textsuperscript{70} Sarah Hibberd has linked musical elements in \textit{Robert le diable} to previous works performed in Paris. The act 3 \textit{valse infernale} was prefigured in the act 1 waltz from Castil-Blaze’s \textit{Robin des bois}. She also connects the inclusion of the ballet of nuns to Étienne de Jouy’s four-act opera \textit{Faust} (1827), where a group of mythical women console Faust, who is trying to forget Marguerite. See Hibberd, “‘Cette diablerie philosophique’: Faust Criticism in Paris c. 1830,” 127.
creation which makes Rossini the greatest composer of our age.”

The *Anglo American* critic specifically criticized a section of Meyerbeer’s music in act 3, in which Bertram reveals to Robert how a magic branch will help him win Isabelle, to illustrate his disappointment:

> . . . the music itself is sometimes a little affected. Listen, for instance, to the simple modulation on the *Palme Triomphale* (3d act, 1st part, solo of Robert), and say if it be a triumph of natural melody?

Robert sings about the “palme triomphale” in the midst of his third-act duet, “Si j’aurai ce courage?” The duet is a decisive D-major march with a dramatic interruption at the moment Bertram describes the talisman that will give Robert wealth and immortality. Robert plucks up his courage to retrieve the branch from the tomb of St. Rosalie. He understands that it will transform his fortune:

> Conquis par ma valeur, ce rameau vénéré
> Pour moi va se changer en palme triomphale

[Conquered by my bravery, this revered bough
Will be converted into a triumphant branch for me.]

Robert repeats the phrase, “en palme triomphale,” three times.

For the repetition of this phrase, Meyerbeer writes a harmonic sequence that completes a cycle of major thirds: beginning on an F-major chord, which functions as the flatted sixth degree of the dominant (A major) of the D-major march, he moves deceptively through D-flat major [C-sharp enharmonically] and finally, once again deceptively, to A major, which is the dominant of

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72 Ibid.
D (example 7.2). The sequence’s final statement is similar to its previous iterations, but it prolongs the dominant an extra measure to accommodate the repetition of the second line of text.\footnote{The harmonic motion that Meyerbeer follows is one that had emerged in German music. Operatic examples can be found in Rossini’s \textit{Guillaume Tell}; however, Meyerbeer uses this progression more frequently (William Rothstein, private communication, 24 January 2015).}
Example 7.2: “. . . en palme triomphale. . .” Robert, “Si j’aurai ce courage?”

Robert le diable, act 3, scene 6, mm. 103–13
(after Giacomo Meyerbeer, “Si j’aurai ce courage?” Robert le Diable, vol. 2,
of Early Romantic Opera, vol. 19, ed. and introd. by Charles Rosen
Although the *Anglo American* critic may have regarded this unusual progression as “a little affected,” Meyerbeer, sensitive to the drama, was trying to convey the unnatural situation that Robert would confront after committing this sacrilegious act to be with the woman whom he loves. From a musical perspective, the three-fold sequence may also have seemed excessive, but the passage allows Robert to express his wrenching decision as an aside before the return of the march.

In his article “From Gretchen to Tristan: The Changing Role of Harmonic Sequences in the Nineteenth Century,” Richard Bass traces the roles of harmonic sequences as an effective compositional approach that “capture[s] quite vividly the continuous pursuit of elusive and unattainable goals that is the embodiment of the Romantic spirit.” Bass does not consider text, however, as the cause for the melodic and harmonic effects when used in a dramatic setting, which is clearly an important element in this passage. Furthermore, Meyerbeer’s sequences here are not in “pursuit of elusive and unattainable goals,” but rather self-reflective, allowing Robert to internally and musically consider a life-changing act and decide to alter his fate.

In a review written after the Paris premiere, François-Joseph Fétis also observed that Meyerbeer’s melodies in *Robert* were on their own rather uninspired, but that Meyerbeer’s treatment of the melodies was original, a fact that appealed to the French outlook:

> But, regardless of instrumentation, which is different at every return and which becomes each time more interesting, there is a very remarkable elegance in the repetition of this theme, a return that repeats itself several times, and always by different means. I regret that the boundaries of this newspaper do not allow me to demonstrate here all these details that are so witty and skillfully handled.


