‘The nature of fame: Charpentier’s Les Plaisirs de Versailles and Lalande’s Les Fontaines de Versailles compared’

This essay is based on a journey which began more than ten years ago, in Brisbane Australia. Versailles in the 1680s and Brisbane in the 1990s are rather different worlds, but the temporal and geographical barriers can be overcome, with a small dose of imagination and determination. The impetus for embarking on the project of realising some secular works from the early 1680s was, at first, a simple case of curiosity about the composers and their creative context. Without recourse (at the time) to recordings or published editions, the ensembles which were involved, and their audiences, unanimously relished the experience of exploring some of the intriguing theatrical repertoire from the time of Louis XIV. Two works, one each by Marc-Antoine Charpentier and Michel-Richard de Lalande are therefore the focus of this discussion, namely the former’s Les Plaisirs de Versailles (H.480) and the latter’s Les Fontaines de Versailles (S.133).

The current writer’s immediate goal at the time was to create some new editions for these antipodean performances. However it soon became evident that broader philosophical issues were at play in relation to the genesis of these works, such as the historical impact of coincidence, and the very nature of fame. A composer’s posthumous reputation can all too easily be affected by factors and circumstances which are in themselves purely contextual and transitory. Like beauty, one’s artistic worth resides in the eye (or the ear) of the beholder. Thus informed by the firsthand experience of performing two otherwise ephemeral courtly divertissements from three centuries ago (albeit in a new and perhaps unlikely context), this essay will examine how ‘occasional’ works can sometimes have long-term consequences for their creators.

In his examination of the phenomenon, Clive James noted that “from its earliest times, fame and its means of transmission – its media – were intimately involved with one another.”2 This is most pertinent in relation to the temporal art of music. Furthermore, while most figures in society rely on others to promulgate their reputation, creative artists also leave behind their artefacts for posterity, which are however then prone to decay, loss, or simple neglect. The assignment of some level of importance to a particular work or creator is primarily reliant upon the perceptions of those who interpret these pieces of evidence. This factor, more than any other has implications for what is available for future audiences and subsequent generations of interpreters.

1 The recording of Les Plaisirs de Versailles H.480 by Les Arts Florissants appeared in 1996 (Erato 0630-14774-2) two years after the present writer’s own first performance of this work in 1994. Les Fontaines de Versailles S. 133 is yet to be recorded on CD, though the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles edition of this work appeared in 1997, coincidentally within months of the current writer’s presentation in Brisbane.
It is rather sobering to contemplate how much of our musical heritage is due to the phenomenon of the single performance. The unpredictability of a work’s provenance and the fragility of its afterlife is potentially greater when the means of its potential dissemination fall out of the control of those who might value it the most, namely the composer and the original performers. History abounds with solitary appearances of musical works which might easily be disregarded as artistic ephemera, without long-term impact or influence. Nevertheless, scholars delight in surveying and analysing the forensic evidence surrounding even the slightest works, the circumstances which gave rise to them, and the progress of artistic practices and styles which can then be plotted. In contrast, later generations of performers tend to focus primarily on a work’s communicative potential within a contemporary context – they know that listeners are rarely impressed by historical data alone. Even the most intriguing chronology surrounding a specific work will not justify its revival, if it does not contain interest for a modern audience. At the same time, risks do need to be taken occasionally, in the interests of repertoire expansion.

The two complementary focus works of this study evince some intrinsically interesting stylistic comparisons. Furthermore, together they provide a snapshot of the potent atmosphere of late 1682 and early 1683, with patrons and protégés all seeking advancement at the French court, with the result that the immediate career directions of Charpentier and Lalande were decisively plotted. Through examination of these two rather transitory works and their context, the links between ephemerality and fame will be examined.

