


Spring 2014

# French Opera and the French Revolution, Etienne Nicolas Mehul

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French Opera and the French Revolution  
Etienne Nicolas Méhul

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An Honors Thesis  
submitted for partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for graduation with Honors in History.

Hamline University  
St. Paul, MN  
April 2014

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## **Abstract**

Although Etienne Nicolas Méhul is relatively unknown today, he was greatly respected by his contemporaries, including Beethoven, Cherubini and Berlioz. He rose to popularity and notoriety during the most turbulent years of the French Revolution, when most intellectuals fled for their lives, and yet he managed to maintain his status as a favorite of the people. From an examination of some of his operas - *Euphrosine* (1790), *Ariodant* (1799), *Adrien* (1792, 1799), and *Horatius Cocclès* (1794) - it is apparent that Méhul used thinly veiled allegories to express his views, both political and personal. His heroes in these operas were Romans, Scottish nobles, and Crusaders; the libretti referred to France's history, but they represented political figures and scenes of his time. Méhul was also famous for his revolutionary anthems, which might have protected him from harsh critiques from the censor. While musicologists like M.E.C. Bartlet and David Charlton studied Méhul's works mainly for his musical innovations, my research uses an historian's lens to examine the libretti, scores, and the reviews of these operas. My findings reveal that Méhul was not only an excellent composer, but also a critic of the regime who knew how to overcome censorship through allegorical expression in libretti and musical themes.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the various professors who have helped me with this project, particularly my advisor, Dr. Nurith Zmora, who has helped me throughout the entirety of this project. I would also like to thank in particular Dr. Paula Mullineaux, Professor Bill Wallace, Dr. George Chu, and Dr. Elissa Harbert.

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## **Part 1. Introduction: Who is Etienne Nicolas Méhul?**

Of the composers that are commonly known from around the time of the French Revolution, such as Berlioz (1803-69), Cherubini (1760-1842), Gluck (1714-1781) and Grètry (1741-1813) - Etienne Nicolas Méhul (1763-1817) rarely gets any mention. All of these great composers considered him a worthy peer and in some cases, an innovator who changed their own style. Méhul and his operas have not been studied by many people, despite the fact that many of them are quite political at a time when being political was fraught with danger. While some scholars have discussed his music and his life, as of yet no one has answered one particular question that seems apparent when discussing intellectuals and artists from the time of the French Revolution: how and why did this man survive?

As a composer of operas with clear political commentaries, he should have been the immediate target of not only censoring, but of persecution: many other intellectuals at the time were executed for far less. Yet Méhul not only survived, he became a favorite of the people and of Napoleon; and the scholarly community at large has not recognized him as one of the greater composers of the age. This is all too common, and composers rose and fell in popularity throughout this time in surprising ways. Thus, the question of how he survived remains unanswered.

To try and resolve this question, I have researched some of his operas that were published at key points in the Revolution, and the historical context of the settings, the plot choices, and more within those operas. I have studied the scores and libretti for the operas that I could find, and searched through archives to find anything written at the

time about Méhul and his operas, as well as any of his other works, so as to determine how he achieved popularity and how he maintained his station throughout this period.

I have chosen to focus on opera because it was a popular art form at the time, and one that was undergoing a transformation throughout the French Revolution. The particular operas by Méhul that I have chosen to analyze in this thesis are from the most turbulent and divisive parts of the French Revolution, and they represent those times well. *Euphrosine* is from the early Revolution, when the first changes started occurring, and was popular. *Horatius Coclés*, written during the Reign of Terror, is emblematic of the violent changes occurring at the time, and was banned after only a few performances – despite its popular story. *Ariodant*, 1799, premiered when Napoleon began to consider himself the true leader of the French Revolution (he was the “First Consul”, and a military leader – he became Emperor in 1804), and was popular; and *Adrien* displays an interesting dichotomy between what would have been popular in 1792 and 1799, though it was censored and banned multiple times.

In the following pages, I will review scholars’ views on the French opera of the time and specifically on French opera during the French Revolution. I will then give a background of the French Revolution, the French opera and its audiences during the time, and a biographical sketch of Méhul himself. In my analysis, I will describe the plots of the operas selected, and analyze the symbolism and political views infused in these operas to conclude with some explanation of how he survived and how intellectuals at the time of Revolution used opera to convey their views.

## **Part 2. Historiography**

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The changing politics, symbolism, use of history, and drastic socio-economic changes in the audiences leads to the following conclusion:

In an age of conflict that was being shaped to an unprecedented degree by the shifting content of traditional symbolic representations, the fate of opera was unfolding in accordance with the same structural tensions endemic to the medium, but significantly complicated by the succession of cataclysmic events occurring in the world of political reality.<sup>1</sup>

Méhul was one of the composers that helped to unfold the new fate of opera and interlink it with the complex political fervor that was typical of the period.

### **2.1. French Opera**

Many scholars have studied French music during the French Revolution; some because the innovations made have been widely acknowledged as the beginnings of Romanticism in music, and some because of the importance of music in this particular time period. As the 18th century went on, the musical style of France shifted, and started to become “newer,” and more tuned into the feelings of the common people. In A History of Western Music, this process is described: “original airs (called *ariettes*) in a mixed Italian-French style were introduced along with the older vaudevilles. The vaudevilles were gradually replaced by the *ariettes* until, [by] the end of the 1760s, *all the music in an opera comique was freshly composed.*”<sup>2</sup> (Emphasis mine) The ‘fresh’

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<sup>1</sup>Josephs, Herbert. “Opera During the Revolution: Lyric Drama in a Political Theater.” *The French Review*, Vol. 62, No. 6, Special Issue: 1789-1889-1989 (May, 1989), pp. 975-984. Internet Resource. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/394834>>. 975.

<sup>2</sup>Grout, Donald J, J P. Burkholder, and Claude V. Palisca. *A History of Western Music*. New York: W.W.

composition of the music meant that current musicians were writing music and libretto that naturally would be influenced by the environment around them.

As this environment was growing steadily closer to a more involved, unhappy public, those issues naturally were present in their music; but usually through historical reference. The settings of operas were often classical or famous folk tales, such as Roman tales, etc. Many artists of the time were looking back to the past for inspiration, as the world around them was often violent and frightening. We see this more in the later 19th century, as the burgeoning development of nations inspired artists to use their country's past and shared heritage (even back to Roman times) to create their sense of nationality.

Denise Gallo, author of *opera: the basics* claimed that the newer 'comic' operas influenced the way that theater development progressed. Because of the large audiences that comic operas attracted, new theaters were built that reflected not only the number of people who would come to see each performance, but also the drastic differences in their social status. While operas in the *opera seria* genre were produced in exclusive and expensive venues, "anyone who could afford a ticket could attend comic performances."<sup>3</sup> These comic operas were similar to their Italian counterpart, *opera buffa*, and came to be known as *opéra comique*; implying that they were more lighthearted, and that there was more energy and action in them than in the older *tragedie lyrique* operas.

In *Grètry and the Growth of Opera-Comique*, David Charlton makes an interesting point about the social standing of the opera houses, and how they took the place of the comic theatres and public performances. He explains the hierarchy of

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Norton, 2006. Print. 494 [emphasis mine]

<sup>3</sup>Gallo, Denise P. *Opera: The Basics*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print. 151



“public entertainment,” and states that the Opéra and the Comédie-Française were the two most important theaters at the time of the Revolution. “Next came the Comédie-Italienne; below were the acrobats, child actors and marionettes at the fairs and the Boulevard du Temple.”<sup>4</sup> In the above quote, Charlton mentions three opera houses: the Opéra, the Comédie-Française, and the Comédie-Italienne.

The Opéra was the main house for the operas that had been so popular during the *ancien regime* period - *tragedie lyrique/tragedie en musique*. The Comédie-Française was the home of the newer, *opéra-comiques* and similar operas that were a blend of the lighter themes, more beloved by the public that had less to do with the intricate and opulent operas of the *opéra seria* and more with the storytelling and culture of the French people. As this was a period wherein the French people were beginning to subvert the status quo, these newer kinds of operas were far more popular with the public. Additionally, the Comédie-Italienne was very popular but was (at its inception) populated by only Italian, and Italian-trained, actors. They performed Italian *opéra buffa*, the equivalent of *opera-comique*, which was also relatively popular with the public.

As Charlton points out, “public taste everywhere fastened on the melodramatic, the historical, the gothic, and the exotic” - the key phrase here is “public taste”. Until the revolutionary era (and even before) the ‘public taste’, while influential in some things, was not always the most important when operas were written. Most operas were often created because a wealthy patron requested them, or a composer wrote something for a specific artist, who also happened to be a patron. These largely favored the wealthy

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<sup>4</sup>Charlton, David. *Gretry and the growth of opera-comique*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. Print. 207.

nobility, and as such ‘public taste’ was generally overruled for the ‘aristocratic taste,’ as it were - before the Revolution.

Charlton also explains that while these operas were becoming more suited to the ‘public taste,’ they were still restricted to the whims of the higher institutions. “Such was the attractiveness of the smaller theatres that in 1784 the Opéra obtained a royal decree giving it the right to license and exploit all of them.”<sup>5</sup> As Charlton states, the more “important” opera houses could censor or take any material they wished from their lesser competitors, and maintain their steady income. This system started to wear down during the Revolution, as it increasingly meant that fewer people could see those operas.

Historians debate whether or not the various political movements and events from the French Revolution are important in this context. These events and various socio-political movements (such as the fall of the Bastille, the Cult of the Supreme Being, etc.) changed the musical content of the time and changed the occasions at which commissioned music was performed. The themes that were presented in different musical works also changed with the time – partially due to censorship and partially due to the changing popular culture of the time.

For example, composers were often commissioned to write musical pieces for important events, during both the *ancien regime* and the Revolutionary period (1789-1804); moreover, each Revolutionary government supported the main theatres throughout the Revolution, though the libretti or texts of these works were subject to stricter censorship than in previous years. Any musical work would only be produced if accepted by the censor.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Charlton, 208

<sup>6</sup>“Composers wrote large choral works for the many government-sponsored festivals to celebrate the

Cynthia Verba's thesis, in Music and the French Enlightenment: Reconstruction of a Dialogue, 1750-1764, also aligns with the notion of political movement that influenced music, and states that "French music served as an integral part of an overall attack on the *ancien regime*."<sup>7</sup> Through their music, composers such as Méhul and other artisans started to criticize the nobility and the ruling class by using metaphor and analogy. In this way, they were able to direct public attention to the issues of the day.

## **2.2: Revolution**

In *The French Revolution and the London Stage, 1789-1805*, George Taylor describes what he refers to as a 'cultural crisis' when historians study this period of history. He claims that some of these differences come from different approaches to history, given the time of the historian's research, or even political trends that occurred at the time (though he states that he may, himself, be coming from such a vantage point), and as such these previous views must be pushed aside in the interest of continuing study on the topic.

From generation to generation - even decade to decade - different explanations of the Revolution have been propounded...I must express a distrust of those accounts of the 1970s and 1980s that tried to deny any explanation based on 'class interest'. Francois Furet's *Penser la Revolution Francaise* (1978), W. Doyle's *Origins of the French Revolution* (1980), and even Simon Shama's *Citizens* (1989), all tend towards the 'unpredictable chapter of accidents and miscalculations', school of thought.<sup>8</sup>

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Revolution. The government also supported the Opera and Opera Comique, the two main opera theaters in Paris, although opera librettos were subject to censorship for political reasons. Many of the plots touched on themes of the Revolution or concerns of the time." Grout, *History of Western Music*, 570-571  
<sup>7</sup>Verba, Cynthia. *Music and the French Enlightenment: Reconstruction of a Dialogue, 1750-1764*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. Print. 14-15.

<sup>8</sup>Taylor, George. "The French Revolution and the London Stage, 1789-1805." Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 11.

When discussing *Le Deserteur*<sup>9</sup>, Taylor claims that “it inevitably touched political sensibilities because it dealt with the individual as the victim of the state.” Though the monarchy seemed to accept this play as nothing spectacular, its popularity throughout the early years of the Revolution seems to imply, at least for Taylor, the importance of the themes and the use of theatre as a valid place to portray political ideologies and current events, as well as the quickly changing social constructs and roles.<sup>10</sup> Taylor claims that “the essential ideological conflict of the whole Revolutionary period - although its forms varied greatly between 1789 and 1815 - was between the ‘common sense’ of the merchant classes and the ‘irrational’ protectionist tradition of privilege.”<sup>11</sup> In the theatre this conflict could be played out, potential solutions could be modeled for the audience; but they did not directly attack the regime or the leading figures of the time.

Malcolm Boyd also discusses the celebrations at which many artisans had been called to write new plays, operas, and songs, and how they were used politically in his book, *Music and the French Revolution*. At one point, he emphasizes public oaths given by the leaders of the French society, including such figures as Lafayette, and even the King. They swore to preserve the country and its constitution (in this case, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen). In so doing, these leaders of the old hierarchy officially implied that his subjects were no longer merely ‘subjects’ but ‘citizens’. Another important point that Boyd makes is that these declarations were outdoors, where anyone could attend, and that this was the first step towards Louis XVI

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<sup>9</sup>*Le Deserteur* is one of the most popular opera-comiques from the 1700s. It was composed by Michel-Jean Sedaine, who also worked with Andre Grétry, and the libretto was written by Monsigny.

<sup>10</sup>Taylor, 37

<sup>11</sup>Taylor, 21-22

relinquishing his complete control over France.<sup>12</sup>

One phrase from Boyd's book makes this even clearer: "'Fraternité' and 'égalité' were, of course, key words for the period."<sup>13</sup> Not only were the new ideals of the republic quickly accepted, they were used everywhere and in abundance - though these scholars are focusing on particular parts of the history of the Revolution, it seems that those ideas stood true regardless of the year or regime. Boyd uses these examples to show how drastically the opinions of the people were changing at the time - and how that influenced the music of the time. Librettists and composers were in a unique situation where they could harness the views of the people and create entertainment for mass audiences.

### **2.3: Opera during the Revolution**

The decades between 1780 and 1810 were among the most turbulent and influential that Europe had ever seen. Herbert Josephs, in his article "Opera During the Revolution: Lyric Drama in a Political Theater," wrote about the period of the Revolution (approx. 1789-1802), and claimed that "the boundaries that had once been so clearly defined between artistic expression and historical reality became increasingly blurred, with important consequences for the art of the lyric stage."<sup>14</sup> Josephs' thesis is that the dramatic upheaval during the Revolution led to a new era of music and theater for France. Josephs states that "the fate of opera was unfolding in accordance with the

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<sup>12</sup>"Louis XVI's acceptance of the new constitution on 14 September 1791 marked an additional stage in the public realization that a monarch did not receive his authority from on high, but served the collective will of free Frenchmen." Boyd, Malcom. *Music and the French Revolution*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Print. 122.

