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MABE, CASSANDRA PRITCHETT. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's  
Writings on Music as an Aspect of Preromanticism. (1972)  
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Rousseau's works concerning music reveal various recurrent themes which are now considered preromantic. While the writings on theory may be viewed as a treatise on Rousseau's preromantic philosophy, the characters and themes of his operas seem to foretell his most outstanding sentimental work, La nouvelle Héloïse.

Rousseau wrote the "Lettre à M. Grimm," "Lettre sur la musique française," and the "Lettre d'un symphoniste," in which he revealed his preferences for the simple Italian melodic music over the more complex French harmonic music, at the time of the "Guerre des bouffons" in France. During the "Guerre des Gluckistes et des Piccinistes" Rousseau wrote "Fragments d'observations sur l'Alceste" and the "Extrait d'une réponse du petit faiseur à son prête-nom sur un morceau de l'Orphée" in support of Christoph Willibald Gluck's emotive French reform operas.

The theme of melody versus harmony as a conveyor of passion also appears in Rousseau's other works on music theory which do not pertain to one of the eighteenth century polemical musical battles: the Dictionnaire de musique, the

articles which he contributed to the Encyclopédie, the "Projet concernant de nouveaux signes pour la musique," "Dissertation sur la musique moderne," "Lettre à M. Burney," "Examen de deux principes avancés par M. Rameau," and the "Essai sur l'origine des langues." In addition, in these works he demonstrates his predilection for the return from the present corrupt harmonic system to the natural simplicity of the music of the ancient Greeks, "le génie" as opposed to "le goût," and verisimilitude in operatic productions.

Among the sentimental themes which Rousseau sketched in his operas, the best known of which is Le Devin du village, and later cultivated more fully in La nouvelle Héloïse are the following: the exaltation of virtue, innocence, and passionate love; natural goodness of simple peasant people unaffected by society; struggle between passionate love and social responsibility; suffering which results from impossible love; and the superiority of naïve rural pleasures contrasted to vain materialistic wealth afforded by eighteenth-century civilization. Moreover, elements of Saint-Preux's "âme sensible" can be traced to the characters of Rousseau's operas.

APPROVAL SHEET  
JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU'S WRITINGS ON MUSIC

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AS AN ASPECT OF PREROMANTICISM

by

Cassandra Pritchett Mabe

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## INTRODUCTION

In the latter half of the eighteenth century a group of authors reacted to the rationalism and materialism of the "philosophes" by subordinating scientific reason to "sensibilité." Since their works foreshadowed and to some extent influenced the Romantic movement, the term preromantic has been applied retrospectively to the themes and characters of their works. Jean-Jacques Rousseau is now considered one of the most important and influential of the preromantics both because of the sentimental aspects of his literary works and because of the traits of his character and personality which later generations have come to associate with the preromantic hero.

Rousseau appears to have directed his "sensibilité" into two principal channels. On the one hand, he poured his longings for simplicity, virtue, and passionate love into La nouvelle Héloïse. Since music is the language of emotion par excellence it seems fitting that he would also have elected to vent some of his subjective feelings here. Rousseau's statements concerning the emotive capabilities of music seem to indicate that he would have adhered to

the "theory of music as the ideal romantic art."<sup>1</sup> All evidence indicates that he was well aware of the great possibilities for the expression of many varied emotions in this the gentlest of the arts.

This study will show how Rousseau's attitudes toward music, as expressed in his works concerning the subject, mirror his personal "sentiments" as well as some of the nascent preromantic themes. Rousseau's writings pertaining to theory and his actual musical productions, along with certain passages from other works, such as La nouvelle Héloïse, reveal clearly many of his preromantic tendencies. The focus upon these individual works must be preceded by a brief overview of the development of music in the life of Rousseau as well as certain comments concerning the state of French music during the eighteenth century.

Late in life Rousseau stated that he had been born for music.<sup>2</sup> It was his dear aunt Suson who first inspired

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Ware Locke, Music and the Romantic Movement in France (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1920), p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Dialogues, in Oeuvres complètes, ed. by V.D. Musset-Pathay, XVII (Paris: Chez P. Dupont, 1824), p. 298. Unless otherwise stated, all references to the Oeuvres complètes will be this edition.

in him this passion for singing simple tunes which remained tenderly with him throughout his life. This love revealed itself periodically, as during his stay in Turin. After having renounced his Protestant faith, he attended Mass regularly, mainly in order to satisfy his growing passion for music. Mme de Warens aided him slightly in his endeavors to learn the art by giving him eight or ten basic singing lessons herself and then by providing him the opportunity to study with Le Maître, the lively French choir-master of the cathedral at Annecy. It seems fitting that these six months were among the calmest periods of his life.

An interesting event in the musical career of Rousseau occurred at Lausanne where, knowing thus far very little about the art, he set himself up as a music teacher. In order to prove his ability, he composed and performed a truly ludicrous symphony for which he was greatly ridiculed. Nonetheless, he persevered with his students, moved to Neufchâtel where he was a bit more successful, and, in fact, there learned music by teaching it. He became interested in harmony, accompaniments, chords, theory in general, Rameau, concerts, and even began to compose some

small pieces of his own.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of his self-taught knowledge of music, Rousseau came to realize the many difficulties existing for a novice in the present system. Genius that he was, he devised a revolutionary system of writing music with figures. After being replaced by the newcomer Vintzenried in the home of Mme de Warens in 1742, he left the Charmettes for Paris where he expected to make a reputation for himself by presenting his "Projet concernant de nouveaux signes pour la musique" before the Academay. Although the "Projet" was not accepted by this elite group of scholars, it prompted his "Dissertation sur la musique moderne" in 1743.<sup>4</sup> Years later in 1774(?) he was still concerned with revamping the system and wrote a "Lettre à M. le docteur Burney, auteur de l'histoire générale de la musique" in which he proposed a system similar to that of the ancient Greeks of writing music in "sillons," from

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<sup>3</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Les Confessions, in Oeuvres complètes, ed. by Michel Launay and Jean Fabre, I (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967), pp. 123-215. For a verification of Rousseau's statements concerning his musical career, as well as additional information on the subject, see Jean Guéhenno, Jean-Jacques (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1948).

<sup>4</sup>Rousseau, Confessions, p. 229.



left to right, right to left, etc.

Rousseau's passion for music and the preromantic traits he possessed complemented one another. Nothing, perhaps, illustrates this fact better than his final choice of a profession in 1751, that of copier of music. His desire for independence, individuality, and simplicity could best be realized, given the freedom which this profession afforded. He said of himself:

C'est par paresse, par nonchalance, par aversion de la dépendance et de la gêne, que Jean-Jacques copie de la musique. Il fait sa tâche quand et comment il lui plaît; il ne doit compte de sa journée, de son temps, de son travail, de son loisir à personne. Il n'a besoin de rien arranger, de rien prévoir, de prendre aucun souci de rien; il n'a nulle dépense d'esprit à faire; il est lui et à lui tous les jours, tout le jour; et le soir, quand il se délasse et se promène, son ame ne sort du calme que pour se livrer à des émotions délicieuses, sans qu'il ait à payer de sa personne, et à soutenir le faix de la célébrité par de brillantes ou savantes conversations, qui feraient le tourment de sa vie sans flatter sa vanité.<sup>5</sup>

Already having written two insignificant short operas, Iphis et Anaxarète in 1739 and La Découverte du nouveau monde in 1741, he began writing Les Muses galantes, an opera-ballet, in 1743. However, its writing was interrupted by his commission to Venice as secretary to the

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<sup>5</sup>Rousseau, Dialogues, p. 262.

French ambassador Montaigu. He had gone there from Paris prejudiced against Italian music but soon conceived a great passion for it, so much so that he became a great patron of the opera houses. In Italy he continued to work on Les Muses and finished it later in 1743 when he returned to Paris, where it was performed several times without success in 1745. According to Rousseau, Rameau demonstrated great jealousy, even to the point of accusing him of plagiarism and of hindering the success of his opera. Later, in 1752, inspired by the Italian "opera buffa," he began work on what was to be his most famous musical production, the opera Le Devin du village.<sup>6</sup> That same year on October 18 it was presented before the King at Fontainebleau and then in March, 1753, as an interlude at the Opera;<sup>7</sup> it was indeed a great success. When in attendance Rousseau heard praises from the audience: "Cela est charmant, cela est ravissant; il n'y a pas un son là

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<sup>6</sup>Rousseau, Confessions, pp. 233-67.

<sup>7</sup>Louissette Reichenburg, Contribution à l'histoire de la "Querelle des Bouffons" (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1937), p. 69.

qui ne parle au coeur."<sup>8</sup> Le Devin continued to please for over seventy years.<sup>9</sup> Age did not deter Rousseau in this area. At Lyon in 1770 and later at the Comédie-Française in 1775, the melodrama Pygmalion was presented; Rousseau had written the text but had had Horace Coignet compose the music except for two pieces which he wrote himself.<sup>10</sup> Death interrupted his composing the music for the pastoral Daphnis et Chloé whose text was written by his friend Olivier de Corancez. After his death in 1781 some of his friends published about ninety-five romances and instrumental airs in the volume Consolations des misères de ma vie, the royalties from which went to help support some orphanages, as Rousseau had willed.<sup>11</sup>

In 1749 Diderot and d'Alembert, compiling the Encyclopédie, requested Rousseau to contribute the articles

<sup>8</sup>Rousseau, Confessions, p. 267.

<sup>9</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Ecrits sur la musique, in Oeuvres complètes, XI, XV.

<sup>10</sup>John Grand-Carteret, J.-J. Rousseau jugé par les français d'aujourd'hui (Paris: Perrin et Cie, 1890), p. 353.

<sup>11</sup>Comité national pour la commémoration de J.-J. Rousseau, Colloque, Jean-Jacques Rousseau et son oeuvre (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1962), pp. 360-61.

on music. For this task, which easily could have occupied three years, Rousseau says they allotted him only three months. He states that he was blinded by the zeal of friendship since the product of his efforts contains many errors.<sup>12</sup> These prompted a brochure by Rameau to which Rousseau responded in his "Examen de deux principes avancés par M. Rameau, dans sa brochure intitulée, 'Erreurs sur la musique,' dans l'Encyclopédie." Later, in 1767, his two volume Dictionnaire de musique was published, which contains articles very similar to those found in the Encyclopédie.

In 1750 Rousseau began his writings on the subject of Italian versus French music with his "Lettre sur le drame musical en France et en Italie" to Grimm, of which only a fragment remains. In this he did not really favor one or the other; however, he was soon to change his mind radically. On January 14, 1752, the lyric tragedy Omphale by Destouches was played at the Opera in Paris. Grimm, who had been in Italy and had come to admire Italian music, wrote the "Lettre sur Omphale" published in February, 1752, in which he spoke against this opera and French music in

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<sup>12</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Dictionnaire de musique, in Oeuvres complètes, XII, 4.

general. A few weeks later l'abbé Raynal wrote his "Remarques au sujet de la lettre de M. Grimm" in which he refuted Grimm's statements by upholding Rameau. Again Grimm proceeded to defend his position by writing the "Lettre de M. Grimm à M. l'abbé Raynal sur les remarques au sujet de sa lettre sur Omphale." It is in defense of this letter that Rousseau entered the scene in April, 1752, with the publication of his, at that time anonymous, "Lettre à M. Grimm au sujet des remarques ajoutées à sa lettre sur Omphale" in which he began to praise Italian music over French music. The stage was now set for the polemical battle known as the "Guerre des bouffons" which was to ensue.

In August, 1752, nine Italian singers came to Paris to present, as it turned out, twelve intermezzos of the "opera buffa" type. The subjects of these were contemporary and realistic as opposed to the mythological themes of the traditional French "opera seria." The Italian operas were generally performed alongside French presentations, which, of course, encouraged comparison. The Italian troupe, called the "bouffons," remained in Paris until April, 1754. During their stay a battle waged between such partisans of the traditional French music as Louis XV, Mme de Pompadour, Fréron, and Rameau and those preferring Italian comic opera,



including Rousseau, Grimm, le Baron d'Holbach, Diderot, and the Queen.<sup>13</sup> In his Confessions Rousseau aptly described the situation:

Les bouffons firent à la musique italienne des sectateurs très ardents. Tout Paris se divisa en deux partis plus échauffés que s'il se fût agi d'une affaire d'État ou de religion. L'un plus puissant, plus nombreux, composé des grands, des riches et des femmes, soutenait la musique française; l'autre plus vif, plus fier, plus enthousiaste, était composé des vrais connaisseurs, des gens à talents, des hommes de génie. Son petit peloton se rassemblait à l'Opéra sous la loge de la reine. L'autre parti remplissait tout le reste du parterre et de la salle; mais son foyer principal était sous la loge du roi. Voilà d'où vinrent ces noms de parti célèbres dans ce temps-là de "Coin du roi" et de "Coin de la reine."<sup>14</sup>

The two major pamphleteers supporting the "Coin de la reine" were Grimm with his "Petit prophète" published in January, 1753, and Rousseau with his "Lettre sur la musique française" published in November, 1753. Numerous vehement responses were written to Rousseau's letter, as well as to Grimm's. Members of the French orchestra even burned Rousseau in effigy in front of the Opera house as a result of his satirical "Lettre d'un symphoniste de

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<sup>13</sup>Reichenburg, Querelle des Bouffons, pp. 18-67.

<sup>14</sup>Rousseau, Confessions, p. 269.

l'Académie Royale de Musique à ses camarades de l'orchestre." Although one may say that Rameau's "Coin du roi" triumphed since the "bouffons" were obliged to leave Paris after their presentation of I viaggiatori in March, 1754,<sup>15</sup> the influence of the Italian style was to be felt in France for many years to come.

The polemical battle of pamphlets resumed in 1774 when Christoph Willibald Gluck, a German who had practiced the art of Italian music, entered the Parisian scene. His revolutionary innovations as espoused in Iphigénie en Aulide, Orphée et Eurydice, Armide, and Alceste again divided Paris into two camps. While there were those who revered the refreshing simplicity, sincerity, "sentiment," and melodic qualities of his French operas, others supported the Italian comic operas of Niccola Piccini. Both musicians were requested to compose an opera concerning Iphigénie en Tauride, the best received of which was Gluck's. However, the success of Piccini's "opera buffa" La buona figliuola coupled with the failure of Gluck's last work Echo et Narcisse marked a nominal triumph for the Piccinists.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Reichenburg, Querelle des Bouffons, pp. 48-94, passim.

<sup>16</sup>Norbert Dufourcq, La Musique française (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1949), pp. 206-09.



In reality, Gluck was the true victor since even Piccini, along with numerous other musicians, came to accept many of his innovative techniques.<sup>17</sup> Rousseau altered his views concerning French music and was among the Gluckists, supporting Gluck's cause in the "Lettre à M. le docteur Burney," accompanied by his "Fragments d'observation sur l'Alceste de M. le chevalier Gluck" and in his "Extrait d'une réponse du petit faiseur à son prête-nom sur un morceau de l'Orphée de M. le chevalier Gluck," all three published in 1774(?).

The aforementioned writings cannot be separated from Rousseau's predilection for simplicity, individuality, nature, and imagination. The purpose of this paper, then, is neither to study his merits as a musician nor to delve into the technical aspects of the writings. It is rather to study these theoretical works, along with his operas and certain applicable passages found in La nouvelle Héloïse, from a literary viewpoint, focusing upon the various preromantic themes recurrent in them all.