**Comparison of the première performances - contextual evidence, scoring and artistic forces**

*Les Plaisirs de Versailles* H.480 can be dated with some confidence to November 1682, during the inaugural *jours d’appartement*. The introductory rubric *La scène est dans les appartenements* tends to confirm this. As reported in the *Mercure Galante*, these diversions were convened on three weekday evenings as entertainments for courtiers. Those in attendance were free to choose from a diverse range of gastronomic delights and other forms of recreation, some of which are also referred to explicitly in this work. Circumstantial evidence proposes that the instigator was Mme de Guise, who at this time was actively promoting Charpentier at court. Her attendance at numerous courtly entertainments was necessary because of her familial obligations to the Queen, but this was not an

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4 Cessac, pp. 121-122.
activity shared by her senior, the Mlle de Guise Marie de Lorraine.\textsuperscript{6} The Mlle de Guise however would have approved of any attempts to demonstrate that musical talents other than those of the Surintendent Lully existed outside court. After all, Lully had benefited greatly from her family’s patronage during his youth, before moving on to take advantage of other opportunities, a fact which the Guises never forgot.\textsuperscript{7}

As Catherine Cessac suggests, aspects of scoring and personnel indicate that \textit{Les Plaisirs} was written for the Dauphin.\textsuperscript{8} The development of what constituted ‘the Dauphin’s music’ dates from as early as 1678, as demonstrated in some detail by Patricia Ranum.\textsuperscript{9} A few sacred works from the early 1680s (for example H.326, H.328) are scored for 2 sopranos, baritone, 3 recorders (2 treble and 1 bass) and continuo, thus a very similar disposition to \textit{Les Plaisirs}. As discussed below, H.480 requires only a vocal \textit{haute-contre} in addition to these vocal forces, and while the instrumental parts are not all specifically designated ‘recorders’, the combination of two treble and one bass parts in this context is reminiscent of this particular scoring. H.326 \textit{Gratiarum actions ex sacris codicibus} identifies the singers Marguerite and Magdeleine Pièche and Antoine Frizon, and quite possibly the sopranos’ brothers played the recorder parts. The Pièche males are mentioned in two scores of the 1680s (H.275 and H.488), demonstrating that they played for both the Guises and the Dauphin, and thus probably in \textit{Les Plaisirs}.\textsuperscript{10}

Various commentators have identified a scoring problem in the first two choruses of the work.\textsuperscript{11} These were originally only scored à3 (two sopranos and bass); however, an \textit{haute-contre} part is appended at the end of the manuscript, suggesting indecision or haste in preparation. Otherwise the score is error-free, apart from the omission of a rubric for at the beginning of \textit{Scène 3me}, and a few corrective word changes. However, the first chorus clearly benefits texturally from à4 voicing, if one includes the appended voice part. The leading note (f#) is assigned to the \textit{haute-contre} in the rather arresting entry of the ensemble on the word ‘Mortels’. A few bars later the intricate part writing in both the voices and recorders (including a relatively high tessitura for the \textit{haute-contre}), on the words ‘la divine harmonie’, assigns a degree of self-importance to this philosophically significant text (see Example 1).

\textsuperscript{8} Cessac, pp. 120-121; and Ranum, \textit{Portraits}, pp. 312-313.
\textsuperscript{10} Cessac, pp. 119-120.
The composer tacitly admits a fourth voice is also necessary in the following chorus ‘Arrêtez’. The bass recorder enters briefly without its treble counterparts (see Example 2), where it doubles the appended haute-contre. This line is essential as it completes the harmony with leading notes at several points. However, the doubling of parts at this point is texturally inconsistent and redundant, as all other instrumental phrases are quite separately displaced from the vocal harmonies, statement by statement. Also, in H.326 Charpentier showed that a bass recorder could balance three solo singers. Thus a possible explanation for this anomaly is that the composer’s initial intention may have been to delay the à4 vocal harmonies until after the entry of the haute-contre soloist at the beginning of Scène 3me. This delayed arrival of the fourth and final vocal performer would be further enhanced dramatically if performed by the composer himself, who was known for his ability to sing in this register. Hence the likelihood is that the bass recorder line here was composed first out of harmonic necessity, but then not removed once the decision to add the fourth vocal part was made. Charpentier attaches textural significance to the haute-contre part elsewhere, sometimes by using a relatively high tessitura to enhance tension, such as in the closing chorus.