75 “Mais, indépendamment de l’instrumentation, qui est différente à chaque reprise et qui devient
The French critic for the *Anglo American* claimed to have been at the first two performances of *Les Huguenots* in Paris. He recounted that the opera’s effects “galvaniz[ed]” the audience. Yet the opera was slow to achieve an overall success. He relayed an anecdote by Rossini after he heard *Huguenots*:

> We recollect a single expression of the discerning Rossini, which includes, perhaps, the two styles—“One ought to hear that music,” said he, “a hundred times.” Did he mean that it was so delightful that one ought to hear and enjoy it a hundred times in succession, or would he convey that the music was so difficult as to require a hundred hearings to understand it thoroughly? The wily Italian has taken care that the translation should remain an ambiguity.\(^{76}\)

This account of the opera’s complex music was one of many similar opinions in the Parisian press at the time of the premiere of *Les Huguenots*. In his article on the opera’s premiere in the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, Berlioz declared that “Plusieurs auditions attentives, sont absolument necessaries à la connaissance complete d’une telle partition” (Several attentive listenings are absolutely necessary in order to understand such a score completely).\(^{77}\) In *Le Ménestrel*, “J. L.” likewise wrote, “As the public listens to *Les Huguenots*, the magnificent details of the score will become more clearly delineated, the public ear will become accustomed...”

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to it, the motifs will be understood, and from then on its popularity will be assured forever.”

Henry Watson at the *Broadway Journal* did not consider Meyerbeer to be a first-rate composer because he felt his oeuvre was not uniformly wrought. He wrote:

> Of the music of the Huguenots, we prefer that which is contained in the First and Fourth Acts. If the whole of the music of the two works was equal to the Fourth Act of the Huguenots, Meyerbeer would rank with any Composer [*sic*] living or dead; but the inequality of his music denies to him that honor.  

He was ambivalent also about Meyerbeer’s orchestration and did not consider it of the “highest order.” He approved of Meyerbeer’s musical inventiveness, however, describing it as “vivid, brilliant, and deeply tinctured by romance,” which linked the “passion of his music” to the “passion of Nature [*sic*].” He granted that Meyerbeer’s “knowledge of the resources of the orchestra is profound, and his method of applying his knowledge is bold and comprehensive.” But he addressed the difficulties posed by the orchestral writing:

> [Meyerbeer] is less careful than the great masters, with the exception of Beethoven, for they, treating the orchestra as a *whole*, ensure the developments of their efforts, even by a common orchestra; but Meyerbeer treats the orchestra most frequently as an assemblage of solo instruments, and thus brings his instrumentation only within the range of first rate players.

Meyerbeer’s “gigantic mass of richly swelling harmony” was counteracted by his use of solo

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79 “Musical Department. French Opera,” *Broadway Journal* 2, no. 7 (23 August 1845): 105.
80 Ibid.
instruments to add “a lightness and varied beauty to the ensemble.” The writer associated Meyerbea with Beethoven because both included a greater role for the double-bass and the violoncello. He acknowledged Meyerbeer’s emphasis on orchestral weight but believed it could challenge the capacities of average opera orchestras.

The *Evening Gazette* critic furnished a nuanced appraisal of how to understand Meyerbeer in contrast to the “modern Italian school.” Although he lamented the lack of memorable melodies to “whistle” the next morning, he commended Meyerbeer’s operas for having a “beauty” in the music that could be rediscovered with each hearing. In his estimation, the rediscovery of musical treasures was a “prominent characteristic of the production of great classical masters.” Like Berlioz and others who had emphasized the importance of listening to Meyerbeer’s music multiple times, he challenged the New York audience to listen in a more discriminating manner to appreciate Meyerbeer. In this pro-Italian opera environment, he proffered an alternative way of hearing the works of Rossini and Bellini.

