

Excavating French Melodrama of the First Empire

Katherine Astbury, Sarah Burdett, Diane Tisdall

French melodrama of the Napoleonic era was a form of total theater with text, music, and gesture inextricably linked in the creation of effect for the post-Revolutionary audience. Theater scholarship in France has long been dominated by textual analysis and, as a result, the interconnections between these elements of melodrama performance have been underexplored, although attempts “to ‘sonorize’ the study of melodrama” are becoming more widespread.¹ Even the groundbreaking volumes of René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt’s theater being produced currently perpetuate the subservience of music to text in that the play texts receive full critical apparatus whereas the scores do not.²

The creative possibilities of practice as research as a way of moving beyond the study of words on the page is well established in the UK but has only recently begun to gather pace in France and this is leading to an important rapprochement between theory and practice with *conférences-spectacles*, *séminaires-ateliers* and historically informed performances by com-

¹ Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks, “The Melodramatic Moment,” in *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and Theatrical Culture, 1790–1820*, ed. Hambridge and Hicks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 1, a volume that challenges “the binaries that have come to characterize melodrama scholarship,” 13. For years, Emilio Sala was a lone voice in examining the scores of early nineteenth-century French melodrama, most notably in *L’opera senza canto: il mêlo romantico e l’invenzione della colonna sonora* (Venice: Marsilio, 1995), but now there are a number of musicologists studying French melodrama scores, most notably Jens Hesselager, Sarah Hibberd, and Jacqueline Waeber. Nevertheless, scholarly interest in melodrama has not seen the level of interest that characterizes the field of English melodrama. See for instance *The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, ed. Carolyn Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

² René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt, *Mélodrames*, ed. Roxane Martin, 4 vols. (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013–).

panies such as Théâtre à la Source.³ This article offers a case study of how public performances of two early nineteenth-century French melodramas can further interdisciplinary dialogue and question conventionally assumed beliefs about melodrama of the period.

The blending of scholarship and practice is labelled in a variety of ways depending, in part, on the discipline. Historically informed performance has been claimed above all for musical performance but is often discredited, not least for a “tendency to use the evidence in several different ways simultaneously, according to what suits the project at hand” rather than seeing it as providing “a starting point for experimentation.”⁴ Practice as research, or practice-led research, are phrases more often associated with Theater Studies and denote a process whereby insightful practice is a substantial part of the evidence of the articulation and evidencing of a research inquiry.⁵ Recapturing elements of melodrama through collaborative “working historically through practice” was at the heart of Jacky Bratton and Gilli Bush-Bailey’s Jane Scott project in 2002, which had as one of its research questions the issue of non-textual gaps in melodrama.⁶ Their work, which also fed into a 2014 workshop on melodrama in France and England directed by Bush-Bailey and led by researchers at the Universities of Warwick and King’s College London,⁷ has done much to underline Baz Kershaw’s view that “performance knowledge is most likely to be produced by creative processes.”⁸ Our contribution to this landscape has been to go beyond the confines of an academic workshop to public performance, something which allows greater space for an exploration of “then and now” as the per-

³ See www.alexandrin.org.

⁴ John Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 200, 196.

⁵ See Robin Nelson, “Introduction: The What, Where, When and Why of ‘Practice as Research,’” in *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, ed. Robin Nelson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 3–22.

⁶ Gilli Bush-Bailey, “Still Working It Out. An Account of the Practical Workshop Re-Discovery of Company Practice and Romantic Performance Styles via Jane Scott’s Plays,” *Nineteenth-Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 7.

⁷ See the video-article by Katherine Astbury, Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks, “Researching Early French and English Melodrama through Performance” at <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/research/french/currentprojects/napoleonictheatre/performingmelodrama/>.

⁸ Baz Kershaw, “Performance as Research: Live Events and Documents,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, ed. Tracy C. Davis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 36.

formance needs to resonate with the public. The two plays performed in 2017 and discussed here might best be seen as research-informed performances, blending approaches with a view, to use Robert Sarlós's words, to "bring all participants, including spectators, closer to a sensory realization of the style and atmosphere, the physical and emotional dynamics of a bygone era, than can mere reading".⁹