The likelihood that only four voices were required to perform this work (possibly the Pièche sisters, Frizon and Charpentier himself) is not undermined by the fact that a fifth character is identified in the score – a notional extra haute-contre. This character (un des Plaisirs) is a cameo rôle lasting only 8 bars, which would scarcely require another soloist. This is especially so since the other haute-contre part (Le Jeu) is also comparatively short (just 22 bars). Indeed, Les Plaisirs is usually listed as requiring 2 sopranos, 2 altos and a bass voice. In the context of the work’s total length of 937 bars, the combined solo haute-contre contributions are therefore comparatively slight. As to the need for a separate chorus, the performance convention of soloists fulfilling multiple requirements is also quite workable, even though rapid interchanges between soloists and ensemble might suggest a sonic and dramatic separation of forces (seule - tous). Character definition, if required for dramatic purposes, can easily be achieved by other means such as gestures or props, in the case that the quartet of singers were not augmented by additional chorus members.

Where the instrumental scoring is concerned, a number of additional observations can be made. Mention of a ‘violle’ at least once in the score, and the consistent presence of figures suggests at least a modest two member continuo team. Extra instruments, for example violins or treble viols, doubling or alternating with the treble recorders might enhance certain passages (such as the

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12 Cessac, p. 121.
rambunctious entry of *Comus*), but this coloristic enhancement is not essential.\textsuperscript{14} A rendition of the Minuet à3 within *Scène 2me* by recorders alone is eminently possible. Finally, the librettist gives perhaps provides a definitive clue as to the scoring, in the line of text in the finale ‘*nos flûtes et nos voix*’.

Musicales during the *appartements* probably had minimal staging or production support,\textsuperscript{15} so the opportunity to work with a well-knit ensemble (the Pièche family plus Frizon) would have ensured success, even with minimal rehearsal time. The composer was probably expected to lead the performance, if not as a baton-wielding conductor, then perhaps through honorary membership of this ensemble. Adding more performers, though possible, would not have necessarily enhanced the artistic quality or impact of the event.

It is therefore suggested, based on the evidence discussed above, that a ‘minimalist’ troupe of just nine performers, including the composer, may have originally presented *Les Plaisirs* – four singers (2 sopranos, *haute-contre*, bass), three recorders (two trebles and a bass), and two continuo players including a viol player. In terms of the scale of the performance, the notation of ‘*un heure et demie*’ at the end of the score is misleading. This might be inferred as to indicate a performance timing, but as it takes not more than 30 minutes, the work most surely was accompanied by other activities.\textsuperscript{16} Since the *appartements* lasted from 6pm to 10pm, this scenario is possible.

In contrast to *Les Plaisirs*, the première performance of Lalande’s *Les Fontaines de Versailles* S.133 is very well documented. Many details are to be found on the official score which was prepared by Philidor, and which appeared between the April 5\textsuperscript{th} performance and June 3\textsuperscript{rd} 1683.\textsuperscript{17} Its binding with another recent work, *Le Concert d’Esculape* S.134, suggests that his then patron Mme de Montespan, and her circle which included the copyist, wished to be associated with this new rising star in the Versailles galaxy.\textsuperscript{18} Around this time, the King embarked on a reorganisation of sacred music at court, through declaring all key positions vacant, and announced an open

\textsuperscript{13} Hitchcock, *Raisonné*, p. 349; and ‘Charpentier, Marc-Antoine’ in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed, Vol 5, p. 525.

\textsuperscript{14} This approach was initially employed by the present writer in 1994, and also in William Christie’s 1996 recording (Erato 0630-14774-2).

\textsuperscript{15} Cessac, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{16} Cessac, p. 122. The recording directed by William Christie takes less than 28 minutes.