<sup>13</sup>Boyd, 111

<sup>14</sup>Josephs, 975

same structural tensions endemic to the medium, but significantly complicated by the succession of cataclysmic events occurring in the world of political reality.”<sup>15</sup> The paradigm shift for opera in France may seem like a natural occurrence, given the changes in the country’s leadership - but throughout the changes in leadership, the Opéra proved to be an excellent forum for artistic expression of the feelings of the leading intellectuals towards their leaders, without outwardly and clearly stating those feelings.

Malcolm Boyd also writes about the change in opera houses and theatres in Paris, in *Music and the French Revolution*. From 1789-92, he claims, “Little seemed to change on the surface.” The repertoire of most theatres had not changed, and most still praised the monarchy and the ruling powers that were starting to become unpopular.

Apparently the audiences of different theaters welcomed the appearance of the Queen and the royal family at performances up until 1791. Near the end of 1792 when the monarchy had been dissolved and the Republic had been declared, Boyd claims that the Opéra successfully maneuvered a change from a monarchic institution to one that was committed to the future of France by making a commitment to patriotic and morally ‘correct’ works that promoted the Republic.<sup>16</sup>

Boyd explains that when librettists tried to emphasize French heroism, they ran into one large issue: “there were no clear precedents.” Unfortunately, because most operas and theatrical works at the time would idolize and focus upon the lives of living people whose names were in the public record, the characters were changed in order to avoid ‘hero-worship.’ This makes it harder to identify whom these stories were about

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<sup>15</sup>Josephs, 975

<sup>16</sup>Boyd, 108

and what these people were actually doing at the time of the revolution - because their identity is suppressed by analogy.<sup>17</sup> As librettists and composers sought out those allegorical masks for their present-day models, they found that going back to classical themes proved to serve their purpose. Boyd states that “by choosing classical subjects they could at the same time continue the traditions of the theatre and capitalize on the cult of antiquity among Revolutionaries ... comparisons with the precedents of republican Greece and Rome were frequent in official speeches.”<sup>18</sup> Boyd’s claim seems to support Josephs’ thesis that the political events of the day were imbuing popular artistic mediums with new importance. While often operas and theatrical works were styled to reflect the monarchs and important aristocracy, they had not been so full of political metaphor and importance until the Revolution began.

Another scholar, Damien Mahiet, discusses why those allegories were so important, and may seem so vague at times. He explains that because the Opéra depended on subsidies from its benefactors, who were often of different opinions toward the ongoing political conflicts, the operas performed were often varied and had to keep their political themes to analogy.<sup>19</sup>

George Taylor, in *The French Revolution and the London Stage, 1789-1805*, discusses the efforts of other historians to explain the political and cultural themes in theater and how political messages could be seen in plays from the time period. In his introduction, he references Emmet Kennedy’s book *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris*, and argues against Kennedy’s theory that “previous historians

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<sup>17</sup>Boyd, 126

<sup>18</sup>Boyd, 124-125

<sup>19</sup>Mahiet, Damien. "Staging the French Revolution: Cultural Politics and the Paris Opera, 1789-1794.(book)." *Notes*. 69.3 (2013). Print. 540.

overstated the political content and influence of the theatre during the revolution.”<sup>20</sup>

Here, Taylor gives credit to Kennedy, and quotes him:

“Kennedy accurately summarises the plot and reliance on conventional tropes and situations: ‘Stock eighteenth-century themes are skillfully exploited here: marriage of love over marriage of interest, bourgeois frugality and prudence over aristocratic honour, testy master-servant relations in which money is the main factor, and the psychology of deaf-mutes ... It has no political message, only a few social banalities...’”<sup>21</sup>

But Taylor then disagrees with Kennedy’s thesis by stating that while the plays analyzed may seem to be quite apolitical at first, the themes that keep recurring (or “stock themes,” as Taylor calls them) indicate the political messages of the librettist and thereby, the audiences that enjoyed the pieces.

In one such play, Kennedy and Taylor both analyze the same scene, and where Kennedy finds no significance, Taylor notes the particular moments that seem, in a closer look, to show the questions raised, not outright, but in passing. Taylor also mentions the “metaphor of deafness being adopted as a strategy for coping with a material problem” as the number of characters in different theatrical pieces who suffered afflictions like deafness, blindness, or muteness increased during the Revolutionary period.”<sup>22</sup> These characters seem represent figures of the time; therefore they (and others in many other plays and theatrical works) were the artist’s way of showing the public different sides of their leaders and political ideals.

Here, Taylor goes into the heart of the argument that will be pursued further in this paper - the messages instilled in the artistic pieces of the time (in this case, opera) can expose the political and cultural significance of the pieces themselves; and in many

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<sup>20</sup>Taylor, 6

<sup>21</sup>Taylor, 6

<sup>22</sup>Taylor, 6-7



cases, these works gave the artists who created them a way around the censorship of the time and the danger that came with criticizing the leaders of the time.

Lynn Hunt, in Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution, wrote about the change in the way artisans expressed their feelings about the change in social order, and describes the different so-called ‘generic plot’ lines in popular culture.

“The uncertainty about the course of the Revolution can be seen in the transformation of narrative structures that informed revolutionary rhetoric. In the first months of the Revolution, most rhetoric was unconsciously shaped by what Northrup Frye terms the “generic plot” of comedy...Comedy turns on a conflict between an older social order (the phrase *ancient regime* was invented in these early days) and a new one, and this conflict is often represented as one dividing a son who wants freedom from his more arbitrary and conventional father...The final reconciliation, the happy emergence of the new society, is signaled by a festive ritual, which often takes place at the end of the action...The Festival [of Federation, 14 July 1790] brought the French family back together again, with the recognition that the father had given in to the pressing demands of his sons.”<sup>23</sup>

This does align with the common plot of operas before and in the early days of the Revolution, and certainly makes sense. However, this happy image of a family reunited did not last for long, as the more radical factions of the Revolution started enforcing their opinions into what Hunt refers to as ‘revolutionary rhetoric’.

“The king had acquiesced only in appearance, and the radicals were not satisfied with the restoration of family harmony. As the radicals began to dominate discourse in 1792, especially after the declaration of the Republic in September, the generic plot shifted from comedy to romance. Now the Revolution seemed more like a quest, in which the heroes were the brothers of the revolutionary fraternity, who faced a series of life-and-death struggles with the demonic forces of counterrevolution.”<sup>24</sup>

Hunt brings up an excellent point about the narrative of opera in this section, and it certainly applies to many aspects of French culture at the time. This plot shift shows up

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<sup>23</sup>Hunt, Lynn. *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1984. 34-35.

<sup>24</sup>Hunt, 35

in the later operas of the period, such as *Ariodant*, that focus on the romance and the struggle of the hero to win his love through many trials.

#### **2.4: Etienne Nicolas Méhul**

Despite not having reviews readily available to the public, M.E.C. Bartlet, who had access to the French National Archives, was able to find enough material to support her claim that Méhul's operas were seemingly profound. "As a group they show better than the oeuvre of any other single composer the stylistic break with the works of the previous generation, the developments contributing to their far greater dramatic impact, and the musical innovations which proved to be influential precedents for Romantic music."<sup>25</sup>

In M.E.C. Bartlet's dissertation, *Etienne Nicolas Méhul and Opera during the French Revolution, Consulate and Empire: A Source, Archival, and Stylistic Study*, she first discusses the importance of Méhul's operas in her preface. She claims that "Méhul's operas-comiques of the 1790s were the mainstay of the repertory in Paris and were frequently performed elsewhere." After searching through newspaper archives, reviews of Méhul's work showed up in Spanish, English, and German newspapers, but the operas reviewed were *Joseph*, *Uthal*, and *Euphrosine*. The other operas considered in this paper do not appear in any major newspaper archive that I have searched (such as Harvard Library, Bibliotheque Nationale de France, *German National Library*).

Other scholars have praised Méhul for not only his body of work, but his

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<sup>25</sup>Bartlet, M. Elizabeth C. *Etienne Nicolas Méhul and Opera during the French Revolution, Consulate and Empire: A Source, Archival, and Stylistic Study*. Vol. 1-5. Chicago: University of Chicago. 1982. Print. xv

character; George Ferris wrote the following about Méhul in his book from 1840, *The Great Italian and French Composers*:

“Méhul was a high-minded and benevolent man, wrapped up in his art, and singularly childlike in the practical affairs of life. Abhorring intrigue, he was above all petty jealousies, and even sacrificed the situation of chapel-master under Napoleon, because he believed it should have been given to the greatest of his rivals, Cherubini. When he died, Paris recognized his goodness as a man as well as greatness as a musician by a touching and spontaneous expression of grief, and funeral honors were given him throughout Europe.”<sup>26</sup>

While Ferris mentions the other notable composers and of the time, he makes an emphasis on Méhul while other, later musicologists have omitted him. To be fair, at the time that Ferris wrote his book, Méhul’s works were still performed in their entirety, and Ferris’ book certainly seems to be a somewhat sensationalist publication.

Another historian from the early 20th century, Arthur Hervey, discusses Méhul in his book about composers from the 19th century. He claims that “Among the French musicians who were to the fore at the commencement of the XIXth century Méhul undoubtedly occupies the first place,” citing his operas and his later songs - specifically the *Hymn du Depart*.<sup>27</sup> He also claims that, “Like all really great artists, Méhul took infinite pains with his work,”<sup>28</sup> which is certainly true when discussing the effort that Méhul took in writing his operas.

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<sup>26</sup>Ferris, George T. *The Great Italian And French Composers*. New York: D. Appleton and Co. 180.

<sup>27</sup>Hervey, Arthur. “French Music in the XIXth Century.” London: Grant Richards. 1903. 12-13.

<sup>28</sup>Hervey, 15-16

## Part 3: Context

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### 3.1. Revolution

To truly comprehend the turbulent and expressive themes in the operas written during the French Revolution, one must first have a grasp of the rapidly changing political culture of the time. The many different governing bodies of the period meant that the intellectuals and artisans of the time were often persecuted and left in fear – as they could be favorites one minute and in line for the guillotine the next. First came the *ancien régime* - the period of the monarchy, which lasted from the 1500s to 1789. This period was one of growth, and general monarchic rule until the American Revolution.

To help solve the financial problems that the French nation was suffering from, Louis XVI called a meeting of the Estates General, the governing body of the people also known as the Three Estates, in 1789. The Estates General had been called very infrequently throughout this entire *ancient regime* – the last meeting was in 1614 - and the monarchy had established themselves as supreme leaders without the need of a governing body of the people. As such, having a king call a congress of his people to help him solve any problem, no matter how important, was seen as a weak action by the people of France.

In fact, Louis had called the meeting because his advisers refused to work with him; blinded by the fact that he knew little about ruling a country, and even less about how to maintain its economy, he called a meeting of the Estates General. It was at this point that most of the people of France lost faith in the monarchy, if they had not

already.<sup>29</sup>

The Three Estates convened on May 5, 1789 in Versailles and became the governing body for a short while. The Three Estates that met were very clearly divided: the First Estate was comprised of the nobility, the Second was for the clergy and other religious figures, and the Third and largest estate was for the representatives of the people, or bourgeoisie. Though there were far more 'common' people than the nobility and the clergy, each estate held the same voting ability - and in some ways, this meant that the Third Estate was allowed much less power than their counterparts, as they had been regarded as lesser parts of society for so long.

However, when the members of the Third Estate were locked out of a general meeting shortly after the Estates reconvened, the members decided to withhold their votes and refused to partake in the Estates General until they had the same amount of sway as the other two estates. This has now become an historic moment, called the Tennis Court Oath of 1789, so named because the 577 members of the Third Estate wrote an oath that stated:

The National Assembly, considering that it has been summoned to determine the constitution of the Kingdom, to effect the regeneration of public order and to maintain the true principles of the monarchy; that nothing can prevent it from continuing its deliberations in whatever place it may be forced to establish itself, and lastly, that wherever its members meet together, there is the National Assembly. Decrees that all the members of this assembly shall immediately take a solemn oath never to separate and to reassemble wherever circumstances shall require until the constitution of the Kingdom shall be established and consolidated upon firm foundations; and that the said oath being taken, all the members and each of them individually shall ratify by their signatures this steadfast resolution.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Taylor, 21-22

<sup>30</sup>Duvergier Lois 1.24, as translated in Const, and Doc. France, 1789- 1907. Anderson, page 3. Bunker Hill Memorial Association, ed. *Proceedings of the Bunker Hill Memorial Association*. Boston: Bunker Hill Memorial Association, 1914. Web. 11 Mar. 2014. 50.

This was a revolutionary document in itself, and demanded legitimacy; much like the American Declaration of Independence.

After some time, the other Estates caved in to the demands, and the governing body became the National Assembly. Almost a month later, in July of 1789, an angry mob besieged the Bastille prison in Paris, boldly freeing the few prisoners held there in a bold move against the authority of the monarchy.

The Bastille served as both a prison and a fortress, with eight towers and five-foot thick walls. It had been constructed as a defense against the English in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and converted to a prison by Charles VI; though Cardinal Richelieu (made infamous by Alexandre Dumas' *The Three Musketeers*) and his sinister methods of interrogation gave the Bastille its reputation. This was a prison wherein prisoners were detained at express order from the King, and held without any judicial process. The prisoners were of different sorts, but most were high-born nobles who had conspired against the crown, writers whose works were considered dangerous, or delinquents whose families had petitioned the King for their incarceration. Most rooms in the fortress were somewhat uncomfortable but not abysmal, and while it was certainly a prison, it was much better than some others. However, the Bastille was an excellent example of the old regime, and as such was demonized by many revolutionaries at the time so as to sway public opinion against the monarchy and its 'horrible ways.'

Interestingly, in the weeks before the Bastille was sieged, the King had ordered the structure to be demolished. In its place would be fountains, inscribed "Louis XVI, Restorer of Public Freedom," but this was not to be. In those same weeks preceding July 14, 1789, many occupants of the Bastille would shout down to any passerby about the potential massacres of prisoners, and try to appeal for their release. This caused huge

crowds to start amassing near the front court, and by the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, the crowd attacked the fortress, eventually freeing the seven prisoners inside.<sup>31</sup> In this battle, many soldiers switched sides, and began to fight with the people, rather than against them; this event was symbolic and spirit-crushing for proponents of the monarchy.