We yield to no one in our admiration of the brilliancy of Rossini or the pathos of Bellini; but in once or twice hearing, our ears can grasp all that is offered, and from the sameness of their productions, can almost anticipate the coming phrase in an opera

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81 Ibid.
82 Ibid. Hector Berlioz’s first and only review of *Robert le Diable* appeared in 1835 and focused on the orchestration. Berlioz discusses in detail how difficult it would be to replicate a Meyerbeer orchestra, which demanded a large number of talented instrumentalists and members of the chorus, and would tax a “provincial” opera company. Berlioz praises Meyerbeer for his success in instrumentation and attention to detail and addresses the “most striking passages” in the overture, act 1, and act 2. Midway through his discussion, Berlioz strongly criticizes Meyerbeer for using a predictable musical cliché in act 2. Berlioz’s highest approval was reserved for Meyerbeer’s choice of instrumentation in act 3 during the “Résurrection des Nonnes.” See Kerry Murphy, *Hector Berlioz and the Development of French Music Criticism* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1988), 119; and Howard Robert Cohen, “Berlioz on the Opéra (1829–1849): A Study in Music Criticism” (PhD diss., New York University, 1973), 110–17.
In a rare moment of criticism of the Italian composers, the critic proposed that their musical uniqueness became predictable after only a few hearings. Instead he commended the French and “some” German composers for including challenging music in their operas. In this way, the critic identified this approach to be “a prominent characteristic of the production of great classical masters.”

Conclusion

Thanks to the New Orleans French Opera Company’s 1845 season, New Yorkers heard two different “modern operas” by Meyerbeer in a short span of time. What did they make of this German-born, Italian-trained composer who wrote successful French-language operas? By this late date, the initial socio-political Parisian context of the two operas had lessened considerably, and New York critics deemed Meyerbeer to be an important figure in nineteenth-century opera. No longer would New Yorkers wait nine and fourteen years, respectively, to hear his work; the subsequent Paris opéras comiques and grands opéras arrived within three years of their Parisian premiere dates, although all were performed in Italian.

This tour served as an eye- and ear-opening experience for some critics, who were

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83 “Park Theatre.—Les Huguenots,” The Evening Gazette, 12 August 1845, [2].
84 Ibid.
impressed with Meyerbeer’s unusual harmonies and instrumentation and were not willing to accept Meyerbeer’s status without hearing the works themselves and assessing Meyerbeer’s biography for their readers. Although New York critics might have previously considered themselves “behind,” the rich 1845 season provided challenging and exciting works, about which they were more than adequately equipped to enlighten their readers.
Conclusion

Foreign-language opera in New York began as a cultural experiment in 1825 and ended in a deluge of foreign-language performances by 1845. Although foreign-language opera took nearly thirty years to take hold in New York, the foundation was laid in these twenty years after the Manuel García company arrived in 1825. In this dissertation, I have found from a detailed evaluation and comparison that the more accomplished foreign-language opera seasons in New York were devoted to French operas, either sung in French or in English translation. While Italian opera companies had been invited and were sought after, my study has revealed that the works coming from Paris via New Orleans were also admired and, in most instances, were more successful than the Italian works—both in performance and in critical reception.

While American operatic research has downplayed the importance of NOFO and even referred to it as “mediocre,”¹ in this dissertation I demonstrate its direct impact upon New York’s nascent foreign-opera endeavors. When NOFO first arrived, the company offered older French works and tailored its programming to the expatriate French community. From 1827 to 1833, NOFO’s performances were better received than the overall reception of the Manuel García company. The French company’s singers, chorus, and orchestral musicians, for example, were superior to those found in New York theaters at this time, and critics suggested that resident dramatic companies follow its lead.

In 1830, the spirit and ideas of the July Revolution in Paris resonated with the entire New York community. I include a discussion of the New York City–wide parade and celebration in addition to the new works and music performed at local theaters to provide further context for

the connection between the people of Paris and New York. I show that NOFO altered its productions in response to contemporary events and performed recently written and composed plays, vaudevilles, and dramatic works from Paris that were not only entertaining but also educative. The company also performed the most prescient French opera of the time, Auber’s *La muette de Portici*. New Yorkers experienced in word, song, and dance the extraordinary events that had occurred in France.