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<sup>17</sup>Paul Henry Láng, Music in Western Civilization (New York: W.W. Norton, 1941), p. 563.

THEORETICAL WRITINGS PERTAINING TO THE "GUERRE  
DES BOUFFONS" AND THE "GUERRE DES  
GLUCKISTES ET DES PICCINISTES"

Rousseau's theoretical works on music included in this chapter can be divided into two groups. The first series--"Lettre à M. Grimm au sujet des remarques ajoutées à sa lettre sur Omphale," "Lettre sur la musique française," and "Lettre d'un symphoniste de l'Académie Royale de Musique à ses camarades de l'orchestre"--was written in connection with the "Guerre des bouffons." In them Rousseau rejects the allegorical, mythological subjects of the French "opera seria" and speaks against the current use of erudite ornamental harmonies to dazzle the senses, as exemplified in the works of Rameau. He upholds, instead, the Italian comic operas in which simple melodies were employed to transmit sentimental, truth-seeming themes to the heart. The second group of works, including "Fragments d'observation sur l'Alceste italien de M. le chevalier Gluck" and the "Extrait d'une réponse du petit faiseur à son prête-nom sur un morceau de l'Orphée de M. le chevalier

Gluck," was written during the "Guerre des Gluckistes et des Piccinistes," in support of Gluck's reform operas. In part, by subordinating his music to the librettos and the harmony to the melody, he was able to create a highly expressive type of dramatic music which inspired Rousseau to favor his productions over Piccini's comic operas. Rousseau was not so blinded by his admiration for the Italian "opera buffa" and by his disgust for the traditional French "opera seria" that he could not recognize the supreme artistry of Gluck's French operas.<sup>1</sup>

In his "Lettre à M. Grimm au sujet des remarques ajoutées à sa lettre sur Omphale," one clearly understands that Rousseau is lambasting not only l'abbé Raynal, at that time anonymous author of the brochure criticizing Grimm's "Lettre sur Omphale," but critics in general who tend to write more obscurely than the texts they judge. Moreover, one notes his increasing hostility toward Rameau. Of course, Rousseau has grown bitter as a result of the latter's accusations of plagiarism, but really the discord results from the opposing ideologies of the two men. Rousseau complains that Rameau has reduced the great

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<sup>1</sup>Láng, Music in Western Civilization, pp. 547-63.

emotional art of music to neat little packages of ornamental harmony. In short, Rousseau states that Rameau's great knowledge of music is more like that of a calculated scientist than that of an inspired genius: "... plus de savoir que de génie, ou du moins un génie étouffé par trop de savoir ... ." <sup>2</sup> Rousseau feels that by making accompaniments too full, frequent, and confused, Rameau has given birth to a French orchestra unable to move its audience. On the other hand, Rousseau has a longing for the simplicity of melody in musical productions which, he believes, is best able to capture the emotions of the audience:

Toutes ces belles finesses de l'art, ces imitations, ces doubles dessins, ces basses contraintes, ces contre-fugues, ne sont que des monstres difformes, des monuments du mauvais goût, qu'il faut reléguer dans les cloîtres comme dans leur dernier asile. <sup>3</sup>

He also complains of the influence the philosophers have had on the judgment of art in France. They tend to

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<sup>2</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Lettre à M. Grimm au sujet des remarques ajoutées à sa lettre sur Omphale," Ecrits sur la musique, in Oeuvres complètes, XI, 316. Henceforth, all references to Ecrits sur la musique will be this volume of Oeuvres complètes.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 317-18.

mistake "la sécheresse du calcul" for "le goût," the result being that "le génie" remains undiscovered by the majority of the would-be connoisseurs. He believes that a man of art cannot be dependent upon the appraisal of philosophers nor upon the gift of money. Instead, he must have great talent in whatever field he is engaged in as well as "une ame grande et sublime."<sup>4</sup> In addition, he must be master of his passions and possess great virtue.<sup>5</sup>

By 1753 the battle between French and Italian music was well underway. The Italians complained that French melody was "plate et sans aucun chant."<sup>6</sup> The French, on the other hand, accused Italian music of being baroque and bizarre. More moderate judges held to the argument that both types of music are good, each according to the language which produced it. In the "Lettre sur la musique française" Rousseau set out to resolve the question, stating clearly his purpose in the first paragraph: to examine the music of France in order to determine if it really does

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 313.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 298-320.

<sup>6</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Lettre sur la musique française," Ecrits sur la musique, p. 159.

exist. First, he was to prove that the French language is decidedly inferior to Italian and, then, as a direct consequence that French dramatic music is greatly inferior.

All music is founded upon melody, harmony, and rhythm. According to Rousseau, harmony is the same for all nations since it is based on nature, and rhythm is its direct result. It is melody alone which determines the quality of a national music. If harmony differs somewhat from country to country, it is because of the melody. Since melody is the deciding factor, a language which lends itself easily to melodic music would be superior, as far as music is concerned, to one which does not. A language devoid of melody would be a monotonous one composed of mute or nasal syllables, few sonorous vowels, and many consonants. Such an insipid language is French as opposed to Italian, which is sweet, flowing, sonorous, and accented more than any other. Rousseau also holds that musicians working within the confines of the French language, unable to create true inspired beauty, resort to inventing artifices, as described in the "Lettre à M. Grimm," which result in little more than complicated noise completely void of expression. In short, Rousseau is condemning the intellectual French harmonic music, which, he says, is



heralded only by the natives, contrasted to the universally loved expressive melodic music of the Italians.

In proving his thesis, Rousseau relates three experiments he performed. First, he took two airs equally esteemed in the two languages, removing all glides and cadences from the French, and from the Italian all the suggestive notes, not even written down by the composers but added by the singers. The simple melody was all that remained, and Rousseau, deeming himself an unbiased judge, decided firmly in favor of the Italian air.

The second more decisive experiment reveals more concerning his reasons for preferring Italian music. He had some Italian singers perform the most beautiful airs of Lulli and French musicians perform several airs of Leo and Pergolesi. Although the French did not do justice to the Italian music, at least they made some semblance of feeling the melody. However, the Italians harbored absolutely no feeling when performing the most moving French melodies.

The third analysis involved an Armenian living in Venice who, strangely enough, had never before heard music. A French singer performed very badly an Italian melody and somewhat more skillfully a French air. During the performance



of the French song, Rousseau observed more surprise than pleasure on the part of the Armenian. But his reaction to the Italian performance was completely the opposite:

"... tout le monde observa, dès les premières mesures de l'air italien, que son visage et ses yeux s'adoucissaient; il était enchanté, il prêtait son ame aux impressions de la musique; et, quoiqu'il entendît peu la langue, les simples sons lui causaient un ravissement sensible."<sup>7</sup> Needless to say, after experiencing the Italian melody, the Armenian would no longer listen to any French air.

After these experiments Rousseau concludes that he seriously doubts the existence of melody in French music. The principal outcome of the French composers' use of complex ornamental harmonies to compensate for the lack of melody is that it really worsens the situation since only excellent singers with great lungs are able to sing loudly enough to be heard above the pandemonium. On the contrary, any voice is suitable for Italian airs since the beauty of the music is in the melody itself and not in the skill of the performer. The goals of the Italian masters are, then, different from those of the French: "Plus doux ... ; ne forcez point, chantez sans gêne; rendez vos sons doux,

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 163-64.

flexibles et coulants; réservez les éclats pour ces moments rares et passagers où il faut surprendre et déchirer."<sup>8</sup>

Rousseau believes that three elements combine to produce the perfect Italian melody, the first being the sweetness of the language which makes all inflections of the voice easy. This enables each actor to appear as an individual, singing the air according to his own personality. Next is the boldness of the inflections which results in the sensitive conveyance of expression. The Italian composer can readily pass from one mood to another, thus being able to convey the most impetuous passions as well as very serene ones. Rousseau maintains that such versatility is alien to French music. The third advantage is the precise rhythm felt in both slow and fast movements, which facilitates the communication of many varied feelings: "... qui porte au coeur tous les sentiments, et à l'esprit tous les tableaux; qui donne au musicien le moyen de mettre en air tous les caractères de paroles imaginables ..."<sup>9</sup>

The Italian composer's ability to express easily not only agreeable feelings but also pathetic and tragic ones

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

may be attributed to his rejection of counterpoint, which enables him to work with only one melody at a time and, thus, convey only one idea to the listener. Rousseau believes that unity of melody is as important in music as is unity of action in a tragedy, since a composer must make all the parts contribute to the main melody or idea in order to bring all the desired feelings to the soul. He contends that the only purpose of harmony and accompaniment should be that of reinforcing the expression of the melody. In essence, his principal desire is that music follow nature, as is the case with one melody or "chant," since: "... tout ce qui est au-delà de la nature ne touche pas."<sup>10</sup>

He does, however, state a compromise on this point. If there must be harmony, let it be simple, as he witnessed once at an Italian opera. He observed a youth about ten years old accompanying on the harpsichord. He noticed that this boy seldom played, but when he did, he generally used only two fingers and almost always sounded the fundamental base of the chord. Rousseau was truly astounded:

Quoi! disais-je en moi-même, l'harmonie complète fait moins d'effet que l'harmonie mutilée, et nos accompagnateurs, en rendant tous les accords

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

pleins, ne font qu'un bruit confus, tandis que celui-ci, avec moins de sons, fait plus d'harmonie, ou, du moins, rend son accompagnement plus sensible et plus agréable!<sup>11</sup>

He found a great deal of expression in the simplicity of this harmony, so closely united to the melody, as opposed to the cold, listless confusion present in the more complicated French harmonic system.

In addition to the expressiveness of the Italian dramatic music itself, Rousseau loves the many varied sentimental themes in the operas and the truth-seeming feelings they convey to the hearts of those present. Great weeping and lamentations are the customary reactions to such "tableaux" as the following:

Tantôt c'est un père désespéré qui croit voir l'ombre d'un fils qu'il a fait mourir injustement lui reprocher sa cruauté; tantôt c'est un prince débonnaire qui, forcé de donner un exemple de sévérité, demande aux dieux de lui ôter l'empire, ou de lui donner un coeur moins sensible. Ici c'est une mère tendre qui verse des larmes en retrouvant son fils qu'elle croyait mort ...<sup>12</sup>

In these scenes it is the language of love which flows:  
"... tragique, vif, bouillant, entrecoupé, et tel qu'il

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

convient aux passions impétueuses."<sup>13</sup>

How far removed from the uninspired productions witnessed by French opera-goers! As Diderot criticizes the French theatre for lack of verisimilitude, so Rousseau disapproves of the insufficient "vraisemblance" in French operas. The French singer, having no concept of pantomime and being in no way inspired to act by the music, remains motionless and expressionless while another on stage performs his air. Rousseau offers the suggestion of including natural, expressive recitatives, similar to those found in Italian operas, in order to achieve greater verisimilitude. The following is among their melodious assets: "... qu'il peut marquer toutes les inflexions dont les passions les plus véhémentes animent le discours, sans forcer la voix du chanteur ni étourdir les oreilles de ceux qui écoutent."<sup>14</sup>

He summarizes by saying that the intellectual French dramatic music as opposed to the simpler, more meaningful Italian music has neither rhythm nor melody, because of the poverty of the language. The harmony which the natives

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

praise so highly is harsh and expressionless. In forthright terms, the French may lay no claim to true dramatic music and never will be able to, as far as this polemicist is concerned.<sup>15</sup>

Rousseau takes a much lighter, satirical tone in his "Lettre d'un symphoniste de l'Académie Royale de Musique à ses camarades de l'orchestre." By studying the remarks of the fictitious symphonist, the reader clearly discerns, once again, the author's aversion to traditional French music. The symphonist laments the demotion of his orchestra from its former splendor, attributable only to the influx of Italian music.

In order to prevent such humiliation, the members of the orchestra deliberately accompanied badly a presentation of La serva padrona, a comic opera by Pergolesi, their purpose being to prejudice the French public against Italian music. The Italians became, therefore, somewhat fearful of Paris, the reasons for which stated by the symphonist: "... il ne nous a pas été difficile d'écraser de pauvres étrangers qui, ignorant les mystères de le boutique, n'avaient d'autres protecteurs que leurs talents, d'autres partisans que les oreilles sensibles et équitables,

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 145-203.



ni d'autre cabale que le plaisir qu'ils s'efforçaient de faire aux spectateurs."<sup>16</sup>

This conspiracy not being enough to crush their popularity, the symphonist proposes another secret intrigue. This time they are to spoil deliberately the intermezzo L'Oiseleuse anglaise by Jomelli and send the "bouffons" home once and for all. He gives twelve calculated steps for them to follow, among which appears the following: "On aura grand soin d'adoucir les 'fort' et de renforcer les 'doux,' principalement sous le chant ..."<sup>17</sup> If in reality Rousseau's satirical account is accurate, it seems remarkable that the troupe was able to remain in Paris for two years, in the face of such obstacles. Certainly the melodies of these intermezzos must have contained a high degree of "sensibilité" not to have been overcome more readily by such plots.

During the period of about twenty years which intervened between the "Guerre des bouffons" and the "Guerre des Gluckistes et des Piccinistes," Rousseau did not alter

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<sup>16</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Lettre d'un symphoniste de l'Académie Royale de Musique à ses camarades de l'orchestre," ibid., p. 208.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 213.



to a great extent his thoughts concerning dramatic music in general; however, he did gain respect for the new style of French music introduced by his friend Gluck. Strangely enough, considering his fervent remarks in the conclusion of the "Lettre sur la musique française" with regard to the utter impossibility of any worthwhile French music, he was to realize that by means of some badly needed reforms true music could actually develop in France.

Gluck had asked Rousseau to comment on his Italian version of Alceste. But before he could adequately organize his ideas, Gluck requested that he return the score without even inquiring into the nature of his observations. However, portions of these thoughts remained written, which Rousseau years later sent to Dr. Burney under the title "Fragments d'observation sur l'Alceste italien de M. le chevalier Gluck," in hopes he might be able to use some of them in his General History of Music.<sup>18</sup>

First, he criticizes the lack of variety of the passions in Alceste, since the entire opera revolves mainly around sorrow and fright. According to Rousseau, these

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<sup>18</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Lettre à M. le docteur Burney, auteur de l'histoire générale de la musique," ibid., pp. 258-59.

limited emotions could easily lead to monotony. The fact that the interest declines instead of mounting from the first to the last act is attributable, in part, to this deficiency.

In addition, Gluck has not used music to its optimum advantage. Rousseau is of the opinion that in an opera music has the all-important role of conveying to the heart the passions expressed by the words. Gluck has, indeed, applied it skillfully to the great pathos of the first act, but he does not carry through with it. Music should be employed to enhance all the "sentiments" of all the "tableaux." A composer should be well aware of the correlation between the different types of music and the varied moods he wishes to portray to his audience: "Partout où l'intérêt est plus vif, la musique doit être plus animée, et ses ressources ne sont pas moindres dans les expressions brillantes et vives, que dans les gémissements et les pleurs."<sup>19</sup>

As emotion mounts, the music should become more forceful and eventually be so powerful that it alone could

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<sup>19</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Fragments d'observations sur l'Alceste italien de M. le chevalier Gluck," ibid., p. 261.

move the audience to tears at the appropriate moment. However, care must be taken that this increase of emotion be gradual throughout the opera so as not to exhaust both the ears and hearts of those in attendance. In the first act Gluck produced a heart-rending overture, whose purpose was to prepare the audience for the sadness it was to experience, by modulating almost entirely in a minor key. This is another point where Gluck failed since the music was at its peak of emotion here and could only decrease from the first two scenes of the second act to the end. Furthermore, an author should not express a "douleur" in advance of its being on the scene, as Gluck did in this act.