\textsuperscript{17} F-Pc/ Rés F 537. The title page reads: “LES FONTAINES DE/ VERSAILLES ; SUR LE RETOUR DU/ ROY / CONCERT/ Donné a sa Majesté dans les grands appartements/ de son Château de Versailles, le cinqui.\textsuperscript{e} Avril. 1683./ FAIT PAR M. MOREL, ET MIS EN MUSIQUE PAR M. DE LA LANDE / MAISTRE DE MUSIQUE DE LA CHAPELLE DU ROY./ Coppié par M. Philitour, & écrit par Fr. C.\textsuperscript{cssion} / Le 3.\textsuperscript{e} Juin 1683.”

competition for suitably qualified composers desirous of such a leadership opportunity. The Concours for the positions within the Chapelle was finalised by May 16th, so the substantial score of Les Fontaines, which proudly announces the composer’s newly acquired position, was possibly completed within only a three-week period. One wonders what where the motives for such swift action by the copyist Philidor, who normally produced only retrospective editions, rather than scores of newly composed works. Perhaps it was the desire of the work’s patrons to show that the newly appointed Sous-maître also had theatrical abilities. Lully had previously blocked Lalande’s career options as instrumentalist, but it was now clear that he could not inhibit his rival’s advancement in other capacities.

Like Philidor, who played in the instrumental ensemble, the librettist Antoine Morel [Maurel] was also a featured performer in Les Fontaines. Morel was evidently proud of this, and indeed his rôle of Ancelade is the musical and dramatic highlight, even though, like most of the other rôles, his solo appearance is restricted to a single section. After a strikingly energetic Ritournelle, the complex harmonies of the Air in Scène 4me are scored à4, and are indicated by rather detailed figures—both features are otherwise absent in this work. The vocal writing for Ancelade is also rather more distinctive than that offered to the various deities featured elsewhere in Les Fontaines. Both of these men soon advanced themselves at court, Morel as the Dauphine’s valet de chambre, and Philidor as royal librarian. This demonstrates that exposure alongside Lalande in Les Fontaines had certainly not harmed, and probably helped, their subsequent careers.

All performer’s names are detailed on the score. The impressive cast list also includes members from the prominent musical dynasties of Hotteterre and Rebel (including the composer’s future wife Anne Rebel). A 10-piece string ensemble, pairs of winds, and continuo group including harpsichord and theorbo, supports a 14 voice chorus (possibly dispersed 4-3-3-4), which includes the soloists who appeared as the various named characters. One presumes that Lalande, a junior musician, who did not hold a major appointment at the time of composition (except as teacher to Montespan’s daughters), had generous assistance to organize such an ensemble. Also, the King had recently heard a performance of Lalande’s Une Sérénade en forme d’Opéra S.131, sponsored by Mme de Thianges and her sister Montespan. These women, who at this time still enjoyed a degree of royal favour, were probably responsible for Les Fontaines.

19 Cessac, pp. 122-123.
The subtitle *Sur le retour du Roy* is rather enigmatic in relation to April 5th 1683, since the King had not been recently absent from court. However the allegory of Spring’s return (announced early in the work by *Latone*, the mother of the sun god Apollo), and the presence of *Cérès* (goddess of agriculture and the harvest) and *Flore* establishes a seasonal theme with royal allusions. The performance date listed on the score also provides evidence of the work’s creation within weeks of the announcement of the *Concours*, and therefore that this was a hasty, but strategically important move. As Barbara Coeyman has suggested, the Salon of Apollo is a likely venue, where thirty performers could have performed for a modestly sized audience - a *Concert* would not require staging effects.\(^{22}\) The score provides evidence of a possible second performance, with some revisions and suggestions for re-ordering of movements. Clearly these do not refer to the 1683 première, but were possibly added around the time of a repeat performance in 1685, which Lionel Sawkins has ascertained took place in connection with the completion of the *Bassin de Neptune* fountains within the gardens of Versailles.\(^{23}\) Previously Barbara Coeyman had suggested that the work was revised for a performance of excerpts at the wedding of the Duc de Bourbon and Lalande’s erstwhile pupil Mlle de Nantes, which also took place in 1685.\(^{24}\)