After all, the written play text is just one aspect of performance—the score is an integral part of melodrama, as are the non-verbal gestures of the actors, and bringing those three elements together through performance allows us to gain a much better understanding of their interaction. In addition to the play text and score (where it has survived), traces in reviews, memoirs, illustrations, institutional registers and other documents allow us to piece together information about the play as a performance, even if what has survived is fragmentary. It is a task similar to that of an archaeologist reassembling an old pot from a handful of pieces. While Kate Newey reminds us of the dangers that some will see archaeology as dry, dusty, "dead,"¹⁰ we use this metaphor of archaeology in the sense in which it is found in Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks' seminal text *Theatre/Archaeology* and James Mathieu's *Experimental Archaeology*.¹¹ Shanks and Pearson in particular highlight the centrality of interpretation in both archaeology and performance and see both spheres as connected by a common aim to retrieve and reconstruct ephemeral events and understand the textures of the social and cultural experience of the object in the past. For them, archaeology is a means of mediating with the past where it is imagination and "contemporary interest which takes the archaeologist to the material past".¹² The absence of a performance tradition, patchy survival rates of musical scores or visual sources for gestures, pose considerable practical issues when attempting performance of early nineteenth-century French melodrama. This article explores how the idea

⁹ Robert K. Sarlós, "Performance Reconstruction: The Vital Link between Past and Future," in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, ed. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 201.

¹⁰ Katherine Newey, "Embodied History: Reflections on the Jane Scott Project," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 67.

¹¹ Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology: Disciplinary Dialogues* (London: Routledge, 2001); *Experimental Archaeology: Replicating Past Objects, Behaviors, and Processes*, ed. James R. Mathieu (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2002).

¹² Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, 11.

of archaeology as a metaphor for our work helped us reach a clearer understanding of how text, music, and genre intertwine.

Theater was an important tool for Napoleon Bonaparte but it has been neglected by scholars who have focused instead on French Revolutionary theater.¹³ Opera has benefited from monograph-length works from a range of scholars, but other genres are restricted to isolated studies.¹⁴ And yet the First Empire is a period when theater flourished, and when its foremost dramatic form, melodrama, was exported around the world. To redress the imbalance in scholarship, the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council funded two projects at the University of Warwick between 2013 and 2017. The first, “French Theatre of the Napoleonic Era,” revitalized the study of texts and expanded our knowledge of the period by exploring issues of genre, repertoire, censorship, and intercultural exchange.¹⁵ It also made an important contribution to practice-based research on melodrama with the aforementioned workshop comparing the music for the English adaptation of Pixérécourt’s *La forteresse du Danube* with one of the surviving French scores, directed by Gilli Bush-Bailey and benefitting from methodological approaches tested in Bush-Bailey and Jacky Bratton’s Jane Scott project and by Jens Hesselager’s work on Pixérécourt.¹⁶ The second project, “Staging Napoleonic Theatre,” focused on performance, with productions of two early nineteenth-century

¹³ For an état présent see the introduction to Clare Siviter, *Tragedy and Nation in the Age of Napoleon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020).

¹⁴ On opera, see for instance David Chaillou, *Napoléon et l’Opéra. La politique sur la scène, 1810–1815* (Paris: Fayard, 2004) and Annelies Andries, “Modernizing Spectacle: The Opéra in Napoléon’s Paris” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2018).

¹⁵ Principal outputs include Katherine Astbury, “Présentation de *La forteresse du Danube*,” in Pixérécourt, *Mémoires*, vol. 3, 1804–1808, 263–289; Katherine Astbury and Devon Cox, “Re-Examining the Sources for the Prisoner-of-War Theatre at Portchester Castle,” in *Ser prisionero de guerra entre la Ilustración y Napoleón. Una aproximación por casos particulares*, ed. Evaristo C. Martínez-Radio (Madrid: Sílex, forthcoming); Devon Cox, “Stages of Captivity: Napoleonic Prisoners of War & their Theatricals, 1808–1814” (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2017); Vincenzo De Santis, “La tragédie à Paris en 1809. Débats esthétiques et répertoire théâtral,” in *Fièvre et vie du théâtre sous la Révolution française et l’Empire*, ed. Thibaut Julian and Vincenzo De Santis (Paris: Garnier, 2019), 179–193; Hambridge and Hicks, *Melodramatic Moment*; Siviter, *Tragedy and Nation in the Age of Napoleon*.

¹⁶ Jens Hesselager, “Sonorizing Melodramatic Stage Directions: The ‘Reflexive Performance’ as a Way of Approaching Nineteenth-Century French Melodrama,” *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 23 (2011): 20–30.

French melodramas for the public.¹⁷ The first was a three-act melodrama, *Roseliska ou amour, haine et vengeance*, written and performed by French prisoners of war at Portchester Castle in 1810, the second a community “performance in a week” (the cast was in fact together for just six days) of one of the most successful melodramas of the early nineteenth century, Pixierécourt’s *La forteresse du Danube* (1804) at the Georgian Theatre Royal in Richmond, North Yorkshire.