The success of NOFO’s season sparked Italian opera enthusiasts, including Lorenzo da Ponte, to send for Italian companies. I detail how, during this second wave of Italian opera performances in the mid-1830s, a New York *querelle* erupted between those who thought that New York should foster opera in its original language and those who favored translating all foreign-language operas into English to appeal to a broader audience. Both parties considered Paris the model city for adopting and incorporating non-native operatic works into its cultural milieu. I show that, during this period, the French community supported Italian operatic efforts in New York. The *Courrier des États-Unis* critics were at the opening of the first Italian Opera House, writing excitedly about how it reminded them of Paris. They reviewed every Italian opera company and their performances—positively and negatively. The English-language press observed the unbiased assessments that the French had with regard to other styles of music. The *New World* critic noted, “We have never been able to perceive any jealousy on the part of the French, either in this city or in their own country, of foreign musical talent.”\(^2\) I demonstrate that even when NOFO was not in New York City, the city’s connection to French works, albeit in English translation, remained. Although the “Englished” works interpolated Italian and German arias and finales, the Parisian operas of Auber, Boieldieu, Halévy, and Meyerbeer crossed the

Atlantic. New York critics knew, however, that they were not hearing the original works; they craved the originals.

I detail that when NOFO returned in 1843, the company adapted to remain competitive within the current New York environment. Like the English touring companies, NOFO engaged a vocal star, who impressed audiences and critics and bolstered the already high quality of the company. New Yorkers yearned to hear the most recent works from Paris, and NOFO responded by offering recent operatic successes that had debuted at the Paris Opéra Comique. The company included a myriad of works, from the tuneful and accessible works of Auber to the harmonically challenging music of Halévy. In addition to members of NOFO, three more Paris-trained sopranos sang arias and scenes in French and Italian in New York’s concert halls. A second New York querelle arose—now between the French and Italian companies.

I demonstrate how, by 1845, NOFO brought works that broadened the public’s knowledge of the operatic landscape. During a summer season of grands opéras, the company introduced the most musically challenging, visually spectacular, and critically acclaimed works from Paris. The efforts of NOFO were acknowledged by important musical figures abroad. When Eugène Prévost returned to Paris at the beginning of the American Civil War, musical luminaries, such as Auber, Halévy, Rossini, Meyerbeer, Berlioz, and others, wrote a public letter in the Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris praising the efforts of NOFO’s composer-conductor and declaring:

Having learned that you were back from America, we seize this occasion to offer to you collectively the expression of our deep gratitude. Thanks to your talent as orchestral conductor and to your enthusiasm as fellow countryman, the lyric repertoire of the three important Parisian stages has become, for twenty-three years,
that of far-off lands.³

In this letter, it is apparent that the composers were keenly aware of the role that Prévost had played in performing their works in New Orleans and New York.

By detailing the impact of NOFO, I have integrated its efforts into the historical narrative and found the company to have participated in edifying New York citizens in the musical arts. The critics’ columns were full of rationalizations as to why foreign-language opera was such a difficult genre to “naturalize.” Andrew D. Paterson, editor of the _Anglo-American_, wanted to make sure that audiences were properly educated to listen. He suggested the creation of a “Music Hall” to be led by a principal and instructors, who would lecture in classes with access to a music library.⁴

Finally, my work opens up further avenues of research. First, my research does not integrate the French criticism of every French work. A transatlantic comparison, on a work-by-work basis, could further reveal the extent to which New York critics were parroting European critics or were making distinct observations. In addition, continued research into French operas after 1845 would deepen our understanding of the formation of the nineteenth-century American operatic canon. While many of the works included in this dissertation are rarely performed in the twenty-first century, they remained central to the nineteenth-century repertoire. For instance,

⁴ Lawrence, _Strong on Music_, 327–28.
Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable* and *Les Huguenots* were both included in the first season of the Metropolitan Opera in 1883–84. In the end, the inclusion of NOFO in the picture of opera in New York provides deeper insight into a complicated time in New York’s operatic history.
Appendixes