The creative contexts of *Les Plaisirs* and *Les Fontaines* therefore have much in common, in that both occasions benefited from strategic alliances with patrons who could engage prominent performers. The works are however rather different in scale, and by extension, so was their likely contemporary impact. Preservation of *Les Fontaines* by a professionally engraved fair copy also distinguishes it from the more modest *Les Plaisirs* which, like most of Charpentier’s works, was preserved by the composer in manuscript.

**Points of stylistic comparison – Structure, vocal writing, text setting, harmonic vocabulary**

Lacking an authentic genre indication on the score, Hitchcock designates *Les Plaisirs* an ‘operatic divertissement.’\(^{25}\) On the other hand, Lalande denotes *Les Fontaines* clearly as a *Concert*, but its reliance on dance models could also suggest the designation of divertissement. Neither work is a mere theatrical insertion, nor are they grand enough to have been aligned with major festivities at court or elsewhere. Both are structured as continuous music in several scenes, though *Les Fontaines* is more obviously Lullian in design, with à5 instrumentation and successions of airs, dances and choruses, including an impressive Chaconne. Both works develop a loose plot, one

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\(^{21}\) Coeyman, p. 93.
\(^{22}\) Coeyman, p. 112.
\(^{24}\) Coeyman, p. 91.
focusing on frivolous indoor pleasures, the other relying on myth and allegory related to the seasons and other elements of the natural world.

Listeners take an imaginary journey through the appartements to savour delights mentioned in Les Plaisirs (music, conversation, chocolate, wine, confitures, pastries, cards, billiards), all of which would have been available to the guests at such events. The audience was long-suffering, as the Duchess of Osnabrück recounted:

“I found so many people to occupy my time and thoughts that I took very little notice of the plays. There was terrible overcrowding in the audience, and the heat was unbelievable; I came to the conclusion that the pleasures of the Court of France are mingled with many inconveniences.”

Similarly in Les Fontaines one mentally perambulates through the gardens, musing upon myths embodied in sculpture and water. Such tours were devised by the King to include Le Bousquet de l’Encélade where one views the tortured shape of the vanquished Titan who dared to challenge Apollo. The moral would not have been lost on observers, and so it deservedly features prominently in Lalande’s work, through its central placement, scoring and vocal style.

Described variously as ‘lightweight fluff’ and as an ‘agreeable divertissement … full of charm and humour’, Les Plaisirs is replete with detailed refinements. La Musique and La Conversation are clearly characterised with their own distinct metre, vocal style, and harmonic context, thus demonstrating the aesthetic diversity to which Charpentier aspired. As if to signify the composer’s personal preferences, La Musique is crowned with vocally sumptuous phrases and intricate scoring, in similar style to her namesake in Les Arts Florissants H.487. Meanwhile, La Conversation chatters syllabically for most of her rôle.

One searches in vain for similar evidence of subtleties in Les Fontaines. However, Le Dieu du Canal (a newcomer to the Pantheon), La Renomée and Ancelade feature quite vividly, with rhetorical recitatives and occasional melismatic flourishes. Here too, Ancelade stands out from the crowded assembly of characters with his blustering roulades, dissonances and angular intervals. Coincidentally, Comus - deu des Festins appears in both works, in rather similar guise. Both composers set the music of this rôle in the key of C, in triple metre, and supported by the customary à3 texture for a bass Air, with two obbligato treble parts in homophony. In Les Plaisirs, dramatic

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29 Hitchcock, Charpentier, p. 105.
30 Cessac, p. 134.
continuity is heightened by restricting the instrumental involvement to a few bars before each character’s entrance, while postludes and interludes within movements are extremely brief. In contrast, Lalande adheres to the Ritournelle convention whereby full statements precede each Air.