In August of that year, the National Assembly passed the ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen,’ a “stirring statement of Enlightenment principles,”<sup>32</sup> and the first paragraph of the Declaration read:

The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man, in order that this declaration, being constantly before all the members of the Social body, shall remind them continually of their rights and duties; in order that the acts of the legislative power, as well as those of the executive power, may be compared at any moment with the objects and purposes of all political institutions and may thus be more respected, and, lastly, in order that the grievances of the citizens, based hereafter upon simple and incontestable principles, shall tend to the maintenance of the constitution and redound to the happiness of all. Therefore the National Assembly recognizes and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen.<sup>33</sup>

Again, this was a revolutionary document, claiming that the main problems with governments and public disturbances are directly related to the lack of respect for the ‘rights of man.’ This was a drastic declaration at the time, as they had not yet rid themselves of their monarchy.

In August, a second revolution had overthrown the monarchy and taken over the royal stature. By October of 1789, the monarchy was effectively at the whim of the people. The royal family was ‘escorted’ by a mob of men and women who had marched

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<sup>31</sup>Schama, Simon. *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1989. 389-403.

<sup>32</sup>Hunt et al, 738

<sup>33</sup>"Declaration of the Rights of Man." *Avalon Project*.

to Versailles back to Paris, and the center of the revolution; at which point it became clear to the rest of the world that the French monarchy was no longer in control.

The National Assembly, the governing body created by the Third Estate, lasted two years (1789-1791), and its successor, the Legislative Assembly (1791-1792) was similar in many ways. However, different political parties were in control in each governing body. There were two main groups who fought for control - the Feuillants, who represented the former 2nd estate (the nobility, or bourgeois), and the newly formed Jacobin club, a radical group of lower class men who tended towards drastic and violent measures. The Feuillants thought that the revolution had reached its peak, and that the former members of the monarchy should be demoted to normal citizens; whereas the Jacobins felt that more strict control and violence was needed, and the remaining monarchs were a threat as long as they lived.

This growing violent fervor spurred the flight of the royal family in June of 1791; but they were caught in the town of Varennes, near the border of France and Belgium, and an angry populace brought them back to the royal palace in Paris. The Legislative Assembly also passed a constitution in that year, though it ended up lasting only for a short while.

Across the globe, other revolts against the French monarchy started in St. Domingue (now Haiti), and the slaves revolted against their French masters. By 1792, France had declared war on Austria, the nation of their hated queen, and in August of that year an attack on the Tuileries Palace (now the Louvre Museum) led to a suspension of the king. On September 22, 1792, the Republic of France was established, and on January 21, 1793 Louis XVI was executed. At this point, a quasi-war between the newly 'democratic' French people and the monarchies of Europe began.



In 1793, the National Convention became the governing body, and was led by members of the Jacobin club who had overruled the Feuillant members of government. However, at this point in the Revolution the Jacobin club had its own factions – most notably the Girondins (or Brissotins) and The Mountain (or Montagnards). The most notable difference between the two is that The Mountain was far more violent and aggressive. This aggression resulted in ‘the Terror’, starting with the mass execution of the Girondins on May 31 - June 2, 1793, the execution of Marie Antoinette on October 16, 1793, and the rise of Maximilien de Robespierre. Although some of these leaders did have policies and ideals that we would now consider just, like the abolition of slavery in the French colonies (February 1794), the violence and horror that they spread throughout France shocked the French people.<sup>34</sup>

This was the environment in which the Committee for Public Safety was created, led by Robespierre, and the men who made up this committee are generally thought to be the main aggressors of the period. Throughout 1793 and 1794, anyone who could be accused of doing something ‘counter-revolutionary’, ‘ultra-revolutionary’, or against the mission of the Committee in any way was at risk of being arrested at a moment’s notice, tried, and executed swiftly. This definition often varied from person to person, and created an atmosphere of fear and distrust, and most remaining intellectuals left the country during this period if they could. However, as with most violent uprisings, it did not last for very long. In July of 1794, the National Convention voted that Robespierre and his supporters were to be arrested and executed in what is now known as the ‘Thermidorian Reaction’, named for the month of the new calendar the revolutionaries had created.

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<sup>34</sup>Hunt, 758

Shortly after Robespierre fell from power the Directory (1795-1799) came into effect. The people rose up against Robespierre and the Committee's inhuman acts, and instead chose a council to select five directors to rule the country (thus the name) though this did not mean that the state of affairs in France was any less tumultuous. The Jacobins especially were against this Directory, and tried to overthrow the government in any way possible. During this time, the Directory was kept in power by the French armies abroad. The battles fought in Italy throughout 1796 and 1797 were especially important, as they gave rise to a young new consul (military title, similar to 'General'), Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon spent much of 1798 and 1799 in Egypt and the Middle East fighting for control of that territory. Upon his return Bonaparte himself led a coup d'état in November of 1799, and took over the Directory, replacing it with the Consulate (1799-1804) and effectively ended the Revolution.<sup>35</sup>

### **3.2: Relations between France, America, and the rest of Europe**

Throughout the 18th century, France's relations with her neighbors were deteriorating. In 1756, France tried to make an alliance with Austria, but it failed and started creating tension between the two nations. By 1770, Marie Antoinette, daughter of the Austrian Empress Maria Teresa, and Louis XVI were married and it seemed as though their marriage would settle the tension; their eventual failure to have children and inability to manage their coffers ended up making the situation worse.

The French Revolution started in 1789, and as soon as it started a radical

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<sup>35</sup>Hunt, Lynn, Thomas R. Martin, Barbara H. Rosenwein, R. Po-chia Hsia, and Bonnie G. Smith. *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures*. 1st ed. Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. Print. 735

movement grew rapidly amongst the French people. This only grew over the next few years, and at the same time many high ranking officers and nobles emigrated to try and avoid the growing distrust and resentment towards them. In 1790, “violent mutinies at Nancy, Perpignan and elsewhere ... fuelled fears that the line army could disintegrate, leaving Paris open to attack and the Revolution perilously vulnerable. The King’s flight to Varennes the following summer was almost an incitement to noble emigration.”<sup>36</sup>

When in 1791, Austria and Prussia signed the Declaration of Pillnitz, aligning them with the fleeing French monarchy, the situation only became more tense - the French people declared war on Austria and Prussia and occupied Belgium only a few months later. Two particularly radical members of the Legislative Assembly, Guadet and Gensonne, are remembered for speaking out in favor of violence and support of their new constitution:

“On January 14, 1792, after orchestrating the great demonstration when the deputies took the oath, “We shall live in freedom or we shall die, the constitution or death!” Guadet concluded with the following threat: “In a word, let us mark out in advance a place for traitors, and that place will be on the scaffold ... Unfortunately for both men, the definition of treason in the Revolution proved to be mobile: Gensonne was guillotined on October 31, 1793, Guadet on June 15, 1794.”<sup>37</sup>

In 1793, Austria, Prussia, Spain, United Provinces (the Dutch Republic at the time), and Great Britain formed a coalition opposing France that lasted 23 years, and by 1799 Napoleon was almost completely in control of France. Throughout this time, war and violence became almost synonymous with revolution, and to some leaders it became a sign of patriotism. However, some took this even further and defined ‘defensive war’ (as

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<sup>36</sup>Forrest, Alan I. *The Legacy of the French Revolutionary Wars: The Nation-in-Arms in French Republican Memory*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2009. 12.

<sup>37</sup>Blanning, T.C.W., ed. *The Rise and Fall of the French Revolution*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. 1996. Print.17-18

opposed to 'offensive war', where France was the aggressor) as treason.<sup>38</sup>

But even before Louis XVI ascended to the throne, his predecessor (Louis XV) lent huge amounts of money to America during their revolution from approximately 1775-83, putting a deficit in the French coffers. At the end of the American Revolution, however, the new country was in no shape to immediately repay the debt. By late 1793, Great Britain authorized the seizure of American ships that sailed from French ports or were carrying French goods, effectively violating international law. By the end of the next year, hundreds of American ships were taken; and all the while British troops were arming Native Americans and encouraging them to attack American settlers along the Ohio River valley. President George Washington sent John Jay, the Chief Justice, to go to London and settle the issues between Great Britain and America to avoid another war.

In 1794, the agreements that Jay made with the British culminated in the Jay Treaty; which, while it put off a potential war, also created a huge divide in the American public as many saw the treaty as a violation of their previous accords with France (the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, which recognized the United States as a nation and offered trade concessions; and the Treaty of Alliance which stated that "if France entered the war, both countries would fight until American independence was won,"<sup>39</sup> that neither would conclude a truce without the consent of the other, and that guaranteed France's current holdings in the United States while also ensuring that France would not try and take over any other territories). As France and Great Britain

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<sup>38</sup>Neely, Sylvia . "The Uses of Power: Lafayette and Brissot in 1792." *Western Society for French History*. 34. (2006): n. page. Internet Resource. 21 Feb. 2014.

<<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.0642292.0034.006>>. 104.

<sup>39</sup>Tindall, George Brown and David Emory Shi. *America: A Narrative History*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2013. 157.

were currently at war, this also made the French incredibly angry. In 1796, the French issued an order to their navy allowing them to seize ships flying an American flag, so as to halt the communication between America and Britain.

The XYZ Affair was the result of these tense relations, an incident named for the three U.S. envoys that President John Adams sent to France to try and smooth over relations between the two countries. In 1797, when Adams was inaugurated, America was in what was essentially a naval war with France. The French had plundered nearly three hundred ships, and after President Washington removed the Ambassador to Paris, Monroe, from his position (for being violently pro-French and anti-British), the French refused to accept the replacement ambassador and ordered him back. Adams, however, did not give up after this refusal to negotiate, and sent back the replacement, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and two other politicians: Elbridge Gerry (Republican) and John Marshall (Federalist). These men were accosted by three French officials (that Adams later referred to as X, Y, and Z in a report to congress) who then told the men that France would only negotiate with America if they were paid a handsome bribe. While this was a common practice at the time, the American ambassadors refused absolutely; upon their return and report, hostile feelings towards the French rose immensely resulting in the renunciation of the 1778 Treaty of Alliance.

While these aggressively hostile feelings between the two countries seemed insurmountable for a time, they did not last for long. By 1799, President John Adams sent a new envoy to try and negotiate a new agreement with the Consulship of Napoleon Bonaparte. By 1800, they had struck an accord with the following terms: America would give up all claims of “indemnity for American losses,” France would cease their naval

offense, and the perpetual alliance with France from 1778 would be suspended.<sup>40</sup>

To the rest of Europe, the American Revolution was a jarring and violent reminder that the “traditional European order” was not sacred anymore, and could be challenged.<sup>41</sup> No other revolution had occurred in about 100 years, and the rulers of Europe were horrified by the results.<sup>42</sup> When the people of France started revolting in 1789, “The forces of liberalism and nationalism which crystallized in France in those turbulent years were later to change such nations as Germany and Italy far more radically than they did France.”<sup>43</sup> In England, radicalism that had grown from the 1760s erupted in this period of Revolution,

“[bringing] to a head middle-class discontent with the archaic and unreformed constitution. A new and progressive order had come with such apparent ease to the French and English reformers assumed that change in English institutions would follow quickly and painlessly. A heady faith in progress and the dawning of a new era swept through English intellectual and radical circles.”<sup>44</sup>

The French Revolution, it seems, wriggled its way into the internal politics of Europe and began the process which would slowly bring down old customs of monarchy and absolutism across the continent.

### **3.3. French Opera**

Before the Revolution, opera had held a prominent position in France. *Tragédie lyrique* was the preferred format of opera, before opéra-comique came into vogue. This

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<sup>40</sup>Tindall et al., 226-228

<sup>41</sup>Gottschalk, Louis and Donald Lach. *Toward the French Revolution: Europe and America in Eighteenth-Century World*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1973. 192.

<sup>42</sup>Gottschalk, 194

<sup>43</sup>Gottschalk, 246

<sup>44</sup>Krammick, Isaac. *Republicanism & Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America*. New York, Cornell Press. 1990. 141.

‘serious’ form of opera focused more on traditional tales that had been written again and again. Often these productions were run by retired performers and their patrons, who could foot the bill for the extravagance and lavish décor of the productions.

Opéra-comique, or comic opera in the French style, was more lighthearted and tended to focus more on the common French *citoyen*. These stories often poked fun at the ruling class, and championed the ordinary worker. This change in the archetypal hero replaced the figure of the King or Queen with the hardworking citizen, whose drama was less about princes and war and more about where to find food to feed their family.

In Denise Gallo's *opera: the basics*, she describes the surge of popularity that came with comic operas. New theatres were built, audiences were more mixed, regarding both class and rank, and the newer ‘comic’ operas were very influential and popular in the changing musical scene.<sup>45</sup> Throughout this time, specifically 1789-1800, the changes that were made in artistic mediums, specifically opera and lyric theatre also meant that history was given a larger role to play in opera. Historical facts that were used in productions of operas and the like were so frequently mixed with artistic fiction that the two were often indistinguishable to the audiences of the time.

Because of this new artistic direction, the government censors in charge of reviewing material, making sure that none of the productions that played were counter-revolutionary or drew any critiques of the current reigning regime, became very strict in their judgments. Drastic though this censorship may seem, opera continued to thrive,

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<sup>45</sup> “[Comic opera] attracted crowds, so much so that new theaters were built to accommodate them. Their audiences were more likely to feature a democratic mix, for although venues producing serious operas were socially exclusive, anyone who could afford a ticket could attend comic performances. Even though the aesthetic pendulum would swing in favor of serious and sentimental subjects in the nineteenth century, the frequent inclusion of comic characters and allusions to early comic traditions demonstrate the genre’s continued influence.” Gallo, 151

albeit with a few changes and a certain tendency to favor the leaders of the day and cast disfavor on characters representing the monarchy.<sup>46</sup>

Censorship was not new at this period – in fact, in 1791 a law on the liberty of theaters had effectively abolished the older forms of censorship that had been controlled almost exclusively by the monarchy. However, in the 1790s, censorship came back with a vengeance, and was often more strict and difficult to deal with than it ever had been throughout the *ancien régime*. This is largely to do with the fact that there was no central control of censorship. Whoever had the most authority at any particular time, whether that was the city, a particular leader, or a group of outspoken revolutionaries, their personal tastes dictated what could be disruptive to the public order.<sup>47</sup>

Near the end of the eighteenth century, another change that the Revolution had wrought was taking hold - one that took place regarding the artists, not simply their works. As the governing body of France was constantly changing, replacing old (and new) members of the system in place with politicians and revolutionaries, who had previously not been in the political milieu, so too was the operatic community changing. Both composers and librettists were more readily available from outside of the traditional theatre community,<sup>48</sup> and as many intellectuals and artists fled persecution, those who remained took up the artistic calling, often with vigor and almost religious fervor for the Revolutionary cause.