Appendix A:  Chronological list of NOFO’s Northeast tours, 1827–33
Appendix B:  List of operas performed by NOFO, 1827–33
Appendix C:  List of operas performed by NOFO, 1843 and 1845
Appendix A: Chronological list of the New Orleans French Opera Company’s Northeast tours between 1827 and 1833


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1827</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 July–22 Sept</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Sept–20 Oct</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 Oct–29 Oct</td>
<td>New York(^1)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1828</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Aug–5 Sept</td>
<td>Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Sept–12 Sept</td>
<td>New York</td>
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<td>16 Sept–18 Oct</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 Oct–5 Nov</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1829</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Sept–8 Oct</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Oct–26 Oct</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1830</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Aug–31 Aug</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Sept–4 Oct</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Oct–20 Oct</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1831</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Aug–26 Aug</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Sept–12 Oct</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1832</strong> – No tour due to cholera epidemic in Northeast</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1833</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>19 July–30 July</td>
<td>Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sept–18 Sept</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Sept–16 Oct</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
</tr>
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\(^1\) The writer at *The Albion* indicated that the company was in New York City for three nights; see “The Drama,” *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics and Literature* 6, no. 21 (3 November 1827), 168.
Appendix B: List of operas performed by the New Orleans French Opera Company, 1827-1833