The use of humour differs in each work. Whereas Les Plaisirs incorporates humour several times within its libretto, which is further enhanced by the musical setting. A laughing chorus in Les Plaisirs (Scène 4me, bars 197–226) recalls a similar scene in the composer’s Les Fous Divertissants H.500. La Conversation’s final monologue contains quips and clumsy references to solfège with inappropriate syllables on certain notes (Scène 4, bars 187-189). La Musique is astonished that her verbal combatant can not distinguish a minuet from a courante – perhaps La Conversation did not know that the courante was hardly ever used by Charpentier? In comparison, the only evidence of humour in Les Fontaines is in the annotations which were added later, presumably by the composer himself. The most outrageous of these also refers to a minuet as ‘ne vault rien’ (Scène 5, Menuet).

Tonal coherence is achieved differently in these works. Les Plaisirs is set overall in G minor, while the central ‘drama’ of the piece is enacted in C major. Charpentier’s descriptors of these keys, ‘serious and magnificent’ and ‘gay and warlike’ respectively, fit rather well here. In contrast, Les Fontaines demonstrates a progressive tonal structure, which moves gradually downwards in fifths. Using Charpentier’s key system, its opening scenes are in d minor ‘grave and pious’ or D major ‘joyous and very warlike.’ Then follows Scène 4me for Ancelade, strongly set in G minor. Scène 5me moves to G major, returning to the minor for ‘Plaintes regrets’. Thereafter the work is in C major. Thus key and mode are used by both composers to denote Affekt with clarity and simplicity.

The harmonic vocabulary of Les Fontaines is rather limited, being predictably diatonic, aside from a few chromaticisms in the minor-mode movements. The darkness of a De Profundis setting of Lalande’s latter years is hardly previewed at all here, nor would this occasion have suggested such tonal experiments. Charpentier, who in 1682 was the more experienced musician, does not eschew harmonic tension. Corelli-like suspensions introduces La Musique with ‘gorgeous dissonances’. The protagonists’ debate in Scène 3me culminates with a series of biting seconds over a chromatic bass, while the work’s conclusion is enhanced by a few deftly placed 9th chords. Both works do however explore their ensemble’s full potential for textural richness, with Les Plaisirs achieving up to à7 part-writing, and Les Fontaines à8 scoring in the larger choruses.

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32 For the full list of Charpentier’s descriptors, see Cessac, pp. 406-7.
33 Cessac, p. 134.
Connections and turning points – The works in the context of their composer’s later careers

The question as to whether the composers knew each other well, or at all, by 1682-83, is worth considering. However, one could postulate whether this is of any consequence. Also, would they have had opportunity to hear each other’s appartement works? The literature on Lalande is not yet as comprehensive as that for Charpentier, so some of these questions remain open. Both were encircling some of the central points of gravity at court, so they may have gained passing acquaintance of each other’s work. The Parisian churches and the Jesuit Collège provide another possible contact point, as suggested by scholars including Lionel Sawkins. The score of Les Fontaines may have interested Charpentier, but it probably held little instructive potential for him. Conversely, Lalande may have observed some appartement entertainments in late 1682, including Charpentier’s latest project. It is not too much to suggest that the works would have diverted similar audiences in the same venue, only months apart, and possibly in the presence of royalty, as might be inferred by some textual references made within the libretto of each work.

The two composers would have crossed paths during the early stages of the Concours, the process of which is well documented elsewhere. At that time they were at different stages of their respective careers, and perhaps unexpectedly, the outcome for each was also quite different. The King’s recognition of each composer’s abilities, tacitly in the case of Charpentier, and more explicitly for Lalande, thus also provides a point of intersection when comparing their careers. By 1683 Charpentier had earned the respect (or envy) of the most powerful forces within both theatrical and sacred musical worlds. These cross-references are all the more interesting when viewed against the background of Lully’s diminishing influence in the mid 1680s.