These projects were rooted in a desire to recontextualize the plays, particularly in the case of the site-specific prisoner-of-war play;¹⁸ like Pearson and Shanks, we are interested in the “connections between cultural production and its contexts” and the “ramifications of social, cultural, political and historical context upon the nature, form and function of performance.”¹⁹ The notion of archaeology as a process of “making something of what is left of the past” has therefore provided a way of approaching theater of the Napoleonic era.²⁰ In building on Bratton, Bush-Bailey, and Hesselager we acknowledge our debt to their methods—built, as Hesselager puts it, around “trying out ideas, analytically”—but also go beyond their model of experimental workshops to performance-events in front of a non-specialist general public.²¹ In so doing, we had to move from hypotheses to decisions, a process which involved above all the professional directors of the two plays, Kate Howard of the company Past Pleasures for *Roseliska* and Sarah Wynne Kordas for *The Fortress on the Danube* who had the difficult task of taking the audience on an unfamiliar journey through early melodrama.

¹⁷ In addition to the two performances, principal outputs include Katherine Astbury and Diane Tisdall, “Une exploration du mélodrame parisien à travers la représentation d’une pièce des prisonniers de guerre du château de Portchester en 1810: *Roseliska ou amour, haine et vengeance*,” in *Musique de scène dans le théâtre parlé de Diderot à Hugo*, ed. Patrick Taïeb and Olivier Bara (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, forthcoming); Katherine Astbury and Diane Tisdall, “Sonorising *La forteresse du Danube*: Functions of Music in Parisian and Provincial Melodrama of the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Studi francesi* 191 (2020): 348–360.

¹⁸ It lies outside the scope of this article to explore in full the nature of early French prisoner-of-war or the particular context of the theater at Portchester and how it enabled the prisoners to “reconnect with a sense of home, preserving a French identity under threat from prolonged captivity” (Cox, “Stages of Captivity,” 240). See also Astbury and Tisdall, “Une exploration du mélodrame parisien.”

¹⁹ Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, xviii, xiv.

²⁰ Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, 50.

²¹ Hesselager, “Sonorizing Melodramatic Stage Directions,” 23.

Text

Excavating a forgotten period in theater history (there is no calendar of performances for the Napoleonic period for instance), forgotten plays (there are few modern editions), and a genre typically dismissed as staged morality for a post-Revolutionary nation is a challenge.²² The starting point for our two performances was the two play text manuscripts which lend themselves to reflections on sources, intertextuality, the importance of music in the development of melodrama, the role of politics, as well as the layers that make up performance, and the research was shared with the professional directors. Reading from the manuscript of *La forteresse du Danube* allows us to see the process of writing the play and therefore unveil some of the practical and socio-political considerations with which the playwright was grappling, although the 1805 printed edition is also invaluable.²³

Most notably the manuscript indicates that Pixierécourt originally intended to perform the play at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique and had allocated roles to the resident actors before changing his mind and taking the play to the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin.²⁴ The change of theater resulted in changes to the content of the play as Pixierécourt adapted his writing for the comic talents of the main actors at the new venue. The manuscript thus highlights the importance of the comic elements, which are the aspect of Pixierécourtian melodrama that modern critics tend to

²² Scholars from Willie G. Hartog onwards have seen Pixierécourtian melodrama as “une sorte de propagande de la vertu;” Hartog, *Guilbert de Pixierécourt: sa vie, son mélodrame, sa technique et son influence* (Paris: Champion, 1913), 212. Recent scholarship on Pixierécourt in the Garnier critical edition, the chapters in *Melodramatic Voices: Understanding Music Drama*, ed. Sarah Hibberd (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), and Hambridge and Hicks, *Melodramatic Moment* have done much to embrace a more interdisciplinary approach which is leading to a new appreciation of the aesthetics of melodrama. This article has benefited from extensive conversations with a vast range of scholars in the field, especially through the workshop elements of the project, and we are grateful to all those who have supported our work in the last decade.

²³ Pixierécourt added stage directions to the published edition to give guidance to actors in the provinces on how to convey the character development as he intended. See Astbury's critical edition in Pixierécourt, *Mélodrames*, vol. 3, 291–411 for details. The final edition overseen by Pixierécourt, published in 1841, contains a number of changes reflecting the evolution of the genre over the decades.