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<sup>46</sup> “[a]t no point ... was the institution of opera actually suppressed during the entire period between 1789 and 1830. Certain royalist elements were occasionally deleted or might actually have caused the prohibition of new operatic compositions. Nonetheless, with the liberalization of theatrical institutions ... Paris would burst with operatic activity during the first years of the Revolution.” Josephs, 977

<sup>47</sup> Bartlet, 182

<sup>48</sup> Bartlet, 39



### 3.4. Opéra during the Revolution (1789-1800)

Whilst the Revolution ravaged the monarchy and fractured the French people, the Opéra houses of Paris were not left undisturbed. The *Comédie Française* and its troupe are an excellent example of this. In the early years of the Revolution, the troupe split, and the more politically extreme faction set up a new theatre: the Théâtre des Arts, while the others who remained became the Théâtre de la Nation. The actors of the Théâtre de la Nation were then arrested during the Terror and their theatre was closed, though they were released in 1794. Neither group received as much recognition nor esteem as they had while together, and in 1799 the two groups come together once again.<sup>49</sup>

Amidst the Revolutionary period in France, the musical innovations and changes in style made particularly by composers of opéra-comique were just as revolutionary as their political counterparts. The new styles and elements “[had] long been recognized as fundamental to the growth of Romantic opera, particularly that in Germany, and to nineteenth-century developments in the treatment of the orchestra, especially evident in works by Berlioz [that were written decades after the Revolution].”<sup>50</sup> Some of these stylistic elements included changes in the way that the arias were written for soloists, natural male voices (as opposed to castrati) were used, and many plots of new musical works referred to the Revolution and the main figures of the time.<sup>51</sup> Another specific trait of opéra-comique was the spoken dialogue instead of recitative - the singing speech that was so common in operas of the time.<sup>52</sup> Most English and German *singspiels*

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<sup>49</sup>“See Arthur Pougin, *La Comédie Française et la révolution: scènes, recits, et notices*. Paris: Gaultier et Magnier. [1902]” Bartlet, 60

<sup>50</sup>Bartlet, xii

<sup>51</sup>Grout, *History of Western Music*, 570-571

<sup>52</sup>Grout, *History of Western Music*, 494

(comic operas) used spoken dialogue as well, as recitative was always *Italiante* – even when employed by earlier French composers such as Lully (1632-1687) and Rameau (1683-1764).<sup>53</sup>

Méhul lived in an historic period that would change opera and lyric theatre. The use of classical settings, heroes from the crusades, and other periods of great turmoil and violence were striking; though these techniques were not new, Méhul's use of this method of metaphor was in itself noteworthy. For instance, in *Horatius Coclés*, the story of a Roman soldier drew specific correlations between the French version of 'Republic' and the Roman Republic.

Due to the dissipation of the monarchy, royal patronage waned along with the other financial support as did ticket sales. As such, the institution of opera in France not only started going through a period of artistic change, but also an identity crisis. Without their patrons, many opera houses, composers, and librettists were forced to rely on the government's support to maintain their livelihoods. And as the struggling nation continued to fight itself and its neighbors, the support of the government was strained at best.

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<sup>53</sup>Green, Robert A. "Lully, Jean-Baptiste." *Glptq: An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, and Queer Culture*. Chicago, glptq, Inc. 2004. Internet Resource. 15 Apr. 2014. <[www.glbtq.com/arts/lully\\_jb.html](http://www.glbtq.com/arts/lully_jb.html)>

### 3.5. Étienne Nicolas Méhul

Étienne Nicolas Méhul was born in Givet, on June 22, 1763 and died of tuberculosis in Paris, on October 18, 1817.<sup>54</sup> He studied with Jean-Frédéric Edelmann (1749-1794),<sup>55</sup> who trained in law at the same academy as Goëthe and was also a skilled musician and composer. Edelmann is most well-known for his keyboard works, but wrote a few operas, including *Ariane* (a one-act opera that maintained its popularity until about 1825). Edelmann joined the *Société des Amis de la Consitution* in 1790, and when the Société split in 1792, Edelmann was in the faction of the Jacobins (the other being the Feuillants). By 1793, he was a member of the Directory of the Département, and still a prominent figure in the politics of the time – but by July of 1794, he and his brother were housed in the Conciergerie (the prison that had been the final home of Marie Antoinette), and was guillotined later that month.<sup>56</sup>

Méhul was apparently introduced to Edelmann by Gluck, a renowned composer at the time.<sup>57</sup> Later, Méhul studied with Gluck – and the two met originally purely by accident.

“Méhul’s advent in Paris, whither he went at the age of sixteen, soon opened his eyes to his true vocation, that of a dramatic composer. The excitement over the contest between Gluck and Piccini was then at its height, and the youthful musician was not long in espousing the side of Gluck with enthusiasm. He made the acquaintance of Gluck accidentally; the great chevalier interposing one night to prevent his being ejected from the theatre, into one of whose boxes Méhul had slipped without buying a ticket. Thence forward the youth had free access to the

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<sup>54</sup>Goddard, Joseph, 1883-1910. *The Rise And Development of Opera: Embracing a Comparative View of the Art In Italy, Germany, France And England, Showing the Cause of the Falling Back of the English School In the Modern Period And the Compensation Which That Falling Back Involved.* London: W. Reeves, 1911. Print. 93.

<sup>55</sup>Rita, Benton. "Jean-Frederic Edelmann, a Musical Victim of the French Revolution." *The Musical Quarterly* 50 (Apr., 1964): 165-187. Print.

<sup>56</sup>Benton, 185

<sup>57</sup>Benton, 169

opera, and the friendship and tuition of one of the masterminds of the age.”<sup>58</sup> Some scholars have speculated that some of Méhul’s models were Salieri and Le Moyne, popular opera composers at the time.<sup>59</sup> Throughout this period, “Alien [non-French] influences have been frequent ... these foreign masters who have at different times settled in Paris and brought out their works on French soil have been influenced by their surroundings. It has been a question of give and take.”<sup>60</sup> Méhul learned from these different influences, and incorporated some of their styles into his music; while these influences may have made his music more foreign sounding and unpopular, his works proved quite well-liked with the French public at the time. It should be noted that Méhul worked mostly at the Opera-Comique, though he produced ballets at the Opera, and a *piece de circonstance* (a piece written for a special occasion) at the Theatre Feydeau.<sup>61</sup>

One author, Arthur Hervey, claimed that “Among the French musicians who were to the fore at the commencement of the XIXth century Méhul undoubtedly occupies the first place. His operas ... had already brought him fame.”<sup>62</sup> Méhul became popular in France by writing the *Hymn du Depart*, an anthem second only to *La Marseillaise*; though this was not to be his only achievement.

David Charlton wrote about Méhul in his book, *Gretry and the Growth of Opéra-Comique*, and discussed the many pieces that Méhul wrote that were unsuccessful.

“[Méhul] was a musician who survived in spite (or because) of setting *La Jeunesse de Henri IV* (set aside), *Le Jeune Henri* (a failure), *Adrien* [*Horatius Coclés*](i) (forbidden), *Adrien* (ii) (banned after four performances), *Doria* (celebrating the end of Robespierre), and *Le Pont de Lody* (celebrating

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<sup>58</sup>Ferris, 176

<sup>59</sup>Bartlet, 792

<sup>60</sup>Hervey, 2-3

<sup>61</sup>Bartlet, 10

<sup>62</sup>Hervey, 12-13

Napoleon's Italian victory).<sup>63</sup>

While this Charlton's list is appealing, it is misleading; the reader tends to think that Méhul was unsuccessful completely, and not necessarily a person to study in earnest; nothing could be further from the truth. Méhul had many successful operas at the time, and was much beloved by the French people, including Robespierre and Napoleon.<sup>64</sup>

While other popular composers at the time, such as Le Sueur and Cherubini, are noteworthy and should not be set aside, Bartlet emphasizes that, while not perfect, Méhul often reached outside of the conventions of his age and genre. Méhul's scores were dramatic and bold, and according to Bartlet, "he left a remarkably rich creative legacy to the later nineteenth century."<sup>65</sup> Barlet draws particular attention to the fact that Méhul was much different than his peers, as almost all of his works were censored or caused some slight tension with the authorities of the time.<sup>66</sup> In Arthur Hervey's book about French music in the 19th century, the 'great' Méhul is described:

"Like all really great artists, Méhul took infinite pains with his work, and a melody which seemed to be spontaneously conceived had possibly given him an endless amount of trouble. For instance, the well-known romance from *Joseph*, "*A peine au sortir de l'enfance*," a melodic gem of the purest water, was remodeled no fewer than four times. How little does the public imagine the inner workings of a composer's mind, or realise the amount of thought involved in what often appears so simple!"<sup>67</sup>

While the focus of this thesis is opera, I would be remiss not to mention the other various works that Méhul was known for. He wrote several orchestral works, ballets, songs, and operas. For a full list of these operas, please see Appendix C.

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<sup>63</sup>Charlton, David. *Gretry and the growth of opera-comique*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. Print. 296.

<sup>64</sup>Charlton, 296

<sup>65</sup>Bartlet, xvii

<sup>66</sup>Bartlet, 60

<sup>67</sup>Hervey, 15-16

## Part 4: Méhul's Operas

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### 4.1: Euphrosine

Méhul's first successful opera, *Euphrosine* (1790),<sup>68</sup> was well known and well received throughout the years that it was performed in France. It first premiered on September 4, 1790, at the *Théâtre Italien*, and like many other operas composed by Méhul, François Benoit Hoffman was the librettist for *Euphrosine*. Méhul was friends with F.B. Hoffman as well as Gluck, and worked with Cherubini.<sup>69</sup> However, of these men, François Benoît Hoffman is by far the most important in regards to Méhul's operas – as he wrote the libretti for many of them.

Hoffman was born in 1760, and studied at the University of Strasbourg. An independent thinker, his librettos were often controversial and reflected his often strong political views. He wrote the librettos for many of Méhul's operas, the most notable of which is *Adrien*. Though the story was controversial, Hoffman and Méhul refused to withdraw it, and collaborated on their operas quite a bit. At the time of the French Revolution, however, most operas were credited solely (or mostly) to their composer – not the librettist – despite however much the two worked or did not work together.

Other than *Euphrosine*, Méhul had written mostly short pieces for festivals in this early stage in his career, and at the time this opera was not nearly as well favored as the smaller pieces.<sup>70</sup>

In my study, I have noted that there have been few revivals of this opera even in

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<sup>68</sup>Other editions of this opera are entitled *Euphrosine et Coradin*, and *Euphrosine ou le tyran corrigé* (The Tyrant Reformed)

<sup>69</sup>Ferris, 180

<sup>70</sup>“[I]t was not till 1790 that he got a hearing in the comic opera of *Euphrasque et Coradin*, composed under the direction of Gluck. This work was brilliantly successful... The French critics describe both these early works as being equally admirable in melody, orchestral accompaniment, and dramatic effect.” Ferris, 177

part, and fewer in full. *Euphrosine* is one of Méhul's most famous operas, and indeed, ran for several years throughout the Revolution, and remained in the repertoire of opera houses in Paris until the mid-1800s. This is one of the few operas that remained successful throughout the periods of different governments, and through many different standards committees - the French people found themselves in the story of the young girl, Euphrosine who falls in love with her captor.

Euphrosine (and her sisters) are wards of Coradin, a tyrant “in need of correction”<sup>71</sup> as the subtitle implies. Euphrosine sees her lot as one who should do that correcting, and tries to get to the good man under the cranky exterior. One scholar, Robert de Cordes, whose dissertation discussed *Euphrosine* and another opera by Méhul, *Meliodore et Phrosine*, states that “[Coradin] needs only a little awareness of his inherent virtue.”<sup>72</sup> Once she has made him aware, Euphrosine plans on marrying Coradin, the count who has imprisoned her and her sisters – which is something to which the Countess D’Arles is vehemently opposed, as she wants Coradin for herself.

Euphrosine, in the meantime lets a travelling troupe of peasants into the castle (which has been expressly forbidden by Coradin), and they tell her of a *chevalier* (knight) whom the Count has imprisoned - presumably wrongly, and Euphrosine espouses his cause. After Coradin discovers that Euphrosine let the peasants in, he is furious and puts all of peasants in the dungeon. Euphrosine vows to free all of the prisoners and cure the count of his ills.

The Countess sees her opportunity and bribes a guard to release the knight, but tells them that Euphrosine is responsible. She then writes a note to the Count detailing

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<sup>71</sup>De Cordes, Robert Clarence Christopher. *Etienne-Nicolas Méhul's “Euprosine and Stratonice”: A Transition from “Comedie Melee d’Ariettes” to “Opera Comique”*. University of Southern California Press, 1979. 49.

<sup>72</sup>de Cordes, 49

Euphrosine's betrayal, and as such Coradin becomes even more upset and orders that Euphrosine be poisoned as punishment. In a Shakespearean scenario, Alibour (Coradin's doctor) and Euphrosine come up with a fake poison, and Euphrosine fakes her own death. Coradin is overwhelmed with remorse at seeing Euphrosine dead, only to have Euphrosine come miraculously "back to life". He is so shocked, he agrees to reform. The Countess on the other hand, remains unrepentant after admitting what she's done.

#### **4.2: Horatius Coclés**

*Horatius Coclés* premiered on February 19, 1794 at the Théâtre de l'Opéra, and other editions were published in 1794 and 1795. This was right in the middle of 'The Terror' (1793-1795) and depicts the chaos of that time well. Méhul composed the score, and the librettist was *Citoyen* Antoine Vincent Arnault, a man who had previously served the sister and brother of the King. He wrote very few librettos, and also left the country during the Terror. There is little scholarly work about Arnault currently published.

The story is one of a Roman soldier who returns to find Rome under onslaught from Porsenna and a group of Etruscans, who is trying to take over to reinstall the monarchy, and destroy the newly formed Republic. Horatius comes back after serving the Roman cause through the army. Mutius Scaevola enters the scene and announces his intention to sneak into the enemy camp and assassinate the King, even at the cost of his life. Horatius argues against this, but the Consul Valerius Publicola tells Horatius that he is too famous for any disguise to work, and Mutius sets off.



Horatius then is entrusted with the defense of the Pons Sublicius, the bridge across the River Tiber, while Publicola leads the main Roman army against Porsenna's forces. An envoy arrives from Porsenna with captives including the son of Horatius, young Horatius, who was presumed dead. The envoy offers to hand over the captives if the Romans will take back the kings - but Horatius, his son, and all of the Romans refuse the offer. The enemy attacks, and Horatius defends the bridge alone while his soldiers chop through the bridge behind him. Soon the bridge collapses and the whole party plunges into the river - but Horatius survives. Mutius Scaevola returns and tells the tale of entering the enemy camp, but he killed a courtier who insulted Rome, and told Porsenna that he was one of a number of Romans who had vowed to kill him. As a symbol of his failure, Mutius thrusts his hand into the fire, and Porsenna is so impressed that he abandons his quest. The opera ends with Publicola coming back with Horatius' son and the other captives, victorious.