Rousseau explains that the insipidity of this opera is not primarily the fault of the musician but rather of the Greek author whose expressions Gluck rightly did not change, in order to maintain the unity between music and discourse. In fact, according to Rousseau, Gluck tried to avoid coldness by placing a little feast in the second act, but Rousseau even objects to this since it demonstrates a lack of verisimilitude:

Cette fête, mal placée, et ridiculement amenée, doit choquer à la représentation, parce qu'elle est contraire à toute vraisemblance et à toute bienséance, tant à cause de la promptitude

avec laquelle elle se prépare et s'exécute, qu'à cause de l'absence de la reine, dont on ne se met point en peine, jusqu'à ce que le roi s'avise à la fin d'y penser.<sup>20</sup>

Amidst his criticism of Alceste, Rousseau theorizes concerning the role of dramatic music in an opera. In order to appeal in the most significant manner possible to both the ear and the heart, the composer must vary the character of his music, sometimes placing the major emphasis on the accent and rhythm of the language and at other times on the musical melody, harmony, and rhythm. For this reason operas are divided into simple recitatives, "récitatifs obligés," and arias.

The first type is employed when the composer wishes to accentuate the declamation. There are only intervals of music which make the rhythm of the prose appreciated, the simple speech being approximated as nearly as possible. However, when the passion of the discourse becomes more important than the sound of the words themselves, a simple accompaniment of sustained notes may be added to make them more touching. Finally, when the violence of the passion becomes too strong and impulsive for expression in words,

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 262.

Rousseau suggests the use of the "récitatif obligé," an alternation of discourse and symphonic music. The actor, surrendering completely to his passions, pauses at length and performs his "jeu muet" while the orchestra skillfully reinforces his "sentiments." Thus, his silence during the violent moments actually conveys more feeling to the audience than his words. It seems that Rousseau would have pursued this point further, explaining the type of feeling expressed by an aria; however, as he explained, he did not have the energy in his old age to collect his thoughts satisfactorily before sending the fragment to Dr. Burney.<sup>21</sup>

He reiterates his opinions concerning melody, rhythm, and harmony, the latter being superfluous to true music since it can speak but to the ear. Only when harmony is taken advantage of to reinforce melodious accents may it be successful, just as color may be used to enhance drawing. But harmony and color alone can never appeal to the heart since they themselves transcribe no earthly emotion. However, melody, like a sketching in a painting, void of any adornments, will carry the slightest feeling to the soul since, alone, it is capable of expressing any

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

human experience. In short, it is a question of "sentiment" rendered by melody versus "sensation" produced by harmony:

C'est par les accents de la mélodie, c'est par la cadence du rythme, que la musique, imitant les inflexions que donnent les passions à la voix humaine, peut pénétrer jusqu'au coeur et l'émouvoir par des sentiments; au lieu que la seule harmonie, n'imitant rien, ne peut donner qu'un plaisir de sensation.<sup>22</sup>

Rousseau holds that French music is insipid and indifferent because it assigns priority to "sensation," scientifically manipulating the chords with very little regard for melody and rhythm. On the other hand, Gluck, with a rather monotonous harmony, has produced great emotion in his opera by imitating in a simple manner, by means of melody, the accent of the poet and skillfully utilizing rhythm.<sup>23</sup>

From the satirical "Extrait d'une réponse du petit faiseur à son prête-nom sur un morceau de l'Orphée de M. le chevalier Gluck," one perceives Rousseau's favorable attitude toward this French opera. He explains his admiration for one section of Orphée by means of a conversation between a ghost writer and the person for whom he

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 260-84.



writes his music. Without his ghost writer the supposedly fine musician would be little more than a novice. In fact, without a lengthy explanation he cannot understand the enharmonic passage of Orphée, which Rousseau is commenting on, although he is able to feel its beauty. However, Rousseau attributes this to Gluck's genius rather than to the sensitivity of the mock musician.

Rousseau is strongly affected by the scene in which Orpheus is sweetly singing in order to regain his wife Eurydice from Hades and the Furies are crying in a strident, high-pitched tone trying to retain her. How was Gluck able to portray two such divergent moods at the same time in such a natural yet forceful manner as to move his audience greatly? Rousseau holds that he made use of a very simple musical principle, as, according to him, are all those which produce great effects. An ordinary musician, motivated by the mechanics of music rather than by genius and sensitivity, probably would have written the entire pathetic scene in a minor key, which would have made no opportunity for contrast possible. But Gluck introduced and terminated the scene in a major scale. One might surmise that he utilized harmony in order to produce the effect, but the entire passage is sung either in unison or in octaves. Rousseau explains, in

the words of the "petit faiseur," that the superiority of the scene results from Gluck's skillful use of enharmonic transition, modulating intuitively into the minor key each time the Furies sing "no!" Although the "prête-nom" shuddered each time he heard the shrieking sound, the transition producing it was so subtle that he did not even perceive it.

At first glance it might appear paradoxical that Rousseau believed so strongly in 1753 that true French dramatic music was completely unachievable and then in 1774 he was praising Gluck's French version of Orpheus. However, in reality, the development of his thought is not so inconceivable, considering the types he preferred during each period. At the time of the "Guerre des bouffons," he opposed the French "opera seria" in favor of the Italian "opera buffa," which, as contrasted to the former, portrayed feasible passions of plausible people generally in contemporary settings. The Italian genre quickly gained approval in France, as may be attested by the popularity of Le Devin du village. In fact, prior to the writing of his Italian version of Orpheus in 1762, Gluck had been producing French comic operas. By the time his French version appeared in 1774, his aims were well defined; he was striving for the

expression of true human emotions, strong feeling, and a return to nature. He achieved these, in part, by greatly simplifying the Greek legend which he was dependent upon in Orpheus and by emphasizing the melodic line of the music.<sup>24</sup> In view of these qualities, all of which were certainly desired by Rousseau, one would have to judge his thought prejudicial had he not recognized the great merit of Orphée.

Rousseau's predilections during the "Guerre des bouffons" as well as at the time of the Gluck-Piccini controversy illustrate his longings for sentimental, expressive music. Whereas Rameau championed reason in music,<sup>25</sup> Rousseau yearned for passion. Rousseau believed that melody is the conveyor of emotion and can speak directly to one's feelings; harmony, on the other hand, is contrived by reason and can appeal only to the physical sense of hearing and to the mind. Harmony is unlike melody in that it has no capacity to transcribe images and passions since it bears no relationship to the inflections of the voice. Because of the dependence of melody on the spoken

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<sup>24</sup>Christoph Willibald Gluck, Orpheus, ed. and trans. by Edward J. Dent (London: Oxford University, 1955), pp. XVII-XIX.

<sup>25</sup>Láng, Music in Western Civilization, p. 538.

word, it is understandable why in the "Lettre sur la musique française" Rousseau attempted to demonstrate the superiority of Italian to French music by first showing the melodious aspects of the Italian language, which, he believed, are unequaled in French. Rousseau admired first the composers of Italian comic operas and later Gluck because they understood the importance of subordinating the harmony to the emotive melodic line. In Rousseau's opinion melodies played alone are the only types of music which can approximate nature and should, therefore, be employed exclusively since anything which does not follow nature is unable to touch the human heart. In essence, according to Rousseau, discarding scientific harmonic conventions in favor of simple, moving melodies is a return to the goodness and purity of nature.

In addition to upholding Italian melodic music over French harmonic music at the time of the "Guerre des bouffons," he also preferred the verisimilar librettos of the Italian operas to the sensational, mythological ones portrayed at the French serious operas. He admired the passionate themes of the Italian operas which the audience could easily relate to emotionally without having to reason. Gluck went even farther than the Italian masters of the

"opera buffa" in appealing to Rousseau's "sensibilité" since it was he who convinced Rousseau that expressive French dramatic music could, in fact, be created. Not only by subordinating harmony to melody but also by making music in general secondary to the poetry of the librettos was he able to convey forcefully heartfelt themes to the onlookers.<sup>26</sup> Whereas, before, Rousseau had thought composers of French music, especially Rameau, to be little more than scientists who busied themselves with mathematical calculations, now he saw in Gluck a genius who understood well the true powers of dramatic music to enhance the passions of the "tableaux."

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 557.

## ADDITIONAL WRITINGS ON THEORY

Rousseau's works included in this chapter--"Projet concernant de nouveaux signes pour la musique," "Dissertation sur la musique moderne," "Lettre à M. le docteur Burney," Dictionnaire de musique, "Examen de deux principes avancés par M. Rameau," "Essai sur l'origine des langues," and his articles on music appearing in the Encyclopédie--demonstrate, for the most part, the same attitudes toward music which were studied in the preceding chapter. In them Rousseau pleads for the return of harmonic music to the melodious simplicity existing in the state of nature. He exalts the type of dramatic music which is created sensitively by men of genius and which displays verisimilitude in all its varied aspects as an unsurpassed vehicle for the expression of passionate themes capable of emotionally transporting souls.

One of Rousseau's first actual endeavors in the field of music was an attempt at replacing the traditional system of writing music by what he considered to be a less complex one. According to him, musicians have always complained that learning music requires painstaking efforts,



but generally they prefer performing to thinking of ways to make the art simpler.<sup>1</sup> So, early in his musical career he set out to crusade for a new system, first by presenting his "Projet concernant de nouveaux signes pour la musique" to the Academay in 1742 and then in 1743 by expanding the theory and introducing it to the public in his "Dissertation sur la musique moderne." Late in life, when he had almost lost his capacity to write, he was still concerned with the difficulty of the present system and wrote a "Lettre à M. le docteur Burney" urging him to influence people concerning his proposed innovations. The "Projet concernant de nouveaux signes pour la musique" is little more than a concise outline of the "Dissertation sur la musique moderne." In addition to giving a brief résumé of the "Dissertation" in his letter to Dr. Burney, Rousseau proposes another innovation not included in the previous works.

He maintains that there are two basic problems resulting from the extremely complicated system of notes based on staves, octaves, major and minor keys, transposition,

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<sup>1</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Dissertation sur la musique moderne," Ecrits sur la musique, p. 37.

and fourteen different rhythms: "... l'un d'occuper un trop grand volume, et l'autre de surcharger la mémoire des écoliers ... ."2 His opinion is that the difficulty is not in the music itself but rather in the rules which, ironically enough, have developed to make it simple.<sup>3</sup>

First Rousseau attempts to show the inconveniences of the perplexing system of notes. Music being a series of sounds played either together or successively, a good system of notation would be one in which the fundamental sound and the relationship of all other sounds to it could be readily discerned. This is not the case in the system he is attacking since, because of the very nature of notes, the fundamental tone of the scale is not immediately evident and all relationships of others to it must be studied, sometimes at length. On the other hand, it is an inherent characteristic of numbers to show the interval between one another as well as the numerical relationship that each has to the fundamental "1." Since Rousseau believed music to be based essentially on counting, he

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<sup>2</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Projet concernant de nouveaux signes pour la musique," ibid., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

proposed another system in which numbers would be substituted for the conventionally used notes.

In this method the numbers from "1" to "7" would replace the notes which normally stand for do, re, mi, etc. This would naturally eliminate the need for a staff. How then would one indicate the proper octave of the sound? It could be shown either by placing dots above or below the numbers or by drawing a horizontal line above or below the last number of the octave being used before continuing to write the numbers of the sounds which fall outside it. The fundamental sound of each scale would be "1," and the other sounds would be denoted by numbers which would express their particular intervals to the basic sound. The letter of the note (do, re, mi, etc.) which would be represented by the number "1" need only be placed at the side to indicate the proper key. There would be no reason for concern with major and minor keys since invariable numbers would denote the intervals; the altering of the fundamental sound would cause the other numbers to have a different relationship to it, and this, then, would change the key, notwithstanding major and minor. As for accidentals, lines ascending from left to right through the numbers would denote sharps and lines descending through the numbers

would signify flats. In addition to expressing visually that sharps raise sounds a half-step and flats lower them a half-step, this method would make natural signs obsolete.

The second part of Rousseau's system deals, not with the intervals between sounds, but rather with their lengths. He recognizes at least fourteen different rhythms employed by musicians in the present-day system. Within the individual measures of a composition the notes on the staff acquire the property of marking time; they become whole notes, half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, etc. With so many different rhythms as well as types of notes to put the rhythms into practice, there results a great deal of confusion. The length of notes not determined by their shape but rather by the rhythm they appear in, a quarter note in some tempos might be faster than an eighth note in others. In addition, two pieces of music both written in 6/8 time could contain whole notes of different lengths, resulting from the presence of such words as "allegro," "andante," etc. at the beginning.

Endeavoring to dispense with the aforementioned confusion, Rousseau proposed a new system in which there would be only two main rhythms--one with a basic beat of two and the other with a beat of three. He would indicate

them at the beginning of the line of music by a large "2" or "3" separated from it by a double perpendicular line. In addition, he would do away with whole notes, half notes, and all other types which, at best, can have only relative values. Single perpendicular lines would continue to divide the notes into equal measures, but commas would acquire the function of showing the various lengths of the notes. For example, if the time in a measure were taken up by one sound there would be no need for commas, but if two equal notes comprised it they would be separated by one comma, two commas in the event of three equal notes, etc. However, if the notes in the measure were not divided equally (perhaps the equivalent in the current system of a half note and two quarter notes), he would show it as /2,57/. He would still use a period to indicate sustained notes, the conventional  $\wedge$  mark to show linking between sounds, but would use a zero to show rests, all of which would comply with the numerical system just described.<sup>4</sup>

In Rousseau's opinion he succeeded in alleviating many of the problems of the traditional system. Since there would be no need for paper with staves printed on it,

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<sup>4</sup>Rousseau, "Dissertation sur la musique," ibid., pp. 29-118.

the composer's task would be made easier. Musical scores would also be less cumbersome,<sup>5</sup> an advantage which, needless to say, would interest Rousseau since his profession was that of copier of music. Because of his interest in teaching music, he thought the pedagogical advantages of this system to be very important. He believed that the simplicity and logic of the new method would facilitate the student's comprehension of musical theory well enough to enable him to begin serious practice after six months. And after one year the student should be "... un musicien du premier ordre ..."<sup>6</sup> He even experimented with a young American girl, Mlle des Roulins, who, after three months of studying his system, was able to read any music presented to her.<sup>7</sup>

In the letter to Dr. Burney Rousseau sets forth another innovation. He asserts that the inconvenience of reading a long line of music from left to right and then

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>7</sup>Jean Guéhenno, Jean-Jacques, Vol. I: En Marge des Confessions (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1948), p. 162.



having to move the eyes very quickly back to the left, as well as having to jump rapidly from the bottom of one page to the top of the next, causes great fatigue. Since it is just as easy to read notes from right to left as from left to right, as may be attested by the original music of the Hebrews, Rousseau proposed a system of combining the two. In his method the musician would read alternatively from left to right, right to left, etc.; furthermore, when he arrived at the bottom of one page, he would begin the next page also at the bottom in order to avoid additional useless eye movement. So, half of the pages would be read from the bottom to the top just as half of the lines would be read from right to left. Rousseau felt that although such a system could pose some problems for vocal music since the singer would also have to read the words backward, the advantages for instrumental music would be tremendous.<sup>8</sup>

The significance of Rousseau's proposed innovations for this paper lies not in the intricacies of the system but rather in his overall endeavor to regain the simplicity

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<sup>8</sup>Rousseau, "Lettre à M. Burney," Ecrits sur la musique, pp. 252-55.

which he believed music once possessed. He is advocating the return of music to its natural state; in other words, he is suggesting a system based on that of the ancient Greeks. He contends that such men as Guido d'Arezzo and Johannes de Muris, attempting to ameliorate the system by introducing notes, really succeeded in corrupting the marvelous music of the Greeks, whose effects ours can never hope to approximate.<sup>9</sup>

According to Rousseau, the ancient Greeks used the same symbols to represent the letters of the alphabet, the arithmetic numbers, and the musical sounds. A total of twenty-four symbols indicated "... toutes les variations du discours, tous les rapports des nombres, et toutes les combinaisons des sons ... ." <sup>10</sup> He believed that this helped make these people happier than his generation since they did not have to occupy their minds with understanding so many different symbols. In addition, they had to concern themselves with only two different rhythms, as in the

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<sup>9</sup>Rousseau, "Dissertation sur la musique," ibid., p. 31.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

system proposed by Rousseau.<sup>11</sup> It is his contention that the men who introduced notes and multiple rhythms to music destroyed a system which had worked very well for two thousand years. Believing music denoted by numbers to be "la musique naturelle,"<sup>12</sup> Rousseau is seeking to restore it in the "Projet" and in the "Dissertation."