Juxtaposing Les Plaisirs and Les Fontaines, together with various pieces of contextual evidence and a little hypothesis, a passing snapshot is possible. The court’s relocation to Versailles promoted an increase in theatrical activity, particularly by those who were otherwise limited by Lully’s privilège. The establishment of the ‘Aparment Days’ provided the setting for numerous entertainments, staged quickly on demand, as gaps appeared in the schedule. Charpentier and Lalande were aligned to two different factions who were active in courtly circles, but who shared between them anti-Lullian sympathies. As Ranum has demonstrated, the eminent house of Guise could confidently promote

34 Patricia Ranum’s extensive research into Charpentier’s background, his family, and their various professional and personal contacts does not include any major references to Michel-Richard de Lalande. See Ranum, Portraits; also Catherine Massip, Michel-Richard Delalande ou le Lully latin (Geneva, 2005).
35 Sawkins, Thematic Catalogue, xxi.
their resident composer in such productions, something which Lully could not now prevent. Similarly, Montespan and Thianges secured prestigious opportunities for their protégé. The appearance of Les Fontaines is a remarkable event, as Lalande was not yet well established. The example provided by Les Plaisirs may possibly have encouraged Lalande’s patrons to pursue similar projects. These same patrons ensured success before a discerning audience, by using their influence to provide their composer with capable performers.

Thus within months of these two divertissements being written and performed, each composer’s immediate career directions were plotted. Charpentier gained a pension in gratitude for his services to the Dauphin with a series of sacred works as well as works such as Les Plaisirs. Emboldened by this success, he embarked on a series of operas, with support of his regular patrons, the Guises. Interestingly, La Musique reappears in one of them, Les Arts Florissants. Meanwhile, Lalande quickly established himself as the major official sacred composer, writing prolifically during his early Versailles years. He intermittently returned to theatrical music, which was not within his initial list of duties. His Chapelle responsibilities did not preclude his being called upon to replace an indisposed Lully in 1686, with his largest operatic work, the Ballet de la Jeunesse S.136. Such an opportunity might not have arisen without prior exposure through divertissments such as Les Fontaines. Coincidentally, this production featured many of the same performers who had previously appeared in Les Fontaines, and possibly some who had sung in Les Plaisirs. The work also lived on through inclusion of several movements in the Symphonies pour les soupers du Roy, and in revised form for a repeat performance in 1685.

**Measuring posthumous reputations – some indicators and comparisons**

A composer’s immediate posthumous reputation is often a useful indication of his contemporary standing. Lalande’s grands motets featured continuously throughout the 18th century in the programs of the Concerts Spirituels. Their grandeur and profundity is befitting of the Lenten season, and their rich scoring made them ideal vehicles for this very public forum. Indeed, this is a rare but not unique case of a baroque composer’s work living on for several decades in the public’s consciousness. Charpentier’s relatives tried in vain to have his works published extensively, resulting fortuitously in a bequest of his entire oeuvre en masse to the Royal library, where they lay dormant for more than two centuries. Ironically, it was this very lack of marketability that has ensured its posthumous longevity.

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Another indication of their relative fame was Titon du Tillet’s tribute, the *Parnasse Français* which embodied the images of various artists in sculpture. He also produced several prose writings such as a *Description* which first appeared in 1727, the year after Lalande’s death, followed by several supplements over the next thirty years.\(^3^9\) Not intended to be a comprehensive history, it is however significant that while Lully and Lalande had nine and five pages respectively devoted to them in the 1732 publication,\(^4^0\) Charpentier only rates a brief mention, albeit a complimentary one. He is described as a wise, hard-working musician whose music always succeeded.\(^4^1\)

In light of these case studies, how might one usefully measure the fame, notoriety, or influence of a baroque composer, within the bewildering array of choices that confront us in the early 21st century? Mass market appeal or easy recognition might be one indicator, and if so, the famous Prélude to the *Te Deum* H.146 by Charpentier would have to qualify. Lalande’s ceremonial music can be equally impressive, but as yet none of his *Simphonies pour le Soupers du Roy* have achieved the widespread reach as those 8 bars by his older colleague.