At the time of the French Revolution, the Roman republic and tales like the one of Horatius and the defense of Rome were well known. Popular culture at the time focused on Roman culture because Rome was seen as a strong, successful society that overcame many revolts and revolutions throughout its long history. In the 1780s, a rise in the popularity of the ideal Roman Republic was so popular that it created "a powerful bond of identification between ancient and modern republicans,"<sup>73</sup> and created a group of French Republicans so engrossed in the idea of Rome and its Republic that they emulated their culture in many ways – architecture, art, literature, education, and even popular culture was imbued with Roman influences.

As such, heroes from that ancient civilization, such as Mutius Scaevola and

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<sup>73</sup>Schama, 171

Horatius Cocles, were popular figures in artistic works of the period, and their unwavering patriotism was emulated and considered desirable.<sup>74</sup> These men, who were not only popular figures in literature and the culture of the time, were also real men from Ancient Roman history. They represented the strength and leadership that the French Revolutionaries were trying to emulate at the time, at any cost.

“The annals of Rome...were the mirrors into which the revolutionaries constantly gazed in search of self-recognition. Their France would be Rome reborn, but purified by the benison of the feeling heart. It thus followed, surely, that for such a nation to be born, many would necessarily die. And both the birth and death would be simultaneously beautiful.”<sup>75</sup>

The unceasing sound of the orchestra and the rushing brass noise described by musicologists all added to the illusion of the Terror in *Horatius Coclès*. This building, constant action also depicts the story of France at the time. Everything was changing rapidly for the French people, and the entire system of command and government in the country was changing unceasingly.<sup>76</sup> While obviously some melodic contours may be artistic license, many scholars see in *Horatius Coclés* a portrait of France at the time - under the leadership of Robespierre and his Committee. Many have demonized this group of leaders, as they did come to be known as the heads of the Reign of Terror; but some also explain their actions in a different light. One historian, Groen, wrote that

“the terror was “a harmonious chord and a most worthy finale” of the “whole of the tragedy.” Arbitrary will, the “unconditional promotion of the common good or public safety.” was the rule from the beginning. Danton, Marat, Saint-Just and particularly Robespierre were not malicious gangsters, characterized by cunning and violence, but men of unshakeable faith, dedicated to the revolutionary worldview. Their fanaticism, Groen explains, should not be explained simply as atrocious, as without “unity of principle or purpose,” but as the “natural [consequence] of their conviction.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Schama, 171-172

<sup>75</sup>Schama, 861

<sup>76</sup>Caudill, David S. *The French Revolution As Phantom of the Opera*. St. Paul, Minn: s.n, 1991. Print. 253.

<sup>77</sup>Caudill, 253

In this defense of the Committee, Caudill (a reviewer of Groen's work) calls the passion of the men 'fanaticism,' 'dedicated to the revolutionary view,' and as such portrays the Committee as rather unstable characters. Again, this fits with the themes of *Horatius Coclés*. Although it may be a stretch to categorize it as fervor hidden in the music, the overture exhibits a certain undeniable energy portrayed that would certainly fit the depiction of extreme dedication and continuous work. As one scholar claims, "[Horatius Cocles] is really an heroic tale devised for the political exigencies of a Republican public. It is in effect a work of circumstance, and Méhul's severe music did not survive the occasion for which it was written."<sup>78</sup>

This may be part of the reason why *Horatius Coclés* was selected for revival in 1797 when France was returning to war with its neighbors. The Directory (the governing body at the time), turned to the Opéra and *Horatius Coclés*. Lareveillere-Lepeaux, one of the members of the Directory and a friend of Méhul's, supported the opera, and helped to select *Horatius Coclés*.

"[Horatius Coclés], qui a déjà été mis a l'essai et applaudi, n'a été suspendu qu'a raison des circonstances. Il est aujourd'hui nécessaire de mettre en scène un ouvrage qui tend à inspirer l'amour de la patrie et de la République."<sup>79</sup>

*[Horatius Coclés], which has already been tested and applauded, has been suspended under the present circumstances. It is now necessary to stage a work that intends to inspire patriotism and the Republic. (My translation)*

The Directory's goal was to bring forward an opera that would inspire the public, thus assuming that opera was the best way (or one of the best ways) to spread propaganda to the public. Another assumption that can be made based on Lareveillere-Lepeaux's statement is that this opera, which had been previously considered counter-

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<sup>78</sup>Letellier, Robert Ignatius. *Opéra-Comique: A Sourcebook*. Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2010. Print. 547.

<sup>79</sup>Bartlet, 335

revolutionary and unacceptable, was then something that became the exact opposite in a very short period of time.

### **4.3: Ariodant**

*Ariodant* is based on *Orlando Furioso*, a poem written in 1532 by Aristo, and is a tale of a Christian man driven wild with love for a pagan princess, whose love takes him on journeys far and away. Originally entitled *Ina*, *Ariodant* is one of the later operas that Méhul wrote in this period. It premiered on October 11, 1799 and was performed 70 times before Méhul's death in 1817, making it one of his most popular operas, and one of Méhul's most successful operas (after *Euphrosine*, *Joseph*, and *Uthal*). The political commentary, supposedly about Napoleon as a leader, as well as the drama and fanaticism, made it a popular opera amongst the leaders of the Revolution, and most common people as well. *Ariodant* was written during the Consulate Era, while Napoleon was in control, and the story is about a man (Othon) who is passionately in love with a woman (Ina) who is in love with a valiant knight (Ariodant).

Ina, daughter of King Edgard of Scotland is in love with Ariodant. She rejects another suitor, Othon, who decides to get back at her with the help of her maid, Dalinde. Ariodant and Othon are set to fight at a pre-arranged duel at midnight over Ina, but Othon is late. Some other knights show up, to prevent Othon from doing anything sneaky, but when Othon finally does show up, he claims it is because he was with Ina - and has been every night. Dalinde, dressed as Ina, shows up on Ina's balcony and seemingly proves his point. Ina is then arrested for unchastely behavior and is about to be put on trial when Othon offers her a deal: if she agrees to marry him, he will claim

that she has been his wife secretly all along. She refuses, of course. Othon's men have kidnapped Dalinde, in the meantime.

When the trial begins, however, the accused is not Ina but a disguised Dalinde! She tells the court that Othon's men were about to kill her when Ariodant came and rescued her, and reveals the plot that she and Othon came up with. Ina and Ariodant end up together, and the villainous Othon is led away.

Many selections from *Ariodant* continued to be performed at the Conservatoire by soloists for years, potentially due to the various emotional depths of the songs. As Letellier writes, "The composer again shows insight into the depiction of psychological states: the demonic power of jealousy is once more examined, as is the mental anguish of Edgard. There is a good sense of setting, a spacious context of Medieval chivalry somewhat restricted only by the limited participation of the chorus ..." <sup>80</sup> The story of *Ariodant* was very popular at the time. This is the same story that Handel used to set *Ariodante* in 1735, and Dejaure and Berton's *Montano et Stephanie* in 1799. While Handel's version is still more well-known than Méhul's, *Montano et Stephanie* certainly did not take any of the popularity away from *Ariodant*.

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<sup>80</sup>Letellier, 549-550

#### 4.4: Adrien

*Adrien* is the story of the Emperor Hadrian, based on a libretto written by Metastasio, entitled *Adriano in Siria*. It was considered a tale that would bring about public unrest, and was kept from being produced because it was considered counter-revolutionary. It was brought back in 1799, but was again banned after 4 performances. The plot of the opera is somewhat based in fact, and it is set in Syria while Hadrian was a military governor in the Parthian campaigns of Emperor Trajan. However, the facts are slightly blurred - Hadrian is depicted as the Emperor in the opera, when he would not take on that role for several years.<sup>81</sup>

The opera is set in Antioch (modern day Turkey), where the defeated Parthian Emperor Osroa joins forces with a Duke Farnaspe to plot against Emperor Hadrian who has just taken over their land. Hadrian plans to marry Princess Emirena to solidify his conquest, but she is in love with Farnaspe; and to make matters more complicated, Hadrian's betrothed (Sabina) comes to visit him. However, by the end of the opera everything ends up well - Hadrian returns to Sabina and becomes a "benevolent and magnanimous monarch".<sup>82</sup>

*Adrien* was brought back and shown in 1799 for political reasons; not because it was well received, or popular, but because of the traits for which that it had been specifically prohibited. While *Adrien* had been considered counter-revolutionary by the previous governments, the Directory, and later the Consulate, considered the messages imbued in *Adrien* to be pro-revolutionary. At the time, Napoleon's aggressive ways and

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<sup>81</sup> Barker. "Adriano In Siria/Livietta E Tracollo." *American Record Guide* 75.3 (2012): 248-249. *EBSCO MegaFILE*. Web. 4 Mar. 2014. 248.

<sup>82</sup> Veracini, F.M. "Opera Rara: Adriano in Siria." *KARNET*. (2013): n. page. Web. 8 Mar. 2014. <[http://en.karnet.krakow.pl/aktualnosci/muzyka/6/opera-rara-adriano-in-siria\\_26094.html](http://en.karnet.krakow.pl/aktualnosci/muzyka/6/opera-rara-adriano-in-siria_26094.html)>.

his drive to expand the French Empire was very popular with the French people; because after years of internal struggle and bloodshed, the notion of bringing some kind of honor and strength to France was inspiring. This later government considered political messages that could be interpreted as pro-Napoleon (in the form of operatic metaphor) to be something that would be more effective than any other means of propaganda.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Bartlet, 59-60

## Part 5: Analysis

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In this section, I will discuss the political metaphors in each opera, and how the various arrangements of each opera created metaphors that Méhul (and his librettists) used to discuss the current events of the time.

### 5.1: Euphrosine

When studying Méhul's operas, *Euphrosine* (along with *Uthal* and *Joseph*) is one of the easiest to find. More scholars have studied this opera than the other operas in this paper, mainly because it was more popular in its time than any of the other operas discussed here. *Euphrosine* was one of the most successful operas in France of the season in which it premiered, and one of the most lucrative operas that Méhul composed. Bartlet also emphasized how successful this opera was by pointing out the fact that it earned a significant amount of money for both the composer and librettist.<sup>84</sup>

This has been called one of the most significant operas that Méhul wrote. In the various reviews of Méhul's works (which are few and far between), those discussing *Euphrosine* tend to be positive. In an article from 1827, a reviewer wrote the following:

“Méhul tout entier s'était montré dans *Euphrosine*. Il était facile d'y apercevoir une organisation forte, propre à sentir et à exprimer les situations dramatiques au moyen des ressources de l'harmonie; un chant noble, mais peu varié, souvent lourd et dénué de grace; un esprit élevé, capable de grandes conceptions, mais une ame peu passionnée; la faculté d'arriver à de beaux résultats par le calcul, mais point d'entraînement. Ce n'était point, comme on voit, un talent exempt de défauts: mais ce talent avait en outre l'avantage d'arriver à l'époque la plus favorable au développement de ses facultés; sa vigoureuse harmonie convenait bien plus aux passions révolutionnaires du moment que des chants simples et gracieux; aussi le nombre de ses admirateurs fut-il très considérable.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Bartlet, 20

<sup>85</sup>Fetis, M. "Examen De L'Etat Actuel De La Musique: En Italie, en Allemagne, en Angleterre, et en France." *Revue Musicale* 20 (1827): 485-498.



*All of Méhul was shown in Euphrosine. It was easy to see a strong form, clean feel, and the expressions of the dramatic situations with the resources of harmony and organization a noble song, but little changed, often heavy and devoid of grace, a high-minded, capable of great designs, but a little passionate soul, the ability to achieve beautiful results by calculation, but no training. It was not, as we see, a talent free of defects: but that talent had also the advantage of arriving at the time most favorable to the development of his faculties, his vigorous harmony much more suited to revolutionary passions as simple and graceful songs, the number of his admirers was very considerable.*  
(My translation)

This reviewer goes on to point out that the changes that Méhul made in the cadences and modulation of his opera influenced the way that other composers wrote their pieces, though he does not give any specific examples as such.<sup>86</sup>

*Euphrosine* has many interesting allegories that make it potentially ‘counter - revolutionary’. The opera is set in Provence, during the Crusades, but because the Crusades spanned from the 11th to the 13th centuries, it is hard to say when this opera was set, as there were significant changes in that time period around Provence. One important point from this setting is that the Count that takes Euphrosine and her sisters is someone who has benefitted from the Crusades and is a violent, cantankerous, somewhat evil individual who has profited from constant war, and is content with his life as it is. As he is an antagonist in the first part of the opera, we do not pay much heed to his happiness.

This setting also lends itself to an interpretation of the roles of Euphrosine’s sisters in this opera. They have very small parts, and are mostly just there for context, and musical/theatrical appeal - but it can also be said that they represent the important

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<sup>86</sup>“Cet ouvrage, remarquable par la route nouvelle qu’il traçait aux compositeurs français, faisait entendre pour la première fois à l’Opéra-Comique..C’est aussi dans ce morceau que l’on trouve le premier exemple de ces modulations inattendues qui couronnent la cadence finale, sorte de moyen qu’on a tant employé depuis lors.” (M. Fetis, 486) *This work is remarkable for the new road Méhul traced for the French composers [of the time], [and it] was heard for the first time at the Opéra-Comique...It is also in this piece we find the first example of such unexpected modulations crowning the final cadence, so since then we employ that normally.*

nations embarking on Crusades at the time. (They were also probably played by beautiful young women). As this opera was set in the time of the Crusades, it should be noted that there were three nations that led the Crusades (on the Christian side)- France, England, and the Holy Roman Empire (now Germany), and there are three girls. We do not know much about Euphrosine's sisters, but the fact that there are three girls and Euphrosine can be seen as a parallel for France itself lends the analogy for her sisters. Euphrosine represents France, and each other sister could represent Germany and England. This metaphor emphasizes France (and the French ideal) as the most virtuous and fair of all other 'nations' in this context. The three sisters could also potentially represent the Three Estates, with Euphrosine as the Third Estate who risks her life to stand up for her people.

Another metaphor that is apparent in this opera is the idea of the Count as King of France. While he means well, he is not able to fulfill his role as leader without the help of a woman who sacrifices her happiness for the good of "all." In this way, we can also see Euphrosine as the France personified - the ideal image of freedom, liberty, equality, fraternity, and above all the love of those around her - and she helps the Count to become a better person. This is a very common theme in opera and literature - women almost always carry the burden of reforming or redeeming men.

One other important point to make about *Euphrosine* is that it was originally a five act opera, but was cut down to a three act. No copies of the five act version are readily available, though they did exist at one point. However, the changes that were made were mostly regarding the portrayal of the nobility - for some reason the censors thought that it was too counterrevolutionary.