In the letter to Dr. Burney the prototype of Rousseau's recommended system of writing the numbers denoting sounds from left to right and then from right to left may be viewed once again in the system of the ancient Greeks. At first they used the same system as the Hebrews of writing music from right to left. Then they perceived the advantage of writing it in "sillons," from left to right, right to left, etc., and followed this method for a time until they abandoned it in favor of writing exclusively from left to right. Conceivably the problem, which Rousseau foresaw for singers, of having to read the words backward half of the time caused the Greeks to abandon this system in favor of the one which is currently used by musicians.

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<sup>11</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Dictionnaire de musique, II, in Oeuvres complètes, XIII, p. 275.

<sup>12</sup>Rousseau, "Dissertation sur la musique," Ecrits sur la musique, p. 33.

In addition to explaining his system "à la grecque"<sup>13</sup> to Dr. Burney, Rousseau wanted to ask him some questions pertaining to the music of the ancient Greeks since he considered Dr. Burney to be an authority on the history of ancient music. Rousseau first states that he will not even bother to inquire whether the harmony currently admired in France was practiced by the Greeks since he is certain that their simple tastes would not have permitted it. However, he is uncertain about the true nature of their instrumental music. Was it always used solely to reinforce the melody of lyric poetry, or were there times when it was performed alone without any semblance of the melodic line? Were there ever symphonic productions in which there were no words at all? Rousseau admits knowledge of some Greek airs which were not sung, but he wonders if Dr. Burney cannot confirm his belief that these airs were originally based on words. Is it at all possible that one of these airs could have never been sung nor even written to be sung? Judging from Rousseau's tone, it is apparent that he believed that all the airs were at one time based on song; in other words, their purpose was that of supporting

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<sup>13</sup>Rousseau, "Lettre à M. Burney," ibid., p. 255.

a melodic line of words. It seems that Rousseau hoped Dr. Burney's response might help to confirm his belief in the principle of unity of melody employed so naturally by Italian composers, as by himself in Le Devin du village. If Dr. Burney would attest knowledge of this simple principle in the music of the ancient Greeks, it would, in Rousseau's opinion, reinforce his assertions made in the "Lettre sur la musique française" and in the Dictionnaire de musique.<sup>14</sup>

In all of Rousseau's writings he appears to exalt the most natural pleasures and principles and advocates a return to those practiced by men in the earliest stages of society. If the music of the ancient Greeks, whose civilization was still primitive enough to be considered good by Rousseau,<sup>15</sup> was indeed founded completely on melody, then such a music today would continue to surpass all others. He contends that if the French harmonic music continues to move farther away from the original unity of

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 255-58.

<sup>15</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, ed. by J.-L. Lecerle (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1965), pp. 116-18.

melody and to degenerate into pandemonium, the people will no longer be able to endure it. Then the musicians will be "... ramenés de force à ce principe si dédaigné, et à la marche de la nature."<sup>16</sup>

In Rousseau's articles concerning music in the Encyclopédie and in the Dictionnaire de musique he further upholds the unsophisticated music of the ancient Greeks and advocates a return to their natural melodious system. In the articles entitled "Notes" in each he gives an additional explanation of his proposed system. He has in no way been objective when defining the terms in these works; in fact, his subjective attitudes have created recurrent themes which are most pertinent to this study in preromanticism.

A comparison of the articles which divulge these attitudes in both works reveals that his longing for simple, realistic, moving music did not change at all during the time which intervened between his writing the articles for the Encyclopédie and those incorporated into the Dictionnaire. By 1749, when he wrote his articles for the Encyclopédie,

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<sup>16</sup>Rousseau, "Lettre à M. Burney," Ecrits sur la musique, p. 258.



his attitudes regarding music were well formed since much of his inspiration for the sentimental delights of the Italian opera came during the period of his stay in Venice from 1743 to 1744 as Montaigu's secretary.<sup>17</sup>

Whereas there appear a few minor differences in the articles of the Encyclopédie and those of the Dictionnaire such as the omission or addition of sentences or paragraphs in one or the other, basically the information is the same. Some articles such as "Dessin," "Effet," and "Unité de mélodie" which are present in the Dictionnaire do not appear in the Encyclopédie; however, many relevant articles such as "Expression," "Génie," "Goût," "Harmonie," "Mélodie," and "Opéra" have been transcribed almost word for word in the Dictionnaire. As far as this writer can discern, Rousseau's attitudes toward music which are relevant to this paper appear to be the same in both works.

One of his most salient predilections apparent in both works is that of melody over harmony. In the articles entitled "Harmonie" his detailed explanation of Rameau's system is colored with vehement disapproval. As has already been noted in this study, Rousseau invariably upholds the

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<sup>17</sup>Launay, Introduction to Confessions, p. 15.

most natural principles. Although Rameau insists that his system of harmony is based on nature, Rousseau argues that all music except that played in unison is impure. He contends that when a sound is broken up into its harmonic vibrations it is no longer a true sound. According to him, the great art of music began to decay with the invention of counterpoint. He theorizes that harmonic music has no expressive value since chords alone are unable to imitate passions and images. It can appeal only to the senses of those well versed in the art whose ears are already accustomed to hearing the painstakingly arranged sounds; however, all men throughout the ages, including those completely uneducated, have been able to appreciate lyric music played in unison because it has the imitative capacity to carry realistic scenes and feelings directly to the heart.

Quand on songe que, de tous les peuples de la terre, qui tous ont une musique et un chant, les Européens sont les seuls qui aient une harmonie, des accords, et qui trouvent ce mélange agréable; quand on songe que le monde a duré tant de siècles, sans que, de toutes les nations qui ont cultivé les beaux-arts, aucune ait connu cette harmonie; qu'aucun animal, qu'aucun oiseau, qu'aucun être dans la nature ne produit d'autre accord que l'unisson, ni d'autre musique que la mélodie; que les langues orientales, si sonores, si musicales; que les oreilles grecques, si délicates, si sensibles, exercées avec tant d'art,

n'ont jamais guidé ces peuples voluptueux et passionnés vers notre harmonie; que sans elle leur musique avait des effets si prodigieux; qu'avec elle la nôtre en a de si faibles; qu'enfin il était réservé à des peuples du Nord, dont les organes durs et grossiers sont plus touchés de l'éclat et du bruit des voix que de la douceur des accents et de la mélodie des inflexions, de faire cette grande découverte et de la donner pour principe à toutes les règles de l'art; quand, dis-je, on fait attention à tout cela, il est bien difficile de ne pas soupçonner que toute notre harmonie n'est qu'une invention gothique et barbare, dont nous ne nous fussions jamais avisés si nous eussions été plus sensibles aux véritables beautés de l'art et à la musique vraiment naturelle.<sup>18</sup>

Since other articles such as "Accompagnement," "Accord," "Basse-Fondamentale," "Cadence," "Consonance," "Dissonance," "Enharmonique," "Fugue," "Intervalle," "Mode," "Modulation," "Musique," "Sonate," and "Symphonie" have to do with harmony, while explaining the terms, Rousseau takes additional opportunities to speak against Rameau's harmonic system.

By the same token, in articles such as "Mélodie," "Unisson," and "Unité de mélodie," while attempting to define the terms, he lauds melodic music. Whereas harmony was defined as a series of chords disagreeable to untrained

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<sup>18</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Dictionnaire de musique, I, in Oeuvres complètes, XII, 364. Cf. Denis Diderot, et al., Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, XVII (Lausanne and Berne: Chez les Sociétés Typographiques, 1779), 66.

ears, melody is interpreted as a succession of sounds pleasing to anyone. Although he believes that the physical effects of harmony can in no way approximate the heart-felt effects of melody, he feels that two melodies played at the same time are altogether unmoving as well. The only modification that might possibly be made is performing the same melody in octaves; however, to produce the most touching effects it must be played in unison. He recounts an incident when he was at first delighted at hearing the psalms sung in four parts but then annoyed by the clamor and finally bored with all the chords. However, this was never the outcome of his hearing a simple melodious air played at the opera in Venice; he would give it his full attention and listen more intently toward the end than at the beginning:

Cette différence vient de celle du caractère des deux musiques, dont l'une n'est seulement qu'une suite d'accords, et l'autre est une suite de chant: or le plaisir de l'harmonie n'est qu'un plaisir de pure sensation, et la jouissance des sens est toujours courte, la satiété et l'ennui la suivent de près; mais le plaisir de la mélodie et du chant est un plaisir d'intérêt et de sentiment qui parle au coeur, et que l'artiste peut toujours soutenir et renouveler à force de génie.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., II, 319.

He does, however, admit that harmony has value when it is used to reinforce the melody, but only when it is subordinated to the single effect of the "chant." Rousseau designates such an ingenious manipulation of the accompaniment as "unity of melody."

Rousseau's attack on harmony in the Encyclopédie prompted Rameau's brochure entitled "Erreurs sur la musique." In the "Examen de deux principes avancés par M. Rameau, dans sa brochure intitulée, 'Erreurs sur la musique,' dans l'Encyclopédie," Rousseau upholds his position by taking issue with the major principles adhered to by Rameau. As has been stated, it is Rameau's belief that harmony is the only natural basis for music and that melody is, in fact, derived from it. In his opinion all the great effects of music result from accompaniment which is derived from the resonance of the sonorous body or, in other words, from the combination of sounds which naturally accompany any basic tone. Rousseau agrees that it may be pleasant to hear a fundamental root sound accompanied by its third, fifth, and octave relative sounds; however, when minor keys, dissonance, and rules of modulation come into play, he feels that nature no longer guides the composer. Instead, at this point the musician must rely on



rules systematically established by men, which do not facilitate the production of sentimental works. Rousseau suggests that it is absurd to be dependent on a theory which requires the presence of all notes which, mathematically, would seem to sound good together, since "... une harmonie trop chargée est la mort de toute expression ... ."20 According to Rousseau, one need only hear the simple accompaniments employed by the Italians to enhance their lovely melodies to be repulsed by the complicated noise produced by Rameau and his entire school.

Rousseau maintains that, since the ancient Greeks had no way of knowing the present-day rules and still produced touching melodies, mathematical artifices in music are superfluous. Attempting to refute Rameau's hypothesis that harmonic music is agreeable even to untrained ears, Rousseau explains that he conducted an experiment with people living outside Paris who had never before had occasion to listen to the scrapings of local musicians, as had those whom Rameau tested. Just as

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<sup>20</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Examen de deux principes avancés par M. Rameau dans sa brochure intitulée, 'Erreurs sur la musique,' dans l'Encyclopédie," Ecrits sur la musique, p. 242.



Rousseau expected, they were annoyed by any two different notes sounded together and only pleased with the same notes played simultaneously. Therefore, Rousseau concludes from his knowledge of the music of the Greeks and from his experiments with people completely unaccustomed to hearing music, that scientifically derived harmonies which are not employed to enhance imitative melodies should be scorned, since they do not have the capacity to move simple people untouched by the conventions of the city.

It is due mainly to Rousseau's sentimental inclinations that he opposes Rameau's scientific system of harmony in favor of what he deems the truly natural existence of melody. Since harmony by itself is unable to represent any ideas or emotions and is capable only of dazzling cultivated ears, it has, in his opinion, no expressive value. Melody, on the other hand, has emotive powers because it represents the inflections of the voice, which are created by feeling.

L'harmonie est une cause purement physique; l'impression qu'elle produit reste dans le même ordre: des accords ne peuvent qu'imprimer aux nerfs un ébranlement passager et stérile; ils donneraient plutôt des vapeurs que des passions. ...

Les plus beaux accords, ainsi que les plus belles couleurs, peuvent porter aux sens une impression agréable et rien de plus; mais les

accents de la voix passent jusqu'à l'ame, car ils sont l'expression naturelle des passions, et, en les peignant, ils les excitent. C'est par eux que la musique devient oratoire, éloquente, imitative; ils en forment le langage; c'est par eux qu'elle peint à l'imagination les objets, qu'elle porte au coeur les sentiments. La mélodie est dans la musique ce qu'est le dessin dans la peinture, l'harmonie n'y fait que l'effet des couleurs. C'est par le chant, non par les accords, que les sons ont de l'expression, du feu, de la vie; c'est le chant seul qui leur donne les effets moraux qui font toute l'énergie de la musique. En un mot, le seul physique de l'art se réduit à bien peu de chose, et l'harmonie ne passe pas au-delà.<sup>21</sup>

In his "Essai sur l'origine des langues" Rousseau elaborates on his comparison of music to painting as well as on other aspects of the controversy of melody versus harmony. Just as it is not the skillful combination of colors in a beautiful painting which touches, neither is it the combination of sounds in a piece of music which is capable of transporting. Instead, in both types of art the passions and objects imitated are what move sensitive spectators. Melodies in music, the same as sketches in painting, have the function of carrying the emotions and ideas to the onlookers. Without them as imitative forces, accompaniments and colors would have no meaning. Reducing

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 233-34.

the art of music to the relationships of vibrations within the sonorous body would be the same as confining painting to the physical analysis of the refractions of the prism. According to Rousseau, philosophers attempting to establish such mathematical proportions only succeed in destroying the emotional value of the arts.