Sources: Information is taken from Oxford Music Online, Chevalley, and Kmen, unless otherwise noted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Opera (Paris premiere)</th>
<th>Librettist(s)</th>
<th>New Orleans premiere</th>
<th>New York season premiere</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auber, Daniel-François-Esprit</td>
<td>Fiorello, oc, 3 (28 Nov 1826)</td>
<td>Scribe</td>
<td>24 April 1828</td>
<td>22 Aug 1829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fra-Diavolo, ou L'hôtel de Terracine, oc, 3 (28 Jan 1830)</td>
<td>Scribe</td>
<td>28 June 1831</td>
<td>17 Oct 1831</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23 Aug 1833</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>La fiancée, oc, 3 (10 Jan 1829)</td>
<td>Scribe</td>
<td>16 July 1829</td>
<td>21 Aug 1829</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 Aug 1830</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>14 Aug 1833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>La muette de Portici, op, 5 (29 Feb 1828)</td>
<td>Scribe, Delavigne</td>
<td>29 April 1831</td>
<td>15 Aug 1831</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16 Aug 1833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>La neige, ou Le nouvel Eginhard, oc, 4 (9 Oct 1823)</td>
<td>Scribe, Delavigne</td>
<td>21 June 1825</td>
<td>30 July 1827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le maçon, oc, 3 (3 May 1825)</td>
<td>Scribe, Delavigne</td>
<td>22 March 1827</td>
<td>31 July 1827</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23 Aug 1830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le philtre, op, 2 (15 June 1831)</td>
<td>Scribe</td>
<td>17 Jan 1833</td>
<td>9 Aug 1833</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Opera (Paris premiere)</td>
<td>Librettist(s)</td>
<td>New Orleans premiere</td>
<td>New York season premiere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berton, Henri-Montan</td>
<td><em>Aline, reine de Golconde</em>, opéra, 3 (3 Sept 1803)</td>
<td>Vial and Favières</td>
<td>4 June 1811</td>
<td>29 Aug 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Les maris garçons</em>, cmda, 1 (15 July 1806)</td>
<td>P.C. Gaugiran-Nanteuil</td>
<td>3 Nov 1808</td>
<td>26 Oct 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boieldieu, François-Adrien</td>
<td><em>Jean de Paris</em>, oc, 2 (4 April 1812)</td>
<td>St. Just</td>
<td>26 March 1816</td>
<td>6 Aug 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>La dame blanche</em>, oc, 3 (10 Dec 1825)</td>
<td>Scribe</td>
<td>6 Feb 1827</td>
<td>24 Aug 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>La fête du village voisin</em>, oc, 3 (5 March 1816)</td>
<td>Sewrin</td>
<td>13 July 1820</td>
<td>16 July 1827</td>
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<td><em>Le nouveau seigneur de village</em>, oc, 1 (29 June 1813)</td>
<td>Creuzé de Lesser, Favières</td>
<td>17 April 1816</td>
<td>6 Sept 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Opera (Paris premiere)</td>
<td>Librettist(s)</td>
<td>New Orleans premiere</td>
<td>New York season premiere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boieldieu (cont.)</td>
<td><em>Le petit chaperon rouge</em>, oc, 3 (30 June 1818)</td>
<td>Théaulon de Lambert</td>
<td>23 May 1820</td>
<td>31 Aug 1827 17 Aug 1831</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Les voitures versées</em>, oc, 2 (29 April 1820)</td>
<td>Dupaty</td>
<td>8 March 1821</td>
<td>12 Sept 1828</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Ma tante Aurore, ou Le roman impromptu</em>, oc, 2 (13 Jan 1803)</td>
<td>Longchamps</td>
<td>9 Nov 1809</td>
<td>18 July 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boscha, Nicholas-Charles</td>
<td><em>La lettre de change</em>, oc, 1 (11 Dec 1815)</td>
<td>Planard</td>
<td>10 Dec 1822</td>
<td>20 July 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carafa, Michele</td>
<td><em>Le solitaire</em>, oc, 3 (22 Aug 1822)</td>
<td>Planard</td>
<td>20 Dec 1827</td>
<td>26 Oct 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Opera (Paris premiere)</td>
<td>Librettist(s)</td>
<td>New Orleans premiere</td>
<td>New York season premiere</td>
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<td><em>Les folies amoureuses</em>, opéra bouffon, 3 (5 June 1824)</td>
<td>Regnard</td>
<td>7 Dec 1828</td>
<td>21 Oct 1828 21 Aug 1833</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Les noces de Figaro</em>, opera buffa, 4 (22 July 1826)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 Dec 1831</td>
<td>24 Oct 1831</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Robin des bois</em> (7 Dec 1824)</td>
<td>Sauvage</td>
<td>2 May 1827</td>
<td>13 Aug 1827 25 Oct 1828</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catel, Charles-Simon</td>
<td><em>L'Auberge de Bagnoles</em>, opéra bouffon, 3 (23 April 1807)</td>
<td>Jalabert</td>
<td>25 Jan 1820</td>
<td>25 Aug 1830</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cherubini, Luigi</td>
<td><em>Les deux journées, ou Le porteur d'eau</em>, comédie lyrique, 3 (16 Jan 1800)</td>
<td>Bouilly</td>
<td>12 March 1811</td>
<td>23 July 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dalayrac, Nicolas-Marie</td>
<td><em>Adolphe et Clara, ou Les deux prisonniers</em>, comédie, 1 (10 Feb 1799)</td>