This idea also goes hand in hand with the theory that the Countess d'Arles (the

villainess) could be representative of Marie Antoinette. In 1790, the Queen was hated and considered to be one of the reasons why the King was so incompetent. The people of France were suspicious of her, and at the time many claimed that she was a harlot who slept with the entire court, a shrew who took over her husband's affairs by force, and a spy for the Austrians because her mother was Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria. In fact, a recent PBS documentary about Marie Antoinette went into detail about these rumors:

“Illegal presses began printing pamphlets showing the queen as an ignorant, adulterous spendthrift. Some speculated in print that the King's brother, the comte d'Artois, was taking the King's place in his wife's bed. Louis XVI was the first French king in two hundred years not to have a royal mistress; Marie Antoinette was the first queen to believe that she could be both wife and mistress to her husband. However, by cultivating fashion, taste, and the arts while failing to produce a legitimate heir, Marie Antoinette looked to all the world like a mistress, not a wife, and one whose sexuality was directed away from the King. All the ire that had been directed at Madame de Pompadour and Madame du Barry, Louis XV's most famous mistresses, was now redirected at the only target available: the Queen who acted like a mistress, but who was not satisfied, it seemed, with the King.”<sup>87</sup>

While the statements spread by presses of the time are almost certainly not true and were spread by the opponents of the monarchy as propaganda, they are indicative of how much the people truly mistrusted and despised this queen. As such, it is not difficult to see the coincidences between the Queen and the fictional Comtesse d'Arles. The Countess is characterized as a scheming, villainous woman who will stop at nothing to get her way - but is very sly and charming about her mischief. In the same vein, Marie Antoinette was a seemingly charming and coy woman who was perceived as a conniving woman who reached for the power held by her husband.

At one point in the opera, Euphrosine lets a travelling troupe of peasants into the

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<sup>87</sup>Grubin, David. "Marie Antoinette and the French Revolution." *PBS*. (Sept 13, 2006): n. page. Internet Resource. 4 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.pbs.org/marieantoinette/index.html>>.

castle (which has been expressly forbidden by Coradin), and they tell her of a knight whom the count has imprisoned. The Count throws all of them in prison and chastises Euphrosine - who vows to free all of the peasants and the chevalier. At the time that this opera was written, 1790, the idea of freeing prisoners was a very controversial idea: in 1789, a group of revolutionaries had stormed the Bastille and let out the prisoners inside, directly challenging the authority of the time. At that time, the monarchy was still in place in theory, but the reality was that the authority the King once had was gone.

This event was too recent for it not to be relevant in *Euphrosine*, and as such this analogy should be considered as one of the more pro-Revolution messages in the opera. As our heroine is the one who leads the peasants into the castle and vows to get them out, it is clear that Méhul and Hoffman meant this scene to be viewed with favor and honor; in this way the opera seems to applaud the efforts of those who stormed the Bastille. Moreover, *Euphrosine* was a reminder of the events of 1789, and while those events were tumultuous and revolutionary, they also were inspiring in retrospect.

At the time that *Euphrosine* was written, libretti were changing. In one of the precursors to *opera-comique*, *comédie mêlée d'ariettes*, the text of any musical number would often be irrelevant or incidental to the plot - just filler. However, in *Euphrosine*, Bartlet notes that the text becomes “an integral part and frequently had a crucial dramatic function. As a result, the music became more important ... Méhul provided a highly original solution to the problem that the libretto set.”<sup>88</sup> Alongside these changes, Méhul extended the form of the finale of *Euphrosine* and the ‘confrontation duet’, he gave the orchestra a much larger role which at some points equals the voice (or even

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<sup>88</sup>“Though uneven, the score of *Euphrosine* is in strong contrast with those of his most gifted predecessors, Gretry and Dalayrac. with it the melodically-oriented ariette style, which dominates in even the exceptional works of the previous decade (such as Richard Coeur-de-lion and Raoul, sire de Crequi), is passe.” Bartlet, xvi

becomes more important), and increased the range of effects for the performers and the orchestra – Bartlet argues, “[Méhul adds] a larger harmonic vocabulary, remote modulations, and deliberately unmelodic writing for the voice when justified by the exigencies of the text.”<sup>89</sup> What she means here is that the various ways in which Méhul altered and modified his music created an important contrast between the early settings and the later.

Méhul included particularly melodic styles into his music, and made actual scenes where in previous operas by other composers the music had been ‘incidental’ and served to move from one scene to another. He also developed his operas so that where the plot would slow down, in scenes where important events occurred, the music served as a plot device, rather than background noise. While these changes are not in themselves revolutionary, again, the changes between the early settings of the libretti and the music provide contrast between the two. As the early versions of the score are not readily available to the general public in the United States (they can be found in the French National Archives), we must rely on Bartlet’s analysis of the changes between the settings. Her work indicates that these changes were key in determining what the censors of the time thought was relevant, and also pinpoints the parts of *Euphrosine* that were too-counter-revolutionary. Méhul and Hoffman’s edits between the two sections show the amount of work and the collaboration between them that would have been necessary to cut out almost two whole acts of the opera – and yet still maintain the messages in the opera.

This opera gave Méhul a ‘carte blanche’, so to speak, due to its popularity and made him into a popular figure in France. Méhul’s popularity is quite possibly the

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<sup>89</sup>Bartlet, xvi

reason why he was not executed through this period – the public, familiar with *Euphrosine* and its positive revolutionary message, associated Méhul with the success of the early days of the revolution and maintained a positive image of him. As his later operas were considered far more political and potentially counterrevolutionary, this early popularity may have been the factor that kept Méhul out of prison and away from the guillotine.

## **5.2: Horatius Coclés**

*Horatius Coclés* was written during the Terror, while the National Convention was in control of France. Based on the story of a Roman soldier, Horatius, this opera was a portrayal of either the glory of Robespierre or his shortcomings - depending on the depiction of Horatius in the opera. The one-act opera was supposedly written to curry favor with the censor in anticipation of *Mélidore et Phrosine*. As the tale of Horatius was one of Rome just after it had expelled its kings, it was remarkably appropriate for the time period. The tale of the soldier returning from battle to find his homeland ripped apart by struggle is one that fits with both the French Revolution and the period of Rome just after they expelled their monarchy.<sup>90</sup>

At the time of the French Revolution, France was engaged in war with Italy, Austria, and Prussia, as well as some other small skirmishes with other nations, and many soldiers may have had some experience similar to what Horatius had when he returned from war and found his homeland completely changed. And as such, some analogies made by Méhul and Arnault are obvious. For example, equating Rome and the

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<sup>90</sup>Scullard, H.H. *A History of the Roman World: 753 to 146 BC*. Google EBook, Routledge. 2012, 68

Roman soldier with France and the French soldier is an easy comparison to make; Horatius, a folk hero, is emblematic of the ideal Roman - loyal and true to the end. Many Frenchmen left to fight for their homeland and the ideals of a true Republic; and yet these men came home to terror and deceit, fear, chaos, and above all else the ideals that they had fought for were nowhere to be found.

It is no surprise that French soldiers returned disgruntled and feeling as though their country had abandoned them, and it becomes easy to see how these same soldiers, upon viewing *Horatius Coclés*, could get the idea that they should continue to fight for their 'true' country, as Horatius does in the opera. Arnault's memoirs give an account of the creation of *Horatius Coclés* that discuss the potential allegorical nature of the opera:

“J’imaginai pour me conformer au temps, sans déroger a mes principes, de choisir dans l’histoire un sujet analogue a la position ou la France se trouvait avec l’Europe coalisée contre elle, ce qui, abstraction faite des principes du gouvernement, me fournirait l’occasion de louer, dans le patriotisme d’un ancien peuple, celui qui animait les armées françaises. Les traits réels ou imaginaires attribués par la tradition a Mutius Scevola, a Horatius Coclés, me semblèrent de cette nature. Je les développai donc dans un acte lyrique dont Méhul composait la musique a mesure que j’en composai les paroles. Le tout fut l’affaire de dix-sept jours.”

*I imagined myself to comply with the time without departing from my principles, choosing a similar story in the subject position that France was with the European coalition against it, which, apart from the principles of government, provide the opportunity to rent in the patriotism of an ancient people, who animated the French armies. Real or imagined traits attributed by tradition Mutius Scaevola, Horatius Coclés was, seemed to me of that nature. So I developed [this story] in a lyrical act which Méhul has composed music as I wrote lyrics. The whole was the work of seventeen days. (my own translation)<sup>91</sup>*

Bartlet claims that the “seventeen days” is a bit of an exaggeration, but she validates Arnault's statement. “The references to victory suggest that it was written in January 1794, after the encouraging successes of the late autumn, including the recapture of

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<sup>91</sup> Bartlet, 332-333

Toulon on ... 19 December 1793.”<sup>92</sup> At the time that *Horatius Coclés* was written, there were several small Royalist rebellions, such as the one mentioned in Toulon; as the opera championed the cause of the loyal soldier fighting for what he is true to, one can start to understand why this opera was censored at the time. Méhul and Arnault’s message here is that a Republic cannot stay a Republic without a population willing to fight for it.

Yet despite these potentially counter-revolutionary arguments, *Horatius Coclés* was performed 26 times, and was received abundantly well. The premiere was sold out, and “The agent of the secret police, whose job it was to observe the audience’s reaction to what was presented on stage, reported with satisfaction that ... the capacity crowd applauded with enthusiasm the maxims in praise of fighting for liberty.” This success led to later support from the state.<sup>93</sup>

### 5.3: Ariodant

M.E.C. Bartlet, one of the foremost scholars on Méhul, claims that: “*Ariodant* is Méhul’s best opera of the decade and a high-point of Revolutionary opera-comique.”<sup>94</sup> To briefly re-summarize the plot: Ina scorns Othon for Ariodant, Othon vows to kill them both so that his love does not end up with another man. Scholars have stated that this is meant to be a commentary on Napoleon and France, as Napoleon would only be satisfied if he was in complete control of the burgeoning nation.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>“And as a piece de circonstance, it circumvented the usual adjudication for new works at the Opera so that it could be rehearsed and mounted quickly.” Bartlet, 333

<sup>93</sup>Bartlet, 333

<sup>94</sup>Bartlet, xvi-xvii

<sup>95</sup>Bartlet, xvi-xvii



The story of *Ariodant* takes place in Scotland, during the time of the Crusades (the medieval period). At this time, Scotland was undergoing some tension with England, and was culturally influenced by France, to some degree; which may be why Méhul selected this period to set *Ariodant*. During the time of Charles I of Scotland, the monarchy of Scotland was starting to fall apart - Charles alienated the Presbyterian faction of Scots and weakened the roles of the nobility in general.<sup>96</sup> Throughout the French Revolution, the role of religion served as a major catalyst between different factions in France. By 1637, the country broke out into revolution - and therein lies the possibility for Méhul to compare the Scottish Revolution and the French Revolution subtly in his opera.<sup>97</sup>

Another possible reason why Méhul set *Ariodant* in Scotland is actually because of Ireland – in 1791, Catholics and Presbyterians (who were mostly Scots that had settled in Ireland) were both excluded from the vote in Ireland, and formed the Society of United Irishmen. Eventually this group tried to secede from England in 1798, to coincide with a French invasion, but failed after a huge struggle. The proximity of Ireland to Scotland and the fact that both were under the dominion of Great Britain lends itself to a strong metaphorical connection between the two and the story of Ina and Ariodant.<sup>98</sup>

Another allegorical connection between political fact and operatic fiction that I have noted in *Ariodant* is that Ina's maid Dalinde seems to represent the United States. In 1794, the United States and Great Britain signed the Jay Treaty, which solidified their

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<sup>96</sup>"The Making of the Union." *Scottish History*. 2014.

<[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/union/features\\_union\\_covenanters.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/union/features_union_covenanters.shtml)>.

<sup>97</sup>Hunt et al, 750-751

<sup>98</sup>Hunt et al, 750-751

relationship; France interpreted this treaty as a violation of their treaties with America, and started maritime attacks on American ships between 1796 and 1799, approximately. In the opera, Dalinde is present and helpful for the first few scenes, but almost immediately starts helping Othon (the villain) to try and thwart Ina and Ariodant's affair, and becomes a traitor in the guise of a friend or trusted servant. While Dalinde later is kidnapped and repents for her crimes, America did not come back to repent, so to speak, until 1799 when President Adams sent an envoy to France to work out a new accord and halt the constant barrage upon American ships.

Ina represents France in this opera, as the loving and idealistic heroine who trusts her morals and ideals. Othon represents the early revolutionaries, whose eagerness for change led them astray. His overzealous nature leads to violent and rash actions that are similar to the actions of the strong-willed leaders of the Committee for Public Health and Safety who took over and yet quickly fell from power. Ariodant, the valiant knight, represents the idea of freedom and the ideal society that France was longing for. *Ariodant's* message is that not all leaders are to be fully trusted.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Charlton, 295

## 5.4: Adrien

*Adrien* is based on a drama written by Metastasio, entitled *Adriano in Siria*. Antonio Caldara, the Vice-Kapellmeister at the Imperial Court in Vienna, composed the music to set the lyrics into an opera in 1732.<sup>100</sup> The opera by Caldara and Metastasio was written in full for the name day of Charles VI, the Holy Roman Emperor at the time,<sup>101</sup> and it was so popular that it was re-set by several composers in the next few years.<sup>102</sup>

The portrayal of Hadrian as a powerful and worthy Emperor was not something that, in 1790-1, that the revolutionary leaders who had recently and violently deposed the monarchy would have been appreciated. *Adrien* was brought back in 1799, but again was banned after 4 performances. In 1799, Napoleon was in fact mirroring Hadrian's campaign throughout Egypt and the Middle East. And "at the intervention of the minister of the interior, who was Napoleon's younger brother, it was given one more performance in each of the years 1800 and 1801."<sup>103</sup> This opera could have been brought back because Napoleon's brother wanted Napoleon to be portrayed as a benevolent ruler like Hadrian – and it certainly asserts the importance of the opera, if only because Napoleon's brother liked it.

There are also two different settings of Méhul's opera, one that was first made widely available for a short time between 1791 and 1792, and one that was more popular in 1799. The first setting was seen as too long, and too counter-revolutionary for the time. In 1791, the guillotining of the monarchy was still fresh in the consciousness of the French people, and an opera that focused on the Emperor Hadrian made many people

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<sup>100</sup>Pritchard, Brian W. "Caldara's 'Adriano in Siria'". *The Musical Times*, Vol. 127, No 1720 (Jul. 1986), pp. 379-382. Musical Times Publications Ltd. Internet Resource. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/965237>. 379.