Comme donc la peinture n'est pas l'art de combiner des couleurs d'une manière agréable à la vue, la musique n'est pas non plus l'art de combiner des sons d'une manière agréable à l'oreille. S'il n'y avait que cela, l'une et l'autre seraient au nombre des sciences naturelles et non pas des beaux-arts. C'est l'imitation seule qui les élève à ce rang. Or, qu'est-ce qui fait de la peinture un art d'imitation? C'est le dessin. Qu'est-ce qui de la musique en fait un autre? C'est la mélodie.<sup>22</sup>

According to Rousseau's belief, speech and along with it song developed as a result not of need but rather of passion. One can feed oneself without speaking, but to touch another's heart, one finds sounds most helpful. Just as poetry antedated prose, so melody preceded harmony, since passions were felt by men before they learned to reason. Philosophers such as Rameau may invent intellectual harmonies, but nature dictates the succession of imitative

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<sup>22</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Essai sur l'origine des langues," Discours, in Oeuvres complètes, II, 474-75.

sounds in a melodic line. In fact, Rousseau maintains that man cannot rightfully reason at all concerning music since its origin is passionate rather than analytical. Musicians who are more interested in contriving harmonies than in moving hearts with melodies only contribute to the degeneration of the one-time emotive art:

Plus ils le rapprochent des impressions purement physiques, plus ils l'éloignent de son origine, et plus ils lui ôtent aussi de sa primitive énergie. En quittant l'accent oral et s'attachant aux seules institutions harmoniques, la musique devient plus bruyante à l'oreille et moins douce au coeur. Elle a déjà cessé de parler, bientôt elle ne chantera plus; et alors avec tous ses accords et toute son harmonie elle ne fera plus aucun effet sur nous.<sup>23</sup>

Rousseau feels that the difference between Rameau's complex system of harmony and that of natural melody explains the superiority of Italian over French music:

C'est dans ce principe de l'unité de mélodie, que les Italiens ont senti et suivi sans le connaître, mais que les Français n'ont ni connu ni suivi; c'est, dis-je, dans ce grand principe que consiste la différence essentielle des deux musiques; et c'est, je crois, ce qu'en dira tout juge impartial qui voudra donner à l'une et à l'autre la même attention, si toute-fois la chose est possible.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 487.

<sup>24</sup>Rousseau, Dictionnaire de musique, II, 322.

Rhythm being an integral part of melody but not of harmony, French and Italian music can be compared on this point as well. In the articles "Chronomètre" in the Encyclopédie and the Dictionnaire de musique he praises Italian music for possessing a set rhythm which does not exist in French music, since in the latter a passage can be speeded up or slowed down according to the will of the singer. Rousseau's purpose in comparing French and Italian music as well as harmony and melody is that of attempting to explain what makes one type of musical production dull and uninteresting and another type quite expressive. It is apparent that he is trying to convince French musicians that they are going to have to learn to subordinate harmony to melody if they are ever to create moving works.

In the articles entitled "Expression" he elaborates on many of the points already made and gives some new insights as well into the way musicians are able to compose and perform their ideas and feelings. After deciding what he wants to portray, the musician must then decide how to utilize melody, harmony, rhythm, the instruments, and the voices in order to achieve his end. Because of the melody's direct relationship to the spoken word, it is melody which should receive the major emphasis in both instrumental and



vocal music when the composer wishes to convey emotion. In other words, to create expressive works he must depend primarily on melody and, when using harmony, always subordinate it to the melodious line. Major dissonant chords can be used to reinforce vigorous emotions whereas minor chords should be reserved for calmer feelings. In the articles "Enharmonique" he expresses his disapproval of this convention; however, he does feel that enharmonic music could be artful on occasion as in the "récitatif obligé" where the transports of emotion are so strong that words alone are unable to express them. Although he finds both duos and trios generally unrealistic and not in keeping with the principle of unity of melody, he does believe that some passionate moments might prompt two delirious singers to interrupt one another and to sing for a short time together:

L'instant d'une séparation, celui où l'un des deux amants va à la mort ou dans les bras d'un autre, le retour sincère d'un infidèle, le touchant combat d'une mère et d'un fils voulant mourir l'un pour l'autre; tous ces moments d'affliction où l'on ne laisse pas de verser des larmes délicieuses: voilà les vrais sujets qu'il faut traiter en duo ... <sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., I, 276-77. Cf. Encyclopédie, XI, 471.



The most expressive types of music contain rhythms as well as melodies which change readily according to the emotion being portrayed. Gaiety tends to suggest fast tempos whereas unhappiness connotes slow rhythms; however, the beat expressing each mood must be regular within itself. Although a lively rhythm should normally not accompany full harmony, when the ultimate transport of passion occurs in a musical production, it would be appropriate to combine a rapid tempo with heavy chords.

Alors, quand la tête est perdue, et qu'à force d'agitation l'acteur semble ne savoir plus ce qu'il dit, ce désordre énergique et terrible peut se porter ainsi jusqu'à l'ame du spectateur, et le mettre de même hors de lui.<sup>26</sup>

Neither must one overlook the importance of voices and instruments in producing the desired feeling. Different timbres, pitches, and degrees of loudness of instruments render varied moods: "La flûte est tendre, le haut-bois gai, la trompette guerrière, le cor sonore, majestueux, propre aux grandes expressions."<sup>27</sup> Rousseau is of the opinion that the violin is unequaled by any other instrument in being able to produce varied moods. As for voices,

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., I, 321. Cf. Encyclopédie, XIII, 654.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., I, 322. Cf. Encyclopédie, XIII, 655.

generally high-pitched ones express gaiety, tenderness, and sweetness whereas those low-pitched tend to depict sadness and anger. It is extremely important that the singer not only understand but feel as well the emotions which the composer desires to represent. An artful singer holds the power of making the listener forget that his song is being enriched by harmony. The singer then becomes the link between the hearts of the composer and the audience when the passionate message and the melodious sounds appear as one.

Rousseau explains his preference for the art of music over painting in terms of expression. It lends itself more easily to the portrayal of great passions since, unlike painting in which the impression is received all at once, it is able to move the soul to a plateau of emotion by subtle degrees. Whereas the musician can depict feelings which one could not even conceive of hearing, the painter must draw images with which the onlooker is already familiar. Within the realm of music he prefers dramatic music to church music, dance music, purely instrumental music, etc. because it has "... un style propre à exciter ou peindre les passions ... ."28

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., II, 202. Cf. Encyclopédie, XXXI, 772.

In the articles on "Opéra" he states that the three combined elements of poetry, music, and stage decoration should work together to speak to the mind, ears, and eyes, respectively, with the end result of moving the heart. The purpose of an opera is not to make the spectator think or reason about the events taking place on stage as in a tragedy; rather, it is to make him lose himself completely in the "sentiments" being represented. As long as the rules of unity of melody are observed so that the passion of the scene can occupy entirely the feelings of the audience, Rousseau believes there can be no more beautiful form of art.

In both the Encyclopédie and the Dictionnaire Rousseau shows his interest in promoting his conception of realism in the operas. Just as he feels that unity of melody must be observed in order to portray expression, he also believes that the three unities of time, place, and action must be observed to the extent of maintaining realism. All the facets of the opera must relate to one main unifying subject. The stage decorations are among those aspects which should be in accordance with the theme. Since Rousseau despised mythological, sensational themes, it seems fitting that he would also have disapproved of

fantastical, unnatural settings as well. In the same manner that the actors and music should depict real human emotions, the stage decorations should imitate nature as closely as possible since, according to Rousseau, anything which does not reflect nature cannot touch the heart:

... l'imitation de la nature, souvent plus difficile et toujours plus agréable que celle des êtres imaginaires, n'en devient que plus intéressante en devenant plus vraisemblable. Un beau palais, des jardins délicieux, de savantes ruines, plaisent encore plus à l'oeil que la fantasque image du Tartare, de l'Olympe, du char du Soleil ... <sup>29</sup>

In addition, the choosing of a cast is important in facilitating verisimilitude on stage. The composer should select singers whose voices and characteristics distinguish them as individuals possessing unique passions different from all other actors on stage. The pitch and timbre of their voices should be appropriate for the roles they are playing: "... la douleur d'un vieillard n'a pas le même ton que celle d'un jeune homme; la colère d'une femme a d'autres accents que celle d'un guerrier; un barbare ne dira point je vous aime, comme un galant de profession."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., II, 47. Cf. Encyclopédie, XXIII, 731.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., II, 158. Cf. Encyclopédie, XXX, 218.

The singer having been chosen, it is not enough for him to have a pleasing voice. He must know how to act as well and be able to subordinate his individual talent to the overall effect. He must understand well the art of pantomime and be able to occupy himself--"... ses pas, ses regards, son geste ..."<sup>31</sup>--in a verisimilar manner while the orchestra plays alone in order to reinforce his "chant": "Cet excellent pantomime, en mettant toujours son art au-dessus de lui et s'efforçant toujours d'y exceller, s'est ainsi mis lui-même fort au-dessus de ses confrères: acteur unique et homme estimable ..."<sup>32</sup>

Anything which does not contribute to the overall emotional effect of the opera should be discarded. Just as Rousseau disliked duos and trios in operas because "... rien n'est moins naturel que de voir deux personnes se parler à la fois durant un certain temps, soit pour dire la même chose, soit pour se contredire, sans jamais s'écouter ni se répondre ...",<sup>33</sup> so he disapproved of

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., I, 48.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., I, 275. Cf. Encyclopédie, XI, 470.



dancing in the middle of a dramatic production. Since dances destroy the "vraisemblance" of a scene, Rousseau suggests reserving them until after the imitative performance. He scorns ballets, especially allegorical ones, because they are not sentimental representations of reality during which the audience can completely lose itself in the action.

In order for a composer to produce an opera which is capable of greatly moving its spectators, it is hardly enough that he have great mechanical skill. In addition, he must understand human passions and possess what is commonly termed "genius." Knowing the rules of harmony, dissonance, modes, modulation, contrast, fugues, measures, etc. is only a beginning; the true musician finds his inspiration within and conveys his imaginative subject to the audience by creating a variety of beautiful "chants" and simple accompaniments.

Ce que j'entends par génie n'est point ce goût bizarre et capricieux qui sème partout le baroque et le difficile, qui ne sait orner l'harmonie qu'à force de dissonances, de contrastes et de bruit; c'est ce feu intérieur qui brûle, qui tourmente le compositeur malgré lui, qui lui inspire incessamment des chants nouveaux et toujours agréables, des expressions vives, naturelles, et



qui vont au coeur; une harmonie pure, touchante, majestueuse, qui renforce et pare le chant sans l'étouffer.<sup>34</sup>

Whereas men who possess "goût" are capable of identifying great music, only men of talent can create it. It is possible for men to have taste without having "sensibilité," but this failing would be totally inconceivable for a man of genius. A man possessing only "goût" would probably approach composition from the standpoint of accumulating numerous complex chords to be played by many instruments; conversely, simplicity would be the genius' guide.

Le génie du musicien soumet l'univers entier à son art; il peint tous les tableaux par des sons; il fait parler le silence même; il rend les idées par des sentiments, les sentiments par des accents; et les passions qu'il exprime, il les excite au fond des coeurs: la volupté, par lui, prend de nouveaux charmes; la douleur qu'il fait gémir arrache des cris; il brûle sans cesse, et ne se consume jamais: il exprime avec chaleur les frimas et les glaces; même en peignant les horreurs de la mort, il porte dans l'ame ce sentiment de vie qui ne l'abandonne point, et qu'il communique aux coeurs faits pour le sentir ...<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., I, 171-72. Cf. Encyclopédie, VIII, 767.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., I, 343-44. Cf. Encyclopédie, XV, 948.

How can one acquire "le génie"? Rousseau maintains that one must be born with it and that those who are, feel it within spontaneously; others need never hope to find true inspiration. He suggests to those who suspect they are gifted to hasten to Naples in order to hear the comic opera masterpieces of Leo, Durante, Jomelli, and Pergolesi. If they are moved to tears and transports of emotion, then they have reason to believe they are among the chosen few to possess the flame of inspiration and should begin to study the music of the masters; however, if the works of these artists leave them undisturbed and they believe them to be merely beautiful rather than ravishing, Rousseau recommends that they set aside the idea of composing great music and be satisfied to write mediocre French music. He does admit that there are those such as Rameau who have inner genius but are too steeped in the conventions of harmonic music ever to use their "feu naturel"<sup>36</sup> to produce anything really moving.

The opposite of those who feign genius by manipulating chords is those who possess great talent for creating expressive music and do not even realize it, as exemplified

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., I, 300.

by the gondoliers of Venice. Their simple, melodious barcarolles appeal to the most common people of Italy, as well as to the great musicians. The romance is another type of unsophisticated, naïve air sung without any instrumental accompaniment by simple people, which is capable of subtly producing intense emotion in the listeners: "... point d'ornement, rien de maniéré, une mélodie douce, naturelle, champêtre, et qui produise son effet par elle-même, indépendamment de la manière de la chanter ... ."37 The works of genius, then, need no ornamentation to produce their effects; only mediocre music requires embellishment to dazzle insensitive ears.

As was the case in the "Projet concernant de nouveaux signes pour la musique," in the "Dissertation sur la musique moderne," and in the "Lettre à M. le docteur Burney," the reasons for praise of the music of the ancient Greeks in the Encyclopédie and in the Dictionnaire lie in its melodious simplicity. If it is true, as Rousseau conjectured, that the only type of music they practiced at first was vocal, which was fashioned after the song of the birds, and that when instruments began to appear they

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., II, 151. Cf. Encyclopédie, XXIX, 346.

imitated the wind, then it must have been a type which appealed to very simple people with untrained ears. Its simplicity may be further explained in terms of homophony and antiphony. In other words, when voices and/or instruments were sounded together, it was invariably either the same tone or tones played in octaves. So, in the beginning, as today according to Rousseau's belief, no adornments were needed to transmit the simple messages to the heart.

Rousseau maintains that music was one of the first arts to be enjoyed by the primitive peoples since singing is a direct consequence of speaking. In fact, he believes they learned to sing before learning to write. "Aussi les anciens n'avaient-ils point encore l'art d'écrire, qu'ils avaient déjà des chansons. Leurs lois et leurs histoires, les louanges des dieux et des héros, furent chantées avant d'être écrites."<sup>38</sup> The Greeks perfected their "chants" into many varied types for different occasions, such as songs of virtue, love, wine, weddings, funerals, honoring the gods and heroes, and even of the professions. Rousseau feels that the Romans did not create beautiful

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., I, 125. Cf. Encyclopédie, VII, 237.

songs as readily as the Greeks because their nation was "... plus guerrière que sensuelle ... ."39 In reality, they received some of the inspiration for their music from the Greeks, but, because of their war-like, unrefined nature, their songs never reached the unsurpassed splendor of those of the ancient Greeks.

Elements of "sentiment," nature, realism, and simplicity, when blended carefully by a man of genius into a dramatic production, can transport an audience into emotional delirium. In the "Projet concernant de nouveaux signes pour la musique," "Dissertation sur la musique moderne," "Lettre à M. le docteur Burney," and the "Essai sur l'origine des langues," Rousseau looks back to the passionate music of the ancient Greeks for inspiration. In the Encyclopédie, "Examen de deux principes avancés par M. Rameau," and the Dictionnaire de musique, Rousseau warns the people to beware of scientifically oriented musicians such as Rameau who would reduce the great sentimental art of music to mathematical formulas. He advises Frenchmen to cast aside exclusively harmonic

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., I, 129.

sensational productions in favor of melodious, true-to-life ones so that music can once again speak to the hearts of simple people as well as to the ears of experienced music connoisseurs.

Since the emphasis of this study is on the programmatic movement in France rather than on music theory, the themes of Rousseau's operas will be discussed with the omission of any comments on the musical score. Iphigénie en Aulide and La Découverte du nouveau monde, his first two operas, were never presented; however, Les Muses galantes, Le Devin du village, and Pygmalion were all presented during his lifetime, the best received of which was certainly Le Devin. Pygmalion et Chloé will not be included in this study since Rousseau adapted only its music. The writer of this paper perceives a well defined relationship between Rousseau's operas and La Nouvelle Héloïse; hence, a short treatment of the passages concerning music in La nouvelle Héloïse as well as several comparisons between the novel and the operas will be included in this chapter.