<td>Marsollier des Vivetières</td>
<td>16 March 1806</td>
<td>23 Aug 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Opera (Paris premiere)</td>
<td>Librettist(s)</td>
<td>New Orleans premiere</td>
<td>New York season premiere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dalayrac (cont.)</td>
<td><strong>Azéma, ou Les sauvages</strong>, cmda, 3</td>
<td>Poisson de La Chabeaussière</td>
<td>2 Jan 1806</td>
<td>20 Sept 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3 May 1787)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dalayrac (cont.)</td>
<td><strong>Camille, ou Le souterrain</strong>, comédie mêlée de musique, 3</td>
<td>Marsollier des Vivetières</td>
<td>19 March 1812</td>
<td>8 Sept 1827</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(19 March 1791)</td>
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<td>Dalayrac (cont.)</td>
<td><strong>Gulistan, ou Le hulla de Samarcande</strong>, oc, 3</td>
<td>Etienne and Poisson de La Chabeaussière</td>
<td>4 June 1809</td>
<td>1 Aug 1827</td>
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<td>(30 Sept 1805)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dalayrac (cont.)</td>
<td><strong>Maison à vendre</strong>, comédie, 1</td>
<td>Duval</td>
<td>12 Nov 1811</td>
<td>13 July 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(23 Oct 1800)</td>
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<td>Dalayrac (cont.)</td>
<td><strong>Une heure de mariage</strong>, comédie mêlée de chants, 1</td>
<td>Etienne</td>
<td>3 Sept 1807</td>
<td>25 Aug 1830</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20 March 1804)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Della-Maria, Domenico</td>
<td><strong>Le prisonnier, ou La ressemblance</strong>, oc, 1</td>
<td>Duval</td>
<td>26 Nov 1811</td>
<td>12 Sept 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(29 Jan 1798)</td>
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<td>Devienne, François</td>
<td><strong>Les visitandines</strong>, oc, 2</td>
<td>Picard</td>
<td>1-11 June 1805</td>
<td>21 Oct 1828</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(7 July 1792)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Opera (Paris premiere)</td>
<td>Librettist(s)</td>
<td>New Orleans premiere</td>
<td>New York season premiere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fétis, François-Joseph</td>
<td><em>La vieille</em>, op. 1 (14 March 1826)</td>
<td>Scribe and Delavigne</td>
<td>25 Feb 1827</td>
<td>20 July 1827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaveaux, Pierre</td>
<td><em>Le bouffe et le tailleur</em>, op. 1 (21 June 1804)</td>
<td>Villiers and Gouffé</td>
<td>5 May 1814</td>
<td>20 Aug 1827</td>
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<td><em>L'épreuve villageoise</em>, opéra bouffon, 2 (24 June 1784)</td>
<td>Desforges</td>
<td>11 Dec 1806</td>
<td>14 Sept 1827</td>
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<td><em>Marie</em>, op. 3 (12 Aug 1826)</td>
<td>Planard</td>
<td>24 March 1829</td>
<td>18 Aug 1829 (27 Aug 1830)</td>
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<td><em>Zampa, ou La fiancée de marbre</em>, (3 May 1831)</td>
<td>Mélesville</td>
<td>15 Feb 1833</td>
<td>12 Aug 1833</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Opera (Paris premiere)</td>
<td>Librettist(s)</td>
<td>New Orleans premiere</td>
<td>New York season premiere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isouard, Nicolò</td>
<td><em>Cendrillon</em>, opéra-féerie, 3 (22 Feb 1810)</td>
<td>Etienne</td>
<td>24 Feb 1814</td>
<td>13 July 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Jeannot et Colin</em>, oc, 3, (17 Oct 1814)</td>
<td>Etienne</td>
<td>7 March 1820</td>
<td>10 Aug 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Joconde, ou Les coureurs d'aventures</em>, comédie mêlée de chants, 3 (28 Feb 1814)</td>
<td>Etienne</td>
<td>29 Feb 1820</td>
<td>27 July 1827 23 Oct 1828 31 Aug 1830</td>
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<td><em>Lully et Quinault, ou Le déjeuner impossible</em>, oc, 1 (27 Feb 1812)</td>
<td>Gaugiran-Nanteuil</td>
<td>May 1813</td>
<td>1 Sept 1827</td>
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<td>Lebrun, Louis-Sébastien</td>
<td><em>Le rossignol</em>, oc, 1 (23 April 1816)</td>
<td>Etienne</td>
<td>2 April 1820</td>
<td>12 Sept 1828 26 Aug 1833</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Opera (Paris premiere)</td>
<td>Librettist(s)</td>
<td>New Orleans premiere</td>
<td>New York season premiere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Méhul, Etienne-Nicholas</td>
<td><em>Une Folie</em>, comédie mêlée de chants, 2 (5 April 1802)</td>
<td>Bouilly</td>
<td>30 Jan 1808</td>
<td>18 Sept 1827</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rossini, Gioachino</td>
<td><em>Le comte Ory</em>, oc, 2 (20 Aug 1828)</td>
<td>Scribe, Delestre-Poirson</td>
<td>16 Dec 1830</td>
<td>22 Aug 1831</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solié, Jean-Pierre</td>
<td><em>Le diable à quatre, ou La femme acariâtre</em>, oc, 3 (30 Nov 1809)</td>
<td>Creuzé de Lesser</td>
<td>[Not found in Kmen and Loewenberg.]</td>
<td>17 Aug 1827</td>
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Appendix C: List of operas performed by NOFO, 1843 and 1845