<sup>101</sup>Pritchard, 379

<sup>102</sup>Pritchard, 381

<sup>103</sup>[http://mupa.hu/en/program/Mehul-adrien-2012-06-26\\_19-30-bbnh](http://mupa.hu/en/program/Mehul-adrien-2012-06-26_19-30-bbnh)

uneasy – particularly the new leaders. Nevertheless, by 1799, Napoleon was widely accepted as a folk hero, and the French people seemed ready to hear of a leader who was also a conquering hero. It was redacted from the stage and then brought back after constant editing over 7 years.

The changes between the 1792 and the 1799 version of *Adrien* demonstrate what the French people considered appropriate and acceptable. While it did not have an overtly political theme, France was at war with many of its neighbors at the time that it premiered. The first scene in the opera is one of a victorious conqueror, which was exactly what the French were fighting against at the time, and which the censors of the period deemed ‘counter-revolutionary,’ thereby closing the production. Later, when it appeared in 1799, the same opening scene can be interpreted as an analogy for Napoleon taking charge of France, but this version was also censored and closed after only a few performances.

Moreover, the changes between the 1792 and the 1799 versions show what the leaders of the French people thought was appropriate and acceptable in French opera at the time, and there are some key differences between the two versions. First, the libretto and vocal lines in the music of the second edition show more depth and independent character traits.<sup>104</sup> The focus on independent voices and strong characters mean that each character is important in their own way - even those who do not have traditionally powerful roles. While this may seem like a small detail, I believe Méhul was not only trying to make his characters “fuller” and more encompassing, but was also making a statement: all characters were important in the Revolution, even those whose roles were minimal.

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<sup>104</sup>Bartlet,429

Secondly, there were changes in the form of the opera, most notably in the text and slight alterations in the orchestral settings.<sup>105</sup> Bartlet discusses this in her thesis, and notes that while the composers of the late 18th century relied somewhat on Gluck's developments in opera, other composers (most notably, Méhul) made some significant changes to the genre.

“A thorough comparison of Méhul's two settings of *Adrien* would provide a concrete example of some of the changes, as well as an illustration of the composer's own development. Furthermore, the 1799 version (mistakenly thought identical to the opera written for the planned 1792 performance by previous scholars) was by far the most important work given at the opera during the Revolution and an influential model for operas of the Empire. Such a study is beyond the scope of this dissertation (it is a topic for a dissertation in itself), but here at least the two *Adriens* should be differentiated.”<sup>106</sup>

The differences in the text were made due to political influences, as Bartlet tells us in her thesis. However, the other changes (in the orchestration, etc.) are not developed around the changes in the text - they are the developments of the composer.<sup>107</sup> Bartlet states that “these differences may indicate the ideological shift to a more “Romantic” kind of opera” - as Méhul was later credited as being a potentially early Romantic composer rather than a ‘Classical’ composer.<sup>108</sup>

Emperor Hadrian (or *Adrien*) was one of the most respected Emperors of Rome, and made many positive changes to Rome. However, at the time that this opera was first written, the leaders of the Revolution had just deposed the monarchy; the idea of an Emperor was the last thing that those leaders of the Revolution wanted to be considered positive. By 1799, however, the situation had changed drastically. In 1797 and 1798, Napoleon had been in Egypt and Syria on an aggressive and successful campaign for

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<sup>105</sup>“the orchestral texture becomes more distinctive and energetic.” Bartlet, 412, 422-423

<sup>106</sup>Bartlet, 412, 422-423

<sup>107</sup>“But, interestingly, for the most part Méhul worked the same musical material.” Bartlet, 412, 422-423

<sup>108</sup>Bartlet, 429

France, and therefore any story portraying a successful invading force into Syria would have been popular with the rapidly growing pro-Napoleon public. Furthermore, by 1799, Napoleon had led a coup and became the 'First Consul' of France. After years of internal strife and uncertainty, Napoleon's swift domination of the country was a welcome change for many; and at this time the comparison of Napoleon with Hadrian was interpreted by the French people as a positive correlation.

## **Part 6. Conclusion: How and Why Did Méhul Survive?**

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Above all else, it is apparent that Méhul was a composer who harnessed the ideas and emotions of the French Revolution and was able to put them into powerful operas. Méhul was unique at a turbulent period in history. Although the audience reaction to these operas is still somewhat unclear, due to the lack of reactions to them in journals, newspapers, and other publications; those who were in control and censored these operas at the time were so frightened of what could happen if the people were to grasp the metaphors in these works that the threats were immediately shut down. And it is plausible that at the time no one would want to state outright their political opinion in a newspaper - for fear of punishment and death.

Méhul rose to popularity and notoriety during the most turbulent years of the Revolution, when most intellectuals fled for their lives, and yet managed to maintain his status as a favorite of the people. By examining some of his operas my research shows that Méhul used thinly veiled metaphors to express his views. His heroes in these operas were Romans, Scottish nobles, and Crusaders, and his libretti referred to France's history; but these heroes clearly represented political figures and scenes of his time. Méhul was also famous for his revolutionary anthems, which might have protected him from harsh critiques from the censor.

My research shows that Méhul was not only a composer, but also a critic of the regime who knew sometimes how to overcome censorship through allegorical expression in libretti and musical themes. Every one of these operas point back to a historical time when France was doing well in the world, and Méhul avoids excessive political turmoil by not using the present as his scene while still allegorically referring to

it. In this way, these operas (*Euphrosine, Ariodant, Adrien, and Horatius Coclés*) use historical allegory to show the themes of what the people of France were undergoing at the time. They capture the feelings of the people of France, emphasizing the fact that they were often taken advantage of and lived in fear; but because of this many agreed with the ideals of the revolution.

In *Euphrosine*, we see the idealistic, loving and caring side of France; the nurturing figure that symbolized the growing nationalistic pride of the people. *Adrien* displays the fervor and somewhat convoluted opinions of the people towards the monarchy and dictatorship. *Horatius Coclés* displays the loyalty that the French men who served in battles for their leaders felt, and how the average person might have felt after such a huge transition occurred in their home while they were away. Finally, in *Ariodant*, the feeling of frustration with America becomes apparent, and through the allegories in the opera we can observe how cautious the French people were feeling, so as not to be trapped by their villainous former leaders.

Throughout the French Revolution, intellectuals and artists fled from their homes out of fear for their lives. The various revolutionary leaders persecuted the elites of society, and many composers, writers, painters, poets, and others were executed from 1789-1800. However, some were able to stay and survive the fervor of the time by masking their views or by playing to the feeling of the public. Méhul was one of the latter, and his anthem *Hymn du Depart* was second only to *La Marseillaise* in popularity. He wrote many other songs for the French Republic throughout this period, and that may well be one of the ways that he garnered an appreciation from the people of France. Regardless of whichever particular musical work was the most popular, Méhul's patriotic themes made him into a public figure – one who was too well known



to get rid of or render voiceless.

His ability to capture the essence of the French people's feeling in his operas is the most concrete reason why Méhul rose to popularity and notoriety during the most turbulent years of the Revolution. He managed to maintain his status as a favorite of the people and of the Revolutionary governments, and lived through the bloodiest period of France's history, all through his music.

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## Part 7. Appendixes

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### A. Table of Méhul's Works and Dates

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Date	Title of Work	Genre
1783	3 Sonatas for Piano, op. 1	Sonata
1788	3 Sonatas for Piano, op. 2	Sonata
1790	<i>Euphrosine, ou le Tyran Corrige</i>	Opera
1791	<i>Cora</i>	Opera
1792	<i>Stratonice</i>	Opera
1793	<i>Le jugement de Pâris</i>	Ballet
1793	<i>Le jeune sage et le vieux fou</i>	Opera
1794	<i>Chant des victoires</i>	Song
1794	<i>Chant du départ</i>	Song
1794	<i>Horatius Cocles</i>	Opera
1794	<i>Les congress du rois</i>	Opera
1794	<i>Meliodore et Phrosine</i>	Opera
1794	<i>Overture Burlesque</i>	Overture
1794	<i>Ouverture pour instruments à vent</i>	Overture
1795	<i>Doria, ou la tyrannie detruite</i>	Opera
1795	<i>La caverne</i>	Opera
1797	<i>Le jeune henri</i>	Opera
1797	<i>Le pont du lody</i>	Opera
1797	Symphony in C (only parts are surviving)	Symphony
1797-8	<i>La taupe et les papillions</i>	Opera
1799	<i>Ariodant</i>	Opera
1799	<i>Adrien</i>	Opera
1800	<i>La dansomanie</i>	Ballet
1800	<i>Epicure</i>	Opera
1800	<i>Bion</i>	Opera
1801	<i>L'irato, ou l'emporte</i>	Opera
1802	<i>Une folie</i>	Opera
1802	<i>Le trésor supposé, ou Le danger d'écouter aux portes</i>	Opera
1802	<i>Joanna</i>	Opera
1803	<i>Héléna</i>	Opera
1803	<i>Le baiser et la quittance, ou Une aventure de garnison</i>	Opera
1803	<i>L'heureux malgré lui</i>	Opera
1804	<i>Messe Solennelle pour soli, chœurs et orgue</i>	Song
1806	<i>Les deux aveugles de Tolède</i>	Opera
1806	<i>Uthal</i>	Opera
1806	<i>Gabrielle d'Estrées, ou Les amours d'Henri IV de France</i>	Opera
1807	<i>Joseph</i>	Opera
1808	<i>Chant du retour pour la Grande Armée</i>	Song

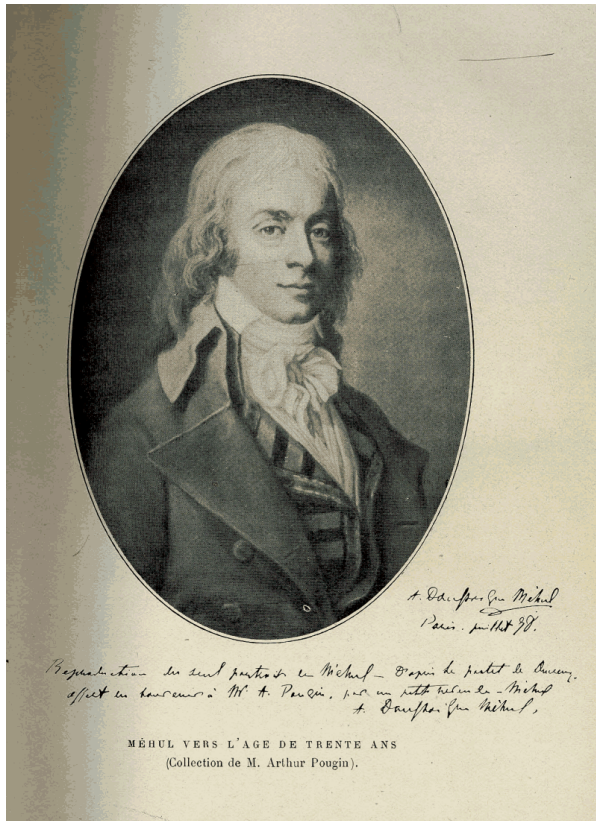
1808-9	Symphony No. 1 in G minor	Symphony
1808-9	Symphony No. 2 in D major	Symphony
1809	Symphony No. 3 in C major	Symphony
1810	Symphony No. 4 in E major	Symphony
1810	Symphony No. 5 (only the 1 <sup>st</sup> movement survives)	Symphony
1810	<i>Persée et Andromède</i>	Ballet
1811	<i>Les amazones, ou La fondation de Thèbes</i>	Opera
1811	<i>Chant lyrique pour l'inauguration de la statue de Napoléon</i>	Song
1813	<i>Le prince troubadour, ou Le grand trompeur des dames</i>	Opera
1814	<i>L'oriflamme</i>	Opera
1816	<i>La journée aux aventures</i>	Opera
1822	<i>Valentine de Milan</i> (posthumously premiered)	Opera

### B. Table of Events and Significant Operas

Date	Event	Significant Opera or other work
1787	Dutch Patriot revolt is stifled by Prussian invasion	
1788	Beginning of resistance of Austrian Netherlands	
1789	-October 5-6 - Women march to Versailles and join with men in bringing the royal family back to Paris - July 14, Siege of the Bastille	
1790	- Internal divisions lead to collapse of resistance in Austrian Netherlands	<i>Euphrosine, ou le Tyran Corrigé</i>
1791	-June 20 - Louis and Marie-Antoinette attempt to flee in disguise and are captured at Varennes - Beginning of slave revolt in St. Domingue (Haiti)	<i>Cora</i>
1792	-April 20 - Declaration of war on Austria -August 10 - Insurrection in Paris and attack on Tuileries palace lead to suspension of the king -September 2-6 - Murder of prisoners in "September massacres in Paris" -September 22 - Establishment of the republic - Beginning of war between France and the rest of Europe; second revolution of August 10 overthrows monarchy	<i>Stratonice</i>
1793	-January 21 - Execution of Louis XVI -March 11 - Beginning of uprising in the Vendée -May 31-June 2 - Insurrection leading to arrest	<i>Le jugement de Pâris, Le jeune sage et le vieux fou</i>

	<p>of the Girondins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-July 27 - Robespierre named to the Committee of Public Safety</li> <li>-September 29 - Convention establishes General Maximum on prices and wages</li> <li>-October 16 - Execution of Marie Antoinette</li> <li>-Second Partition of Poland by Austria and Russia; Louis XVI of France executed for treason</li> </ul>	
1794	<p>February 4 - Slavery abolished in the French colonies</p> <p>March 13-24 - Arrest, trial, and executions of so-called ultra-revolutionaries</p> <p>March 30-April 5 - Arrest, trial, and executions of Danton and his followers</p> <p>July 27 - "The Ninth of Thermidor" arrest of Robespierre and his supporters (executed 28-29)</p> <p>France annexes the Austrian Netherlands; abolition of slavery in French colonies; Robespierre's government by terror falls</p>	<p><i>Chant des victoires, Chant du départ, Horatius Cocles, Les congress du rois, Meliodore et Phrosine, Overture Burlesque, Ouverture pour instruments à vent</i></p>
1795	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-October 26 - Directory government takes office</li> <li>-Third (final) Partition of Poland</li> </ul>	<p><i>Doria, ou la tyrannie detruite, La caverne,</i></p>
1796	Succession of Italian victories by Bonaparte	
1797	Creation of "sister" republics in Italian states and Switzerland	<p><i>Le jeune henri, Le pont du lody, Symphony in C (only parts are surviving), La taupe et les papillions</i></p>
1798	May - 1799, October - Bonaparte in Egypt and Middle East	
1799	November 9 - Bonaparte's coup of 18 Brumaire	<i>Ariodant, Adrien</i>

## C. Images

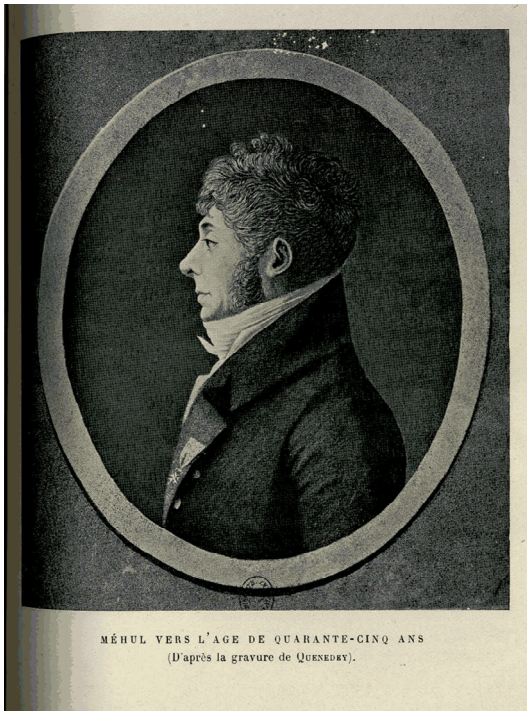


C1. Picture of Etienne Nicolas Méhul at age 30.