The themes of impossible love on the part of Iphigénie and Elise and love versus duty on the part of Amante from the sentimental conflict of Iphigénie en Aulide will



OPERAS AND PASSAGES CONCERNING MUSIC  
IN LA NOUVELLE HELOISE

Since the emphasis of this study is on the pre-romantic movement in France rather than on music theory, the themes of Rousseau's operas will be discussed with the omission of any comments on the musical scores. Iphis et Anaxarète and La Découverte du nouveau monde, his first two operas, were never presented; however, Les Muses galantes, Le Devin du village, and Pygmalion were all presented during his lifetime, the best received of which was certainly Le Devin. Daphnis et Chloé will not be included in this study since Rousseau composed only its music. The writer of this paper perceives a well defined relationship between Rousseau's operas and La nouvelle Héloïse; hence, a short treatment of the passages concerning music in La nouvelle Héloïse as well as several comparisons between the novel and the operas will be included in this chapter.

The themes of impossible love on the parts of Iphis and Elise and love versus duty on the part of Anaxarète form the sentimental conflict of Iphis et Anaxarète. Later

in La nouvelle Héloïse Rousseau would incorporate these same universal themes into the struggle of two lovers in a contemporary situation, as opposed to the ancient Greek setting of this opera.

Elise, a court princess, is madly in love with Iphis, a nonroyal officer of the king's court. Iphis, in turn, is consumed with passion for Anaxarète, daughter of the late king of Elide, who returns his adoration. However, Philoxis, prince of Mycène and famed victor at war for the kingdom of Elide, has been given the hand of Anaxarète as a reward for his deeds. Elise's attendant suggests to her mistress that the agonies of her tearful soul will now come to an end since her beloved Iphis may no longer lay claim to Anaxarète, but Elise believes too strongly in Iphis' constancy to hold to such an idea. In truth, his passion will never wane, its force being easily felt by the reader of the libretto:

Amour, que de tourments j'endure sous ta loi!  
 Que mes maux sont cruels! que ma peine est extrême!  
 Je crains de perdre ce que j'aime;  
 J'ai beau m'assurer sur son coeur,  
 Je sens hélas! que son ardeur  
 M'est une trop faible assurance  
 Pour me rendre mon espérance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Iphis et Anaxarète,"  
Ecrits sur la musique, p. 326.

Anaxarète is also tormented by her love for Iphis. The conflict within her results from the ambivalence between her passion and her feeling of duty as the royal daughter of the deceased king, as well as from her natural desire for prestige. On his death bed her father gave Ortule, his successor, his blessing in choosing a husband for Anaxarète. At last, her sense of responsibility as a royal princess triumphs, and she is to wed Philoxis; however, her decision is accompanied by great unwillingness to renounce her true passion for Iphis:

Fallait-il, dieux puissants! qu'une si douce flamme,  
 Dont j'attendais tout mon bonheur,  
 N'ait pu passer jusqu'en mon ame  
 Sans offenser ma gloire et mon honneur?<sup>2</sup>

Parallels between Julie of La nouvelle Héloïse and Anaxarète may be drawn, passionate love in each case being painfully subordinated to obligation of family and to social class.

Variations of these themes appear in the first act of La Découverte du nouveau monde, although under a very different guise. The Indian chief or Cacique and Carime, an Indian princess, encounter one another in the sacred

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 329.

forest of Guanahan, where the natives go to worship their gods. The Cacique is attempting to appease the wrathful gods, who have disoriented his people with portents of impending doom. Carime, on the other hand, is pleading for them to assist her in gaining illicit affection from the chief. Her request is, however, impossible since the chief and his wife Digizé love each other perfectly, so much so that the chief fears the anger of the gods results from their jealousy over his conjugal bliss. Both love and allegiance honor his marriage bed, a fact which Carime finds incredible:

L'amour et le devoir s'accordent rarement:  
 Tour-à-tour seulement ils règnent dans une ame.  
 L'amour forme l'engagement,  
 Mais le devoir éteint la flamme.<sup>3</sup>

The conflict within the Cacique is not, then, a question of passion versus duty, but rather of life versus honorable death. Digizé pleads with her husband to flee, deserting his people, before the predicted doom ends his life, but he refuses, thus manifesting the extent of his natural virtue:

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<sup>3</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "La Découverte du nouveau monde," ibid., p. 336.

Digizé, je chéris le noeud qui nous assemble;  
 J'adore tes appas, ils peuvent tout sur moi:  
 Mais j'aime encor mon peuple autant que toi,  
 Et la vertu plus que tous deux ensemble.<sup>4</sup>

The themes of exoticism and the enslavement of the noble savage are dominant in the second and third acts. The ominous dangers are revealed as the arrival in the New World of a Spanish fleet commanded by Colomb and Alvar. These so-called civilized Europeans have come to seize the freedom, virtue, and innocence, as exemplified by the Cacique and his wife, of the savages and, in turn, to impose upon them the chains of civilization. The self-assured Spaniards rejoice in the ensuing enslavement:

Triomphons, triomphons sur la terre et sur l'onde;  
 Portons nos lois au bout de l'univers:  
 Notre audace en ce jour découvre un nouveau monde;  
 Nous sommes faits pour lui donner des fers.<sup>5</sup>

Carime does not face the impossibility of her passion for the Cacique in an honorable manner, as do Iphis and Saint-Preux; instead, her love having turned to hate, she swears revenge and allies herself with Alvar against the Cacique and his wife. Believing the Spaniards gods, the

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 339.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

chief is prepared to die honorably. But at this point Carime, who has willed their death, witnesses the profound suffering of the spouses, decides their only crime was loving too much, and implores Colomb to disregard her schemes. He heeds her plea, not so much as a consequence of all the lamentations but rather of the great virtue demonstrated by the Cacique. Not only is Colomb amazed that Carime was able to realize the error of her ways but even more so that the Cacique found it within his heart to forgive and honor him henceforth as a friend. Colomb expressed the astonishment of the Spaniards that such goodness and true love could exist among these savages living in the New World:

... Europe: en ce climat sauvage  
 On éprouve autant de courage,  
 On y trouve plus de vertu.  
 O vous que des deux bouts du monde  
 Le destin rassemble en ces lieux!<sup>6</sup>

Although the characters and setting of Les Muses galantes are mythological, the poetry alexandrine, and the music intellectual, there appear fragments of themes which Rousseau later developed much more completely and skillfully in Le Devin du village as well as in La nouvelle

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 358.



Héloïse. In the prefatory note Rousseau attributes his lack of good taste to the insipid conventions of the existing French music and the unrealistic literature to which he has been subjected since his childhood.

Cupid having triumphed over Apollo as leader of the muses during the prologue, the first "entrée" begins with Euterpe, muse of poetry and music,<sup>7</sup> enamored of Hésiode, a mere shepherd. To confirm his affection, she has promoted a contest in which all the shepherds vie for her hand. Exercising his newly acquired power, Cupid bestows upon Hésiode a sacred lyre which enables him to triumph in the singing competition and publicly gain his right as Euterpe's lover, a feat not nearly so well received by her as Hésiode's previous demonstration of virtue and constancy. Endeavoring to dispel Hésiode's feeling of inferiority as her lover, Euterpe assures him that such a tender soul as his elevates him to the rank of a god:

La vertu des mortels fait leur rang chez les dieux.  
 Une ame pure, un coeur tendre et sincère,  
 Sont les biens les plus précieux;  
 Et quand on sait aimer le mieux,  
 On est le plus digne de plaire.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Samuel Baud-Bovy, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Neuchâtel: Editions de la Baconnière, 1962), p. 58.

<sup>8</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Les Muses galantes," Ecrits sur la musique, p. 377.

The reader is then left with the idea that two simple, virtuous shepherds who sincerely love one another can be just as happy as the gods, who have dominion over the entire Earth.

The setting for the second "entrée" of gardens with snow-covered mountains forming the background is one for which Rousseau was to show his predilection later in La nouvelle Héloïse. Erithie is destined by the Sarmates as a human sacrifice to the goddess Diana. Ovide first laments the impossibility of his burning passion for Erithie and then is able to convince her of its power. He assures her that the hearts of her people will be softened to their desires when they see her tears and hear his persuasive discourse. Cupid, once again demonstrating his power, tempers the souls of the Sarmates so that they become responsive to the tender cries of the young lovers. Ovide expresses his gratitude to the people and suggests to them that a gentle heart will bring happiness more readily than a human sacrifice:

Des biens dont l'usage  
Fait le vrai bonheur,  
Le plus doux partage  
Est un tendre coeur.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 385.

In the third "entrée" passionate love triumphs once again, this time over glory of position. Polycrate, the king of Samos who possesses qualities of a faithful lover, and Anacréon, one of his courtiers who prides himself on his inconstancy in love, are both vying for the affection of the beautiful Thémire. Anacréon defends his fickleness to her by saying that ordinary lovers expend on jealousy some of the energy which he devotes completely to love at any given time. So, renouncing all claim to royalty, Thémire lets herself be conquered by the gentle words of Anacréon, who, in turn, comes to realize that he will never be unfaithful to her.

Although Les Muses galantes and Le Devin du village were both deemed worthy of production, it is not surprising that Rousseau is much better known in the realm of music for the latter. His previous musical attempts at finding expression for his inner feelings of passionate love had failed because they were shrouded in imitation and convention. Now in 1752 amidst the controversy between French and Italian music, his cultivated genius allowed him to produce this simple one act pastorage of the "opera buffa" type. His only inspiration was his imagination and the sentimental delights of his soul. In fact, after returning

to France from a stay in Italy, he was able to write the entire libretto and compose the score in only six days. His melodic music came naturally and sincerely from his heart rather than from long tedious hours of combining notes into seemingly good-sounding chords.<sup>10</sup>

The realistic, sentimental conflict between the shepherd Colin and his sweetheart Colette, which brought Rousseau the estimable praise of deep sighs and tears from the women attending the first presentation at Fontainebleau,<sup>11</sup> begins in the first scene. Colette enters sobbing that Colin has abandoned her for another:

J'ai perdu tout mon bonheur;  
J'ai perdu mon serviteur;  
Colin me délaisse.<sup>12</sup>

Not being able to determine whether she should love or hate her unfaithful suitor, she decides to consult the village magician, "le devin du village," who is approaching.

Placing her counted money in his hand, she sorrowfully asks if Colin will ever be hers again. Already the

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<sup>10</sup>Jean Guéhenno, Jean-Jacques, Vol. II: Roman et vérité (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1948), p. 49.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>12</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Le Devin du village," Ecrits sur la musique, p. 401.

soothsayer has been observing them and realizes that Colin has of late been giving vain attention to a scheming lady of the town. However, he is still in love with the pure Colette, who incidentally has turned down young city men, refusing their ribbons and lace, in order to remain loyal to Colin. The soothsayer promises to help and begins by advising Colette to feign affection for another.

After Colin confides that he has finally decided to love Colette again rather than the superficial courtly dames, the magician reveals to him Colette's interest in a handsome man of the city. The magician further explains to Colin, who refuses to believe that Colette would be disloyal, that one cannot aspire simultaneously to materialistic pleasures and a sincere love relationship:

On sert mal à la fois la fortune et l'amour.  
D'être si beau garçon quelquefois il en coûte.<sup>13</sup>

It is now Colin who pleads for some sorcery which will bring back his Colette. He has discovered that happiness lies in simple pleasures and naïve goodness rather than in visible wealth and position:

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 406.

Je vais revoir ma charmante maîtresse.  
 Adieu, châteaux, grandeurs, richesse,  
 Votre éclat ne me tente plus.  
 Si mes pleurs, mes soins assidus,  
 Peuvent toucher ce que j'adore,  
 Je vous verrai renaître encore,  
 Doux moments que j'ai perdus.

Quand on sait aimer et plaire,  
 A-t-on besoin d'autre bien?  
 Rends-moi ton coeur, ma bergère,  
 Colin t'a rendu le sien.  
 Mon chalumeau, ma houlette,  
 Soyez mes seules grandeurs;  
 Ma parure est ma Colette,  
 Mes trésors sont ses faveurs.<sup>14</sup>

Having been prompted by the soothsayer concerning what to say and how to act, Colette joins Colin on stage. Colin's earnest pleas for reconciliation are met with caution by Colette, who plays well the part of an abandoned sweetheart who has turned her attention to a more responsive suitor. No longer able to bear Colette's love turned into scorn, the remorseful Colin announces that he will have to leave the hamlet forever. This threat, needless to say, softens Colette, and in a duet the emotions of the two lovers begin to merge once again. Realizing that they had never been so happy as when their affections pleased one another, they decide that all the wealth in the world could not grant them as much fulfillment as each other. Symbolizing

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 407-08.



his renunciation of vain materialistic wealth afforded him by the rich city lady for simpler rural pleasures, Colin disdainfully discards from his hat the opulent ribbon bestowed upon him by the dame. To take its place, Colette presents him with a less ostentatious one, which she alone has made. Henceforth, love will be their law and a perfect marriage will reconcile it with society.

This calls for a joyous celebration by all the youthful shepherds and amiable young girls, who exalt the return of Colin to Colette, rural life, simple people, and unpretentious love. The magician takes a song from his pocket and proceeds to sing several stanzas, assisted by Colin and Colette. The second stanza praises naïve love:

Ici de la simple nature  
L'amour suit la naïveté;  
En d'autres lieux, de la parure  
Il cherche l'éclat emprunté.  
Ah! pour l'ordinaire,  
L'Amour ne sait guère  
Ce qu'il permet, ce qu'il défend;  
C'est un enfant, c'est un enfant.<sup>15</sup>

And the song reveals that there is no better setting for such love to find virtuous expression than in the unsophisticated country where corrupt civilization has not yet left

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 414.

its imprint:

A la ville on est plus aimable,  
 Au village on sait mieux aimer.  
 . . . . .  
 A la ville on fait bien plus de fracas;  
 Mais sont-ils aussi gais dans leurs ébats?  
     Toujours contents,  
     Toujours chantants;  
     Beauté sans fard,  
     Plaisir sans art:  
 Tous leurs concerts valent-ils nos musettes?<sup>16</sup>

In light of Rousseau's attitudes, it is apparent that in Le Devin he found expression for his predilection for country over city, simple rural pleasures and hard farm work over eighteenth-century frivolous society and idleness, naïve love over materialistic wealth, and even melodious chants over complicated harmonic productions. It may even be that his imagination coupled with a longing for a sincere love relationship may have prompted him to fancy himself Colin, and his Thérèse would then be Colette. Can we perceive Rousseau taking refuge from his numerous mundane problems with the simple peasant Thérèse, as did Colin with Colette?

Dans ma cabane obscure  
 Toujours soucis nouveaux;  
 Vent, soleil, ou froidure,  
 Toujours peine et travaux.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 413-17.

Colette, ma bergère,  
Si tu viens l'habiter,  
Colin dans sa chaumière  
N'a rien à regretter.<sup>17</sup>

At any rate, certainly Rousseau's sincerity<sup>18</sup> in creating what he believed to be a perfect relationship in a flawless surrounding helped make a very simple plot into an opera which was able to produce compassionate weeping in the audience.