Sources: Information is taken from *Oxford Music Online*, Swift, and Kremen, unless otherwise noted.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Composer (Composer)</th>
<th>Librettist(s) (Librettist(s))</th>
<th>Opera (Opera)</th>
<th>New Orleans premiere</th>
<th>New York premiere</th>
<th>New York season premiere</th>
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<td>Adam, Adolphe</td>
<td>Melesville, Scribe</td>
<td><em>Le chalet</em>, oc, 1</td>
<td>3 Dec 1835</td>
<td>7 July 1843</td>
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<td><em>Le postillon de Longjumeau</em>, oc, 3</td>
<td>19 April 1838</td>
<td>16 June 1843</td>
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<td>Auber, Daniel-François-Ésprit</td>
<td>E. Scribe &amp; G. Delavigne</td>
<td><em>L’ambassadrice</em>, oc, 3</td>
<td>8 Jan 1841</td>
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<td><em>La muette de Portici</em>, op. 5</td>
<td>31 March 1843</td>
<td>14 July 1845</td>
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<td><em>Les diamants de la couronne</em>, oc, 3</td>
<td>31 March 1843</td>
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<td>Castil-Blaze</td>
<td><em>Anna Bolena / Anne de Boulen, tragedia lirica / oc, 3</em> (Milan, 26 Dec 1830)</td>
<td>Romani (Italian), Castil-Blaze</td>
<td>12 Dec 1839</td>
<td>2 Aug 1843</td>
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<td>Clapisson, Louis</td>
<td><em>La perruche, oc, 1</em> (28 April 1840)</td>
<td>Dumanoir, Dupin</td>
<td>24 May 1843</td>
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<td>Donizetti, Gaetano</td>
<td><em>La favorite, opéra, 4</em> (2 Dec 1840)</td>
<td>Royer, Vaëz</td>
<td>9 Feb 1843</td>
<td>25 June 1845</td>
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<td><em>La fille du régiment, oc, 2</em> (11 Feb 1840)</td>
<td>Bayard, St. Georges</td>
<td>7 March 1843</td>
<td>19 July 1843</td>
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<td>Halévy, Fromental</td>
<td><em>L'éclair, oc, 3</em> (16 Dec 1835)</td>
<td>de Planard &amp; St. George</td>
<td>16 Feb 1837</td>
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<td><em>La Juive, opéra, 5</em> (23 Feb 1835)</td>
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<td><em>La reine de Chypre, opéra, 5</em> (22 Dec 1841)</td>
<td>St. Georges</td>
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<td>Hérold, Ferdinand</td>
<td><em>Le pré aux clercs, oc, 3</em> (15 Dec 1832)</td>
<td>de Planard</td>
<td>21 Nov 1833</td>
<td>3 July 1843</td>
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<td>Lebrun, Louis Sébastien</td>
<td><em>Le rossignol</em>, oc, 1 (Opéra, 23 April 1816)</td>
<td>Etienne</td>
<td>2 April 1820</td>
<td>August 26, 1833</td>
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<td>Meyerbeer, Giacomo</td>
<td><em>Les Huguenots</em>, grand opéra, 5 (29 Feb 1836)</td>
<td>Scribe, Deschamps</td>
<td>30 April 1839</td>
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<td><em>Robert le diable</em>, grand opéra, 5 (21 Nov 1831)</td>
<td>Scribe, Delavigne</td>
<td>12 May 1835</td>
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<td>Montfort, Alexandre de</td>
<td><em>Polichinelle</em>, oc, 1 (14 June 1839)</td>
<td>Scribe, Duveyrier</td>
<td>[Not in Kmen or Loewenberg.]</td>
<td>19 May 1843</td>
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<td>Prévost, Eugène</td>
<td><em>Cosimo</em>, opéra bouffe, 2 (13 Oct 1835)</td>
<td>Duport, de St. Hilaire</td>
<td>14 March 1839</td>
<td>22 July 1843</td>
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<td>Rossini, Gioachino</td>
<td><em>Guillaume Tell</em>, opéra, 4 (3 Aug 1829)</td>
<td>Jouy, Bis</td>
<td>13 Dec 1842</td>
<td>16 June 1845 (in French)</td>
<td>16 June 1845</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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