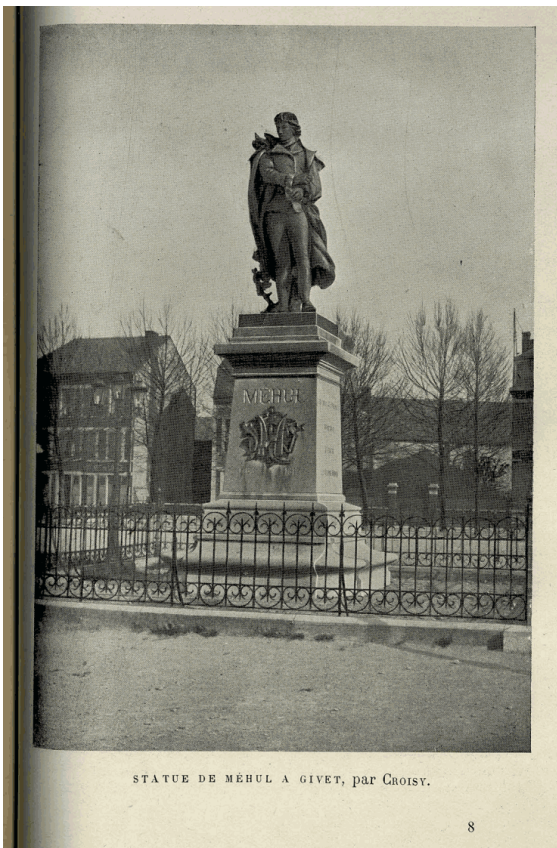


C2. Picture of the piano that Méhul used.

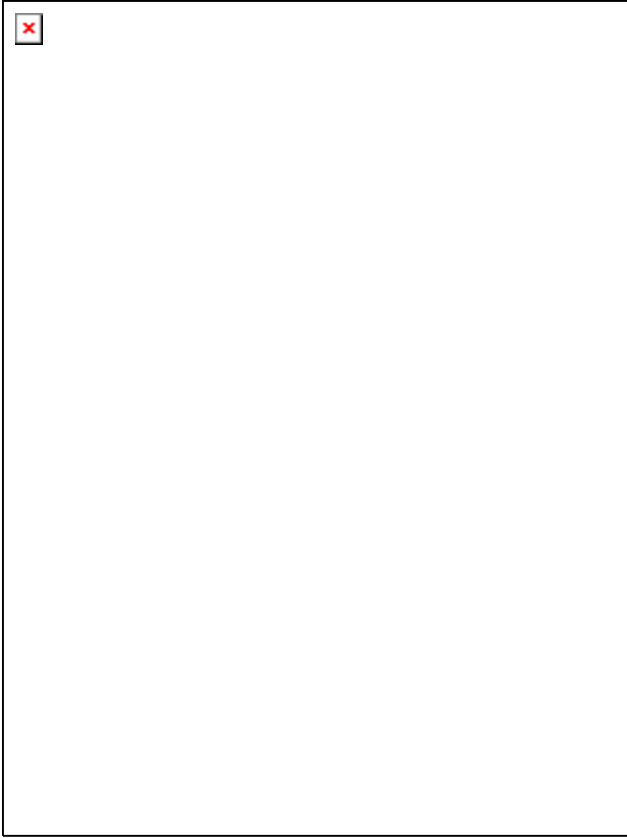
C3. Profile of  
Méhul, age 45



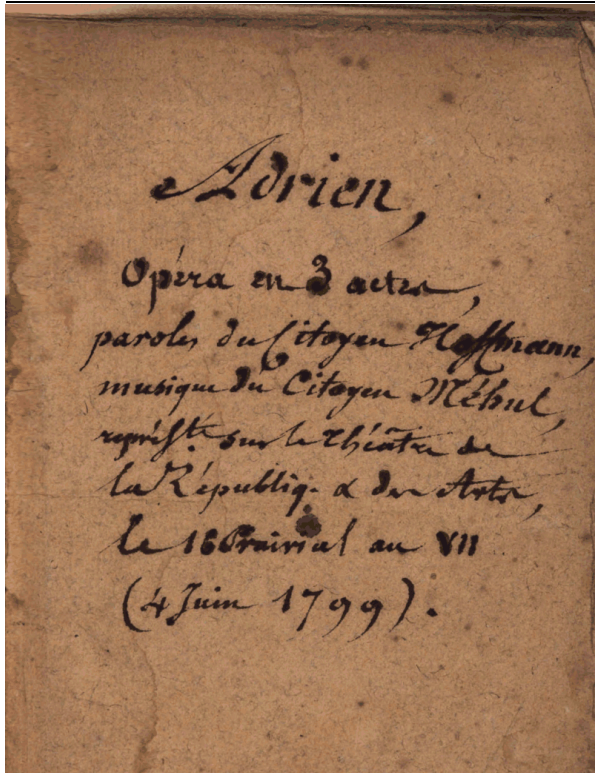
C4. Statue of Méhul  
in Givet, France.



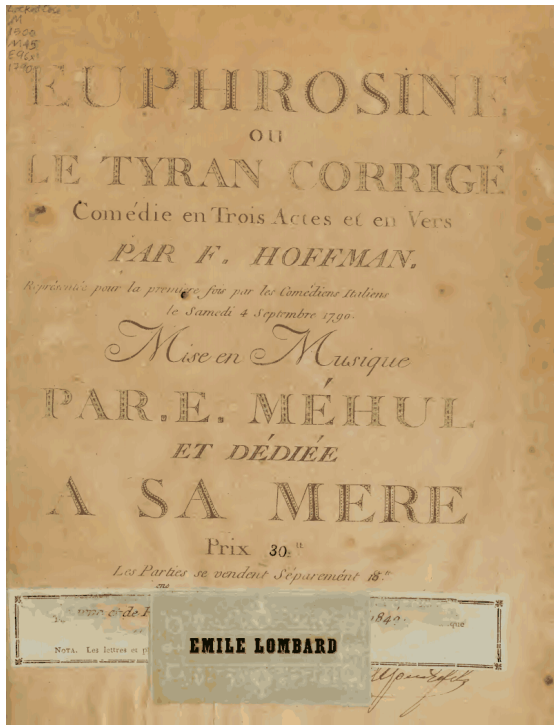




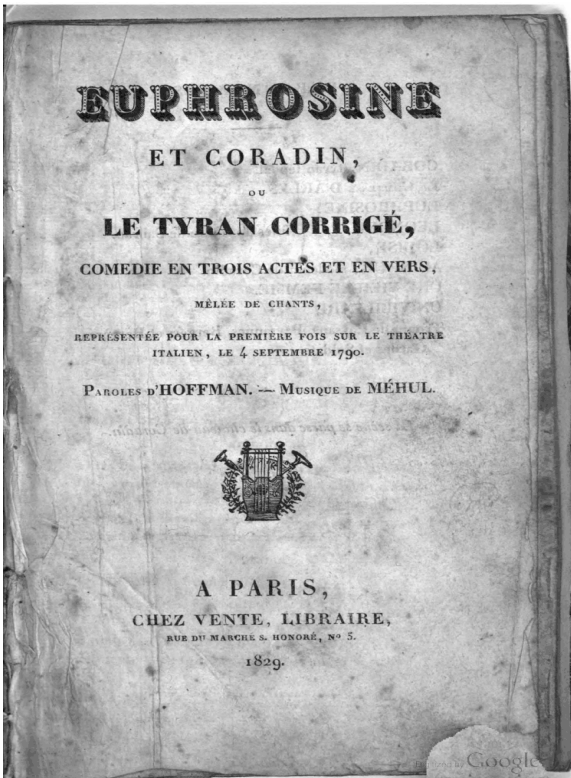
C5. The birthplace  
of Méhul in Givet,  
France.



C6. Autograph of  
*Adrien* from 1799.



C7. Front page of *Euphrosine ou le Tyran Corrigé*, 1799.



C8. Front page of *Euphrosine et Coradin*, 1829.

## APPENDICE

### LISTE CHRONOLOGIQUE DES ŒUVRES DRAMATIQUES DE MÉHUL.

DATES.	TITRES.	LIBRETTISTES.	THÉÂTRES.
4 septembre 1790.	<i>Euphrosine</i> (5, puis 4, puis 3 actes).	HOFFMAN.	Théâtre Favart.
15 fév. 1791.	<i>Corza</i> (4 actes).	VALADIER.	Opéra.
2 mai 1792.	<i>Stratonice</i> (1 acte).	HOFFMAN.	Théâtre Favart.
6 mars 1793.	<i>Le Jugement de Paris</i> , ballet (3 actes).	GARDEL.	Opéra.
28 mars 1793.	<i>Le jeune Sage et le vieux Fou</i> (1 acte).	HOFFMAN.	Théâtre Favart.
18 fév. 1794.	<i>Horatius Cocléus</i> (1 acte).	ARNAULT.	Opéra.
26 février 1794.	<i>Le Congrès des Rois</i> (3 actes) <sup>1</sup> .	DEMAILLOT.	Théâtre Favart.
6 mai 1794.	<i>Mélide et Phrosine</i> (3 actes).	ARNAULT.	Théâtre Favart.
11 septembre 1794.	<i>Timoléon</i> , tragédie avec chœurs (3 actes).	M.-J. CHÉNIER.	Théâtre de la République.
12 mars 1795.	<i>Doria ou la Tyrannie détruite</i> (3 actes).	LEGOUVÉ et D'AVRIGNY.	Théâtre Favart.
5 déc. 1795.	<i>La Caverne</i> (3 actes).	FORGEOT.	Théâtre Favart.
17 <sup>e</sup> mai 1797.	<i>Le jeune Henry</i> (2 actes).	BOUILLY.	Théâtre Favart.
15 déc. 1797.	<i>Le Pont de Lodi</i> (1 acte).	DELBRIEU.	Théâtre Feydeau.
5 juin 1799.	<i>Adrien</i> (3 actes).	HOFFMAN.	Opéra.
11 oct. 1799.	<i>Ariodant</i> (3 actes).	HOFFMAN.	Théâtre Favart.
14 mars 1800.	<i>Épicure</i> (3 actes) <sup>2</sup> .	DEMOUSTIER.	Théâtre Feydeau.
14 juin 1800.	<i>La Dansomanie</i> , ballet (2 actes).	GARDEL.	Opéra.
27 déc. 1800.	<i>Bion</i> (1 acte).	HOFFMAN.	Théâtre Favart.

<sup>1</sup> En société avec Berton, Blasius, Cherubini, Dalayrac, Deshayes, Devienne, Grétry, Jadin, Kreutzer, Solié et Trial fils.

<sup>2</sup> En société avec Cherubini.

C9. Appendix of Méhul's works from Arthur Pougin's book.

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MÉHUL.

DATES.	TITRES.	LIBRETTISTES.	THÉÂTRES.
17 fév. 1801.	<i>L'Irato</i> (1 acte).	MARSOLLIER.	Opéra-Comique.
5 avril 1802.	<i>Une Folie</i> (2 actes).	BOUILLY.	Id.
29 juillet 1802.	<i>Le Trésor supposé</i> (1 acte).	HOFFMAN.	Id.
23 nov. 1802.	<i>Joanna</i> (2 actes).	MARSOLLIER.	Id.
14 janvier 1803.	<i>Daphnis et Pandrose</i> , ballet (2 actes).	GARDEL.	Opéra.
1 <sup>er</sup> mars 1803.	<i>Hélène</i> (3 actes).	BOUILLY.	Opéra-Comique.
18 juin 1803.	<i>Le Baiser et la Quittance</i> (3 actes) <sup>1</sup> .	PICARD, LONGCHAMPS et DIEULAFOI.	Id.
28 décembre 1803.	<i>L'Heureux malgré lui</i> (2 actes).	SAINT-JUST.	Id.
14 juin 1804.	<i>Les Hussites</i> , drame (3 actes).	ALEX. DUVAL.	Porte Saint-Martin.
28 janvier 1806.	<i>Les deux Aveugles de To- léde</i> (1 acte).	MARSOLLIER.	Opéra-Comique.
17 mai 1806.	<i>Uthal</i> (1 acte).	SAINT-VICTOR.	Id.
25 juin 1806.	<i>Gabrielle d'Estrées</i> (3 actes).	SAINT-JUST.	Id.
17 fév. 1807.	<i>Joseph</i> (3 actes).	ALEX. DUVAL.	Id.
8 juin 1810.	<i>Persée et Andromède</i> , ballet (3 actes).	GARDEL.	Opéra.
17 déc. 1811.	<i>Les Amazones</i> (3 actes).	JOUY.	Opéra.
24 mai 1813.	<i>Le Prince Troubadour</i> (1 acte).	ALEX. DUVAL.	Opéra-Comique.
1 <sup>er</sup> février 1814.	<i>L'Oriflamme</i> (1 acte) <sup>2</sup> .	ÉTIENNE et BAOUR-LORMAN.	Opéra.
16 novembre 1816.	<i>La Journée aux Aventures</i> (3 actes).	CAPELLE et MÉZIERES.	Opéra-Comique.
28 novembre 1822.	<i>Valentine de Milan</i> (3 actes) <sup>3</sup> .	BOUILLY.	Id.

<sup>1</sup> En société avec Boissidien, Kreutzer et Nicolo.

<sup>2</sup> En société avec Berton, Kreutzer et Paër.

<sup>3</sup> Ouvrage posthume, dont la musique fut terminée par Daussolgne, neveu de Méhul.

C10. Continued index.



C11. Etching of  
Mutius Scaevola.