Considering the musical techniques employed by Rousseau in this opera, one may arrive at additional explanations for its great emotional impact. Le Devin is a landmark in Rousseau's musical career since it is here that he first put his theory of unity of melody into practice. While his previous musical productions had been dependent on the intellectual French harmonic system, this one broke away from most harmonic and contrapuntal devices in favor of a single melody, which afforded a more natural, moving type of expression. He reserved the use of harmony and modulations for brief moments of intense feeling, which aided greatly in eliciting sentimental responses from the

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 413.

<sup>18</sup>Guéhenno, Roman et vérité, p. 49.

audience. Because of their dependence on harmony, his former works appealed primarily to the physical senses whereas in Le Devin the heart-rending theme of love was transported directly and naturally to the soul by means of melody.<sup>19</sup>

It seems that the best critical accounts of Le Devin would be those of persons who actually attended its stage production. Grimm, who espoused essentially the same views concerning music as Rousseau and who was among those friends accompanying him to the first performance,<sup>20</sup> praises Le Devin in his "Petit Prophète de Boehmischbroda." In this imaginative commentary a spirit which appears to be something of a guardian of France's fine arts is dictating to the little prophet from Bohemia admonitions concerning the impoverished contemporary French music. The prophet, in turn, is to relate to the French opera-goers this unfavorable criticism as well as some constructive suggestions for the initiation of a new type of dramatic

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<sup>19</sup>Robert Osmont, "Les Théories de Rousseau sur l'harmonie musicale et leurs relations avec son art d'écrivain," Jean-Jacques et son oeuvre (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1962), pp. 330-36.

<sup>20</sup>Guéhenno, Roman et vérité, p. 51.

music fashioned after the Italian bouffe genre. Having denounced such adverse aspects of the operas being currently performed in Paris as the unrhythmical scrapings of the orchestra, the exasperating cries of the majority of the singers, the annoying recitatives, the endlessly boring dances, and the unrealistic presence of fairies, monsters, and giants, the spirit does, however, endorse two French singers and one opera. The opera is Le Devin du village and the singers are its protagonists--Mlle Fel, who played Colette, and Jélyotte, who played the part of Colin, according to the author's account in the Confessions.<sup>21</sup> The spirit asserts that he inspired not only the singers but the writing of the sentimental intermezzo as well:

Et comme j'en ai fait exécuter un par mon serviteur Jélyotte et par ma servante Fel, qui t'a fait grand plaisir, parce que je l'ai fait faire selon mes désirs, par un homme dont je fais ce qu'il me plaît, encore qu'il regimbe contre moi, car je le gouverne, malgré qu'il en ait, et j'ai nommé son intermède Le Devin du village.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Rousseau, Confessions, p. 266.

<sup>22</sup>Friedrich Melchior Grimm, "Le petit Prophète de Boehmischbroda," Correspondance littéraire, philosophique, et critique par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, Meister, Etc., ed. by Maurice Tourneux, XVI (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1882), p. 333.

If other French composers and performers would allow themselves to be enlightened by the artful Italian music as did Rousseau and the singers in his opera and if the people would be moved by their efforts, the chimerical spirit would then take pleasure once again in French music.

Probably the best account available<sup>23</sup> and one which discusses Le Devin in much greater detail than the preceding narrative is Diderot's "Vision de la nuit du mardi-gras au mercredi des Cendres." A continuation of "Le petit Prophète," this work opens with the prophet extremely unhappy because the supernatural voice took him away from his composition of minuets; consequently, he had to play those of someone else at the Prague festival since he was unable to compose any good ones after returning from Paris. Not being able to endure the thought of receiving applause for someone else's work, he broke his violin and bow, tore his manuscript into pieces, and swore he would never again return to that city where one can receive inspiration to write only dull music. However, the spirit assured him that he would return to Paris because he wanted him to attend Le Devin du village and, furthermore, that before

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<sup>23</sup>Guéhenno, Roman et vérité, p. 65.



the performance ended he would regret three times having destroyed his violin and bow.

The overture was the first such occasion for lamentation since he would have loved to join this fine orchestra. When Colette entered sobbing, the orchestra wept with her, and then it helped her count the money destined for "le devin" and portrayed her fear in approaching him. So it was apparent to the little prophet from the very beginning that his second trip to the French opera was to be much more enjoyable than the first. The beauty of the magician's song, which advised Colette to feign affection for another, made the prophet remorseful a second time that he could not accompany him along with the orchestra. He realized that Rousseau understood the art of writing appropriate accompaniments for beautiful songs, as opposed to the distasteful noise he had experienced before. The third time he regretted not being able to be a member of the orchestra was when it accompanied so well the soothsayer's spell destined to reunite the lovers. He recalled the words of the spirit and was no longer distraught at having been brought back to Paris against his will.

In fact, the music as well as the scene was so delicate and true-to-life and the emotions were depicted by

the singers and orchestra in such a sincere manner that the little prophet was moved to express his feelings several times. For instance, when the two lovers met for the first time after each had counseled with the magician and Colette told Colin that she no longer loved him, the prophet said: "Ah! la trompeuse! car elle l'aime, car j'y vois clair, malgré tout ce qu'elle fait pour que nous n'y voyions goutte ni moi, ni Colin."<sup>24</sup>

The prophet then became angry at what he believed to be the prolonged arrogant manner of Colin. Wishing him not to be offended and heeding in no way his plea to remain at the opera, the spirit removed the prophet from the "boutique" and returned him to Bohemia before he was able to witness the festival which followed the reunion of the lovers. The narrator continues the commentary on the gala event. He found the decorative setting of the village true-to-life, and the pantomime of the actors and accompaniment of the violins very helpful in portraying the emotions displayed there. And he received the same impression as

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<sup>24</sup>Denis Diderot, "La Vision de la nuit du mardi-gras au mercredi des Cendres," Beaux-arts, in Oeuvres complètes, ed. by J. Assézat, XII (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1876), p. 164.

did Rousseau from those present at the performance,  
 "... tout le monde fut attendri."<sup>25</sup>

Endeavoring to dissuade the public from believing the accusations that he did not write Le Devin, toward the end of his life in his Dialogues Rousseau contends that either he must have written all the works attributed to his name or none at all since the same unsophisticated themes and simple style are recurrent in them all. If another man wrote Le Devin, according to Rousseau, he must then also be the renowned author of La nouvelle Héloïse. Both works are productions of his unique imagination and sentimental desires. Therefore, the pure and simple themes of both and the girls whom he created and loved must resemble one another, a fact which Rousseau clearly stated during his lifetime: "Colette intéresse et touche comme Julie, sans magie de situations, sans apprêts d'événements romanesques; même naturel, même douceur, même accent: elles sont soeurs ... ." <sup>26</sup>

Several of the themes appearing in the latter half of the eighteenth century which Rousseau treated briefly

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>26</sup>Rousseau, Dialogues, pp. 291-92.

in Le Devin were skillfully expanded in La nouvelle Héloïse. Although the setting of Le Devin is in the country amidst trees and running streams and the impression of the purity of nature is received, nothing more explicit than the following is said:

Quand on sait bien aimer, que la vie est charmante!  
Tel, au milieu des fleurs qui brillent sur son cours,  
Un doux ruisseau coule et serpente.<sup>27</sup>

Whereas in the novel there are still relatively few nature descriptions, he extends the gardens, wooded areas, water, and mountains to a role of facilitating meditation, consoling disheartened lovers, and recalling passionate moments from the more felicitous past.

In Le Devin there is merely this author's intuitive feeling concerning Rousseau's presence in the personality of Colin; however, in La nouvelle Héloïse, thanks to a much more thorough development of Saint-Preux's "âme sensible," we see the representation of the author's personality. Both works, nonetheless, greatly moved those who had any capacity at all to feel, in part because of Rousseau's participation

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<sup>27</sup>Rousseau, "Le Devin du village," Ecrits sur la musique, p. 416.

in the sentimental conflicts.<sup>28</sup>

While in the opera Rousseau only touches on the inferiority of society to the pure peasant existence, in La nouvelle Héloïse it plays a much greater role. The love of Colin and Colette was only threatened as a result of Colin's temptation by the artificial city lady, but society destroyed the possibility for the fulfillment of a passionate love relationship between Julie and Saint-Preux. The suffering of the former couple was resolved by the magician, an agent of the return to natural goodness, but only a partially gratifying bond of platonic friendship could be achieved by Julie and Saint-Preux since they had to live within the confines of an insensitive society. Perhaps Rousseau's evolvment from a completely satisfactory resolution by means of a marriage in the former case to a triangular situation of compromise between Julie, M. de Wolmar, and Saint-Preux may be attributed to his increasing disenchantment with society between 1752 and 1758, the year that he completed La nouvelle Héloïse.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>J.-E. Morel, ed., La nouvelle Héloïse, extraits, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1937), pp. 5-16.

<sup>29</sup>Launay, Introduction to Confessions, p. 17.



The more mature development of the latter work probably results from the six year interval following the triumph of Le Devin. The realization that he could express his personal feelings in a form so agreeable even to those caught in the web of society<sup>30</sup> conceivably prompted him to expand his operatic meditations into a novel. The same simplicity and unsophisticated charm grace both; however, La nouvelle Héloïse was a greater success in awakening the passions of the age since the themes, characters, and sentimental mood were more fully cultivated and the novel was more accessible to people than the opera.

It is not merely the aforementioned facts and presumptions which appear to link La nouvelle Héloïse and Le Devin du village. In the novel Saint-Preux states his predilection for the sentimental Italian music, of which Le Devin is an impressive incarnation. If Rousseau did in fact find expression for his thoughts and dreams in the two works, it seems appropriate that in his novel he would have revealed various facets of his musical philosophy which, beforehand, he had demonstrated in his operas as well as written about in his works concerning music theory. Viewing

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<sup>30</sup>Guéhenno, Roman et vérité, p. 53.



La nouvelle Heloise in such a manner facilitates an enlarged comprehension of Rousseau's attitudes toward music as well as a greater appreciation of his success in composing an opera comprising themes speaking directly to the heart, which Saint-Preux found so delightful in Italian music.

In a letter to Julie, Saint-Preux, who had taught her music, expounds upon his renunciation of the uninteresting, insensitive, harmonic French music in favor of the more touching, passionate, melodious Italian music. Since Rousseau's predilections concerning dramatic music were clearly those of Saint-Preux, it is highly probable that he would have hoped for such a response from the audience of Le Devin as the following, which Saint-Preux gave after having witnessed some Italian music performed at the home of M. Bomston:

Je ne sais quelle sensation voluptueuse me gagnait insensiblement. Ce n'était plus une vaine suite de sons comme dans nos récits. A chaque phrase, quelque image entrant dans mon cerveau ou quelque sentiment dans mon coeur; le plaisir ne s'arrêtait point à l'oreille, il pénétrait jusqu'à l'âme ... 31

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<sup>31</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse (Paris: Garnier Frères, n.d.), p. 93.

Saint-Preux's exile in Paris provides another occasion for a commentary on music. He relates to Claire various annoying aspects of French operas, some of which he has just viewed on stage for the first time. Since Rousseau's sentiments were much the same on the subject, it seems fitting that in Le Devin he avoided some of the adverse qualities later criticized by Saint-Preux, as may be attested by Diderot's "Vision de la nuit du mardi-gras au mercredi des Cendres."

The authenticity observed in the presentation of Le Devin<sup>32</sup> is certainly the antithesis of the fantastic scene witnessed by Saint-Preux at the following production of the "Opéra de Paris":

Le théâtre est garni de petites trappes carrées qui, s'ouvrant au besoin, annoncent que les démons vont sortir de la cave. Quand ils doivent s'élever dans les airs, on leur substitue adroitement des démons de toile brune empaillée, ou quelquefois de vrais ramoneurs, qui branlent en l'air suspendus à ces cordes, jusqu'à ce qu'ils se perdent majestueusement dans les guenilles . . . . Mais ce qu'il y a de réellement tragique, c'est quand les cordes sont mal conduites ou viennent à rompre; car alors les esprits infernaux et les dieux immortels tombent, s'estropient, se tuent quelquefois. Ajoutez à tout cela les monstres qui rendent certaines scènes fort pathétiques, tels que des dragons, des lézards, des tortues, des

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<sup>32</sup>Diderot, "La Vision de la nuit," p. 166.

crocodiles, de gros crapauds qui se promènent d'un air menaçant sur le théâtre, et font voir à l'Opéra les tentations de Saint Antoine.<sup>33</sup>

And compare the simple Colette, who used pantomime on occasion instead of song to express her emotions, with the affected actresses of the Parisian operas who felt they had to use artifices to exhort applause from the audience:

On voit les actrices, presque en convulsion, arracher avec violence ces glapissements de leurs poumons, les poings fermés contre la poitrine, la tête en arrière, le visage enflammé, les vaisseaux gonflés, l'estomac pantelant: on ne sait lequel est le plus désagréablement affecté, de l'oeil ou de l'oreille; leurs efforts font autant souffrir ceux qui les regardent, que leurs chants ceux qui les écoutent ...<sup>34</sup>

Added to the horrendous acting and singing are the manifestations of the orchestra. Certainly the little prophet would not have lamented three times breaking his violin and bow had he experienced music such as that which Saint-Preux heard:

Figurez-vous un charivari sans fin d'instruments sans mélodie, un ronron traînant et perpétuel de basses; chose la plus lugubre, la plus assommante que j'aie entendue de ma vie, et que je n'ai jamais pu supporter une demi-heure sans gagner un violent mal de tête. Tout cela forme

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<sup>33</sup>Rousseau, La nouvelle Héloïse, pp. 228-29.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

une espèce de psalmodie à laquelle il n'y a pour l'ordinaire ni chant ni mesure.<sup>35</sup>

Another reform apparently instituted by Rousseau in Le Devin concerns the role of dance in an opera. Saint-Preux's account reveals that ballets in the French operas were generally quite magnificent and spectacular but that, in reality, they detracted from the dramatic effect:

Dans chaque acte l'action est ordinairement coupée au moment le plus intéressant par une fête qu'on donne aux acteurs assis, et que le parterre voit debout. Il arrive de là que les personnages de la pièce sont absolument oubliés, ou bien que les spectateurs regardent les acteurs qui regardent autre chose.<sup>36</sup>

The last scene of Le Devin is the only one which contains dancing. By this time Colin and Colette have renewed their love, which calls for rejoicing by all the young people. The actors are certainly not forgotten during the festivities, as was the case in the French opera, since the lovers as well as the magician sing while the villagers dance around them. Here one may observe another one of Rousseau's attempts to achieve verisimilitude in operatic productions.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>37</sup>Rousseau, "Lettre sur la musique française," pp. 190-93.

Saint-Preux concludes his letter to Claire by stating in general terms the reason for his displeasure with the French opera:

Il me reste à vous dire sur l'Opéra français que le grand défaut que j'y crois remarquer est un faux goût de magnificence, par lequel on a voulu mettre en représentation le merveilleux, qui, n'étant fait que pour être imaginé, est aussi bien placé dans un poème épique que ridiculement sur le théâtre.<sup>38</sup>

Rousseau's purpose in composing Le Devin must have been just the opposite of those of the composers of the operas viewed by Saint-Preux. His was to touch the audience rather than to dazzle it. He achieved his end by depicting the naïve emotions of shepherds in a charming rural atmosphere. Keeping in mind that Saint-Preux was attracted by the sentimental effects of Italian music, one could surmise that his reaction to such an opera as Le Devin would have been one of delight rather than disgust since his "âme sensible" could relate more easily to simple pleasures than to artificial exhibitions.