Another indicator might be availability of a composer’s works through published scores, recordings, and live performances. The latter is difficult to quantify, but in neither case only a few works can be claimed as standard or mainstream performance repertoire. Works in this category would include Lalande’s *De profundis* S.23, Charpentier’s *Te Deum* H.146 and the charming but uncharacteristic *Messe de Minuit* H.9. The hard copy evidence is a little easier to evaluate. Nearly half of Charpentier’s works have now been published, while Lalande’s output is still somewhat under-represented (about 20% of a notional oeuvre of 160 works). Neither composer is yet served by a complete edition, though the Minkoff series of facsimile reproductions has immeasurably enhanced the level of access to Charpentier sources. The advent of specialist organizations such as the Centre Baroque Musique de Versailles has certainly improved the strike rate, but more so for Charpentier than Lalande at this stage.

Recordings are another useful benchmark, though quantification through sales figures is difficult. Charpentier is well represented by recordings of nearly 300 works from his diverse output, though some of the smaller sacred genres are less well covered. In comparison, about 40% of Lalande’s works have been recorded. While his *De Profundis, Te Deum* and *Simphonies* have enjoyed

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numerous interpretations, many are yet to be documented for the first time. Barely half of his c.70 grands motets have been recorded, while none of his c.20 stage works appear to have been released on disc as yet. Evidence of impact through a proliferation of scholarship is also a useful measure of a composer’s fame, but here also Charpentier is much better served than Lalande.

This collective evidence demonstrates that Charpentier has retrospectively attained the status of superstar of the grand siècle, while Lalande, famous in his own lifetime and for many years afterward, has yet to make a comparable impact. While some could argue that recent developments have righted a historical wrong for Charpentier, it is intriguing to ponder that it might have been otherwise, but for a rapid succession of events during a few months in the early 1680s.

Conclusion

This discussion has focused on two secular works of the 1682-83 season, created by musicians who otherwise specialized in sacred music, and who between themselves dominated that field in France for almost 50 years. The study has investigated a seminal moment in careers which otherwise inhabited parallel universes, and whose orbits very rarely intersected. These occasional works were performed only once or twice, and then, only for a distracted audience rigorously bound by protocol.

While one assumes they were performed well by skilled artists, the works at most only peripherally affected the course of music. The scores are well preserved, whether the composer had access to professional copyists, or relied on their own calligraphy. The strategic alliances to which Les Plaisirs and Les Fontaines owe their genesis, impacted on each composers’ subsequent lifestyles and careers, but such concerns now belong to history. The interface between historical coincidences, the career opportunities they engendered, and the perceptions of a composer’s relative standing and reputation is nevertheless an intriguing study in itself. But more importantly, it is clear from this discussion that even the most ephemeral music has the capacity to exist well into the future. Thankfully for musicians of the 21st century, modern editions, performances and recordings of these divertissements and similar works are on the increase.

All composers deserve fair recognition, both in their lifetime and posterity. Much of our western musical culture is based on indefatigable efforts of creative artists working for their patrons, but who rarely achieved fame and fortune for themselves. If the ‘Ghost of Charpentier’ were here to

Sadie, p. 147.
celebrate his tercentenary, he might need to rephrase the words in the Epitaphium H.474 “And since those who scorned me were more numerous than those who praised me, music brought me small honour and great burdens.” One wonders what the ghosts of Lalande or Lully, who were far more famous in their own day than at present, might now be saying to us. Fame, like much that is defined as art, may be essentially ephemeral. Who decides which artists and works are to be honoured, and when it is right to do so, is a fraught question, but one which is worth asking.

Example 1. Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Les Plaisirs de Versailles, Scene 1 excerpt.

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42 Cessac, p. 380.