Rousseau called Pygmalion, his last major work in the field of music to be produced during his lifetime, not

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<sup>38</sup>Rousseau, La nouvelle Héloïse, p. 233.



an opera but a "scène lyrique."<sup>39</sup> He composed the text during his stay at Motiers,<sup>40</sup> by which time he felt completely alienated from his close friends as well as from society in general. Horace Coignet, who composed the music, believed that no one could rightfully consider Pygmalion one of Rousseau's lesser works.<sup>41</sup>

The scene opens with the sculptor Pygmalion very sad and disturbed because he has apparently lost his talent as well as his taste for great art. Believing his affliction to be caused by his excessive admiration for his own work, he has hidden Galathée, his most beautiful production under a veil, but he is even more distraught as a result. Consequently, he decides to unveil the statue and is terrified to realize that he has created a goddess lovelier than Venus instead of the proposed nymph. His senses are agitated to the point that he believes her physical attractions could be enhanced only by the presence of a soul and is even willing to give the inanimate object his own. When the statue does in fact move before his

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<sup>39</sup>Grand-Carteret, J.-J. Rousseau, p. 354.

<sup>40</sup>M. Petitain, "Note" in Ecrits sur la musique, p. 420.

<sup>41</sup>Grand-Carteret, J.-J. Rousseau, p. 355.



eyes, he becomes delirious and frightened at having had such a sinful desire. But he soon rejoices in having given her all his essence; no longer will he be able to live except through her:

Oui, cher et charmant objet, oui, digne chef-d'oeuvre de mes mains, de mon coeur et des dieux; c'est toi, c'est toi seule: je t'ai donné tout mon être: je ne vivrai plus que par toi.<sup>42</sup>

M. Jean Guéhenno is of the opinion that a relationship exists between Pygmalion and La nouvelle Héloïse. Rousseau, like his protagonist Pygmalion, had spent his life creating works from his illusions. Repudiated by his friends, Rousseau, again like his character, was becoming crazy near the end of his life. Having nowhere to turn except to his meditations and works, he began to worship Julie and Claire, his dearest creations whose souls had come directly from his. Perhaps Pygmalion's heartfelt cries to his Galathée were really those of Rousseau himself:<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Pygmalion," Ecrits sur la musique, p. 430.

<sup>43</sup>Jean Guéhenno, Jean-Jacques, Vol. III: Grandeur et misère d'un esprit, pp. 106-49, passim.

Vanité, faiblesse humaine! je ne puis me  
 lasser d'admirer mon ouvrage; je m'enivre  
 d'amour-propre; je m'adore dans ce que j'ai  
 fait. ... Non, jamais rien de si beau ne  
 parut dans la nature; j'ai passé l'ouvrage  
 des dieux. ... <sup>44</sup>

The Consolations des misères de ma vie, a volume of songs published after Rousseau's death, is another example of his innermost feelings set to music. When his sensitivity caused him pain, he would seek consolation, received by most men from other people, in the composition of his little songs,<sup>45</sup> a fact illustrated by the title that he gave to his work. The musical value of the songs is negligible, but the over-all traits of tenderness, charm, naïveté, and general melancholy are noteworthy since they depict Rousseau's moods at the various times when he wrote them. One of the best known of the romances, "Que le jour me dure!",<sup>46</sup> contains the themes of nature, passionate love, and the imagined presence of the loved one in her actual absence, all of which seem to recall passages from La nouvelle Héloïse:

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<sup>44</sup>Rousseau, "Pygmalion," Ecrits sur la musique, p. 424.

<sup>45</sup>Rousseau, Dialogues, p. 300.

<sup>46</sup>Grand-Carteret, J.-J. Rousseau, pp. 358-59.

Que le jour me dure,  
 Passé loin de toi!  
 Toute la nature  
 N'est plus rien pour moi.  
 Le plus vert bocage,  
 Quand tu n'y viens pas,  
 N'est qu'un lieu sauvage,  
 Pour moi sans appas.

Hélas! si je passe  
 Un jour sans te voir,  
 Je cherche ta trace  
 Dans mon désespoir  
 Quand je l'ai perdue,  
 Je reste à pleurer;  
 Mon ame éperdue  
 Est près d'expirer.

Le coeur me palpite  
 Quand j'entends ta voix;  
 Tout mon sang s'agite  
 Dès que je te vois.  
 Ouvres-tu la bouche,  
 Les cieux vont s'ouvrir;  
 Si ta main me touche,  
 Je me sens frémir.<sup>47</sup>

The delightful charm of the words of this song is enhanced by its simple melody, which is composed of only three different notes. Songs such as this one are able to speak directly to the heart because of their unaffected simplicity.<sup>48</sup> Judging from Saint-Preux's reaction in La nouvelle Héloïse to the old romances sung at the wine-harvest

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<sup>47</sup>Rousseau, Ecrits sur la musique, p. 433.

<sup>48</sup>Jean Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: la transparence et l'obstacle (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1957), pp. 109-11.

festival, one could surmise that he would have rejoiced at hearing Rousseau's air:

La plupart de ces chansons sont de vieilles romances dont les airs ne sont pas piquants; mais ils ont je ne sais quoi d'antique et doux qui touche à la longue. Les paroles sont simples, naïves, souvent tristes; elles plaisent pourtant.<sup>49</sup>

Considering Rousseau's feelings of betrayal by his close friends and exclusion from society, one is able to understand why he took refuge in his literary and musical works toward the end of his life. A vehicle for the transmission of his meditations, La nouvelle Héloïse may be viewed as one of the primary sources we have for perceiving some of the distinctive characteristics of his soul. If this be true, then Rousseau's operas may be studied in order to discern the progression of his thoughts, since many of them appearing in these works seem to have reached full artistic development in La nouvelle Héloïse.

As early as 1739, by means of Iphis et Anaxarète, we see Rousseau giving a great deal of importance to Iphis, a simple commoner surrounded by royalty. In this opera the composer exalts virtuous, passionate love, yet at the

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<sup>49</sup>Rousseau, La nouvelle Héloïse, pp. 520-21.

same time he gives credence to the importance of a feeling of duty to social responsibilities. To the themes of honorable love and the importance of moral obligation, in La Découverte du nouveau monde Rousseau adds that of the natural goodness of simple people untouched by civilization. In Les Muses galantes again the themes of passionate love, the elevation of virtuous, simple shepherds, and the discountenance of royalty are all present. In Le Devin du village it appears that the themes of tender love, the preference for unaffected rural life over the materialistic ways of the city, and the exaltation of simple shepherds have become all important, the plot and music being employed primarily to convey them to the onlookers. In this opera he was no longer dependent upon unrealistic characters in unbelievable settings nor upon the conventional music which he had come to hold in contempt to represent his feelings. Instead, like Pygmalion, he had succeeded in giving his heart and soul to Colin and Colette, and, furthermore, he was able to transmit it to the audience by way of his simple and charming melodies. Perhaps the great appeal of the pleas of Julie, Claire, and Saint-Preux for a return to pure and simple love, natural goodness, and moral obligation may be attributed,

in part, to Rousseau's trials in his first three operas and to the final success of Le Devin in eliciting emotional approval for the development of a new literary genre.



## CONCLUSION

A distinct relationship exists among all of Rousseau's musical works, both those treating theory and his operas. Careful examination of the theoretical writings reveals one omnipresent theme. In all of them he advocates melodic as opposed to harmonic music. This fact alone would have nothing to contribute to a study in pre-romanticism; rather, it is Rousseau's intent which interests us. By deleting harmony or at least by subordinating it to the melodic line, he feels that composers are able to carry passions directly to the hearts of the listeners and produce emotional sensations in them. In essence, he believes that if music cannot make men feel it has no value. However, Rousseau must not be remembered in the realm of music as merely a polemicist who advocated sentimental dramatic music. This man who incredibly enough had had no formal music training produced an expressive one-act pastorale which, when performed, brought tears to those in attendance. Le Devin du village may be viewed, then, as a proof that his principle of unity of melody could be utilized to convey very simple sentimental themes directly

to the hearts of many of those who had frequented the opera houses before and received no greater effect than having their senses dazzled.

Rousseau first demonstrated his interest in the theme of melody as an emotive force when he wrote regarding the "Guerre des bouffons," and he continued this concern throughout his life. It was this preference which induced him to favor Italian over French music at the beginning of his career and this predilection which finally led him to accept Gluck's French reform operas at the time of the Gluck-Piccini controversy. In addition, many of the subjective articles submitted to the Encyclopédie, which Rousseau later incorporated into his Dictionnaire de musique, recommend simple moving melodies rather than scientifically contrived harmonies. Considering all of the operas which Rousseau composed, one notes that he was unsuccessful until he liberated himself at last from harmonic conventions and put his theory of unity of melody into practice. The emotional impact of Le Devin du village was so great that some consider it along with La nouvelle Héloïse as serving a great role in reviving the passions of those suffering from what Rousseau believed to be the philosophical ills of the eighteenth century. It contributed

to the emergence of a new age of passionate feeling as opposed to intellectual reasoning.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the other preromantic aspects of Rousseau's musical works are directly related to the over-all theme of melody as a vehicle of "sentiment." Not only must the dramatic representations have harmony subordinated to melody, but the melody must be secondary to the varied feelings expressed by the words and actions of the singers as well. In order for the melody to be able to transport these emotions to the soul, they must be in accordance with reality. In essence, Rousseau is saying that the passions displayed should be those which all people are capable of feeling and should be presented in a verisimilar manner which people living in the eighteenth century could relate to. The settings should be contemporary and the characters believable. All aspects of the dramatic representation should imitate nature as closely as possible, since anything unnatural cannot touch human hearts. In his theoretical works Rousseau surmised that adherence to rules of verisimilitude would contribute to producing emotional

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<sup>1</sup>Guéhenno, Roman et vérité, p. 53.

reactions in opera goers and verified his contention with the production of Le Devin.

Since Rousseau exalted simple peasant people, it seems appropriate that he would have favored a very unsophisticated type of music with no intellectual adornments to obscure the "sentiment" for them. According to him, men learn to feel before learning to reason. The state of mankind before its corruption by civilization was one of passion rather than intellect. Therefore, Rousseau conjectures that only melodic music existed in this state of nature since it is the sole type which is capable of transcribing emotion. In all of his theoretical writings, especially the "Dissertation sur la musique moderne," the "Lettre à M. le docteur Burney," and the Dictionnaire de musique, he exalts the simple melodies of the ancient Greeks and advocates a return to them. He feels that men have corrupted the natural state of music with harmony as they have debased society with the introduction of private property and political institutions. He praises any vestige of pure and simple melodic music which appeals to the hearts of common people, one example being the chants of the Venetian gondoliers and another the charming old romances sung by the peasants at the wine-harvest festival

in La nouvelle Héloïse. These naïve melodies produced such intense emotion in Saint-Preux that, as a result, he was able to feel once again the more felicitous moments from the past when there was still the possibility of conjugal happiness for Julie and him:

Nous ne pouvons nous empêcher, Claire de sourire, Julie de rougir, moi de soupirer, quand nous retrouvons dans ces chansons des tours et des expressions dont nous nous sommes servis autrefois. Alors, en jetant les yeux sur elles et me rappelant les temps éloignés, un tressaillement me prend, un poids insupportable me tombe tout à coup sur le coeur, et me laisse une impression funeste qui ne s'efface qu'avec peine.<sup>2</sup>

Not only does Rousseau advocate in his theoretical works simplicity in musical scores, but in his operas he demonstrates a predilection for simple people unaffected by the artificial conventions of society. It is clear that Iphis of Iphis et Anaxarète, the Cacique of La Découverte du nouveau monde, Hésiode of Les Muses galantes, and Colette of Le Devin du village were created as a result of his longing for virtuous people with gentle souls capable of undying passionate love. In every instance the character possessing an "âme sensible" suffered as a result,

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<sup>2</sup>Rousseau, La nouvelle Héloïse, p. 521.



but Rousseau rewarded each, with the exception of Iphis, for his "sensibilité" by providing a perfect love relationship.

Julie and Saint-Preux may be viewed as the real triumph of Rousseau's operas since, as far as preromanticism in the works of Rousseau is concerned, La nouvelle Héloïse overshadows even Le Devin du village. It is no coincidence that these two characters drawn from Rousseau's unique imagination possess traits which were formerly displayed by his operatic creations. One might even go so far as to say that Rousseau's trials in his operas facilitated the crystallization of his "rêveries" in his widely acclaimed novel. Such attributes as natural goodness, virtue, moral obligation, hatred of society and materialistic wealth as opposed to a predilection for simple rural pleasures, passionate naïve love, the realization and painful acceptance of impossible love, and extended suffering are all present in one or more of the characters of Rousseau's operas.

Saint-Preux, Rousseau's preromantic hero par excellence, champions Rousseau's belief in melodic music as a conveyor of "sentiment." The embodiment of Rousseau's "âme sensible," he completely supports Rousseau's musical thesis:



L'harmonie ... n'est qu'un accessoire éloigné dans la musique imitative; il n'y a dans l'harmonie proprement dite aucun principe d'imitation. Elle assure, il est vrai, les intonations; elle porte témoignage de leur justesse; et, rendant les modulations plus sensibles, elle ajoute de l'énergie à l'expression, et de la grâce au chant. Mais c'est de la seule mélodie que sort cette puissance invincible des accents passionnés; c'est d'elle que dérive tout le pouvoir de la musique sur l'âme. Formez les plus savantes successions d'accords sans mélange de mélodie, vous serez ennuyés au bout d'un quart d'heure. De beaux chants sans aucune harmonie sont longtemps à l'épreuve de l'ennui. Que l'accent du sentiment anime les chants les plus simples, ils seront intéressants. Au contraire, une mélodie qui ne parle point chante toujours mal, et la seule harmonie n'a jamais rien su dire au coeur.<sup>3</sup>

After experiencing Italian melodic music Saint-Preux no longer believed music's sole function to be that of mechanically charming the ear; rather, it was capable of transporting his soul and delighting his "sensibilité":

Ce n'était plus une vaine suite de sons comme dans nos récits. A chaque phrase, quelque image entrait dans mon cerveau ou quelque sentiment dans mon coeur; le plaisir ne s'arrêtait point à l'oreille, il pénétrait jusqu'à l'âme ... <sup>4</sup>

Saint-Preux also believed that those who do not possess an "âme sensible" are not so readily moved by ravishing melodies

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

as are those who do have a facility for feelings. Since M. d'Orbe slept undisturbed while Saint-Preux was transported by Italian music which was being performed, he thought that perhaps it was Julie's image recalled by the music, rather than the melodies, which penetrated his soul.

Rousseau's works on music as a source for his preromantic thought have been neglected too long. Perhaps one could even consider them as a treatise on his preromantic philosophy. Surely if Rousseau had a purpose in writing La nouvelle Héloïse, it must have been to speak to the hearts of simple people who were capable of feeling. Is this not the recurrent theme in all of his theoretical works on music? Is the realization of this theme not why Rousseau himself regarded Le Devin du village as such a tremendous success? Did not Saint-Preux emphasize this aspect of melodic music whenever commenting on the subject? To the present Rousseau's musical writings have been evaluated primarily by musicians; additional investigation of these works by those in the field of literature provides new appreciation for them in the context of preromanticism.

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