²⁴ There is no documentary evidence for the belated change of theater. The directors of the Porte Saint-Martin were trying to restore its fortunes and a new Pixierécourt melodrama would be guaranteed to pull in an audience so it is likely that they made an offer he couldn't refuse.

play down the most, focusing instead on melodramas as morality plays for the masses.²⁵

Roseliska ou amour, haine et vengeance, which was written and performed by Jean-Baptiste Louis Lafontaine and François Mouillefarine alongside other French prisoners of war at Portchester Castle in 1810, only survives in manuscript form. This meant that there were no issues with competing editions, but we did need to make use of other manuscript material held alongside it in the Victoria & Albert theatre collection to understand better the nature of the theater built at Portchester and therefore the parameters of the performance. The memoir writer Joseph Quantin, held at Portchester in 1810–1814 and involved in the theatricals, described the building as a “petit prodige,” declaring that “le théâtre était aussi bien machiné que ceux de la capitale” (The theater was as well-equipped as those in the capital),²⁶ a statement seemingly corroborated by a contemporary account of the theater in the *Hampshire Telegraph* which reported that

The French Prisoners at Portchester have fitted up a Theatre in the Castle, which they have decorated in a style far surpassing anything of the kind that could possibly be expected. ... The Pantomimes which they have brought forward, are not excelled by those performed in London.²⁷

The curtain resembled that of the Théâtre de la Cité with a view from the Pont-Neuf of key Parisian landmarks, including the Louvre and the Tuileries palace.²⁸ This meant that the theater became a space in which the prison-

²⁵ While recent French scholarship has remarked on the background in pantomime of leading melodrama actors such as Tautin—see the articles by Sylviane Robardey-Eppstein and Emmanuelle Delattre-Destemberg in “Le jeu de l’acteur de mélodrame,” special issue, *Revue d’histoire du théâtre* 274, no. 2 (2017)—on the whole French scholarship does not make as much of the mix of the comic and the serious as scholars of British melodrama, as it often focuses on the genre’s violence or its ideology instead. Jean-Marie Thomasseau’s groundbreaking *Le Mélodrame sur les scènes parisiennes de Coelina (1800) à LAuberge des Adrets (1827)* (Lille, Service de reproduction des thèses de l’université de Lille III, 1974) and Julia Przybos’s *L’Entreprise mélodramatique*, (Paris: Corti, 1987) are emblematic in this regard. Only with Frédéric Le Maître’s interpretation of Robert Macaire in *LAuberge des Adrets* in 1823 do French scholars focus on the comic in melodrama. See for instance Marie-Ève Therenty, “Un comique trans: Robert Macaire. Transmédialité et transgénéricité d’une figure nationale,” *Insignis* numéro 1 (2010): *Trans(e)*, 25-35.

²⁶ Joseph Quantin, *Trois ans de séjour en Espagne, dans l’intérieur du pays, sur les pontons, à Cadix, et dans l’île de Cabrera* (Paris: J. Brianchon, 1823), II: 135.

²⁷ *Hampshire Telegraph*, January 7, 1811.

²⁸ See Louis François Gille, *Mémoires d’un conscrit de 1808*, ed. Philippe Gille (Paris: Vic-

ers could reaffirm their Frenchness, reinforced by performing Parisian hits in French, and mitigate the trauma of imprisonment, not least by exploring the theme of imprisonment and escape. The nostalgic recollections of home in the décor and on stage also reinforced the emotional ties binding the prisoners together.

The calendar of performances established by Devon Cox from playbills shows that the prisoners were performing twice a week and had a predilection for Pixérécourt melodramas.²⁹ The rhythm of performances offers an explanation for the rather rushed ending to the manuscript of *Roseliska* which overall seems reminiscent of Pixérécourt, although in fact the inspiration for the play comes from E. F. Varez and Armand Séville's *Métusko, ou les Polonais*, a melodrama based on the 1800 novel of the same name by Pigault-Lebrun and which premiered at the Théâtre de la Gaîté on July 23, 1808. As this premiere was eight months after those at Portchester had marched into Spain to fight in the Peninsular wars (they were captured at Bailén in July 1808), the assertion, in one of the prisoners' memoirs, that newly published texts were being sent to the prisoners from Paris, is corroborated.³⁰ The two plays open in a similar way, suggesting that the prisoners were not simply relying on a memory of the Pigault-Lebrun tale from a decade earlier. The two play texts do subsequently diverge significantly and *Roseliska* is only an adaptation in the very loosest sense. There are a small number of music cues listed in the manuscript, but there are also a significant number of lines indicating the arrival of a character on scene, such as this between two of the servants from act 1, scene 2.

FRESCA: Si fait je te parlais ben sérieusement d'ailleurs (*musique*) quelqu'un s'approche!

WALKO: C'est Mme La Comtesse.³¹

The repetition of this type of "identification" exchange seemed clunky, even amateurish when reading the text, but during rehearsals for the performance of *Roseliska* in the keep at Portchester Castle in 2017, it became clear that the acoustics of the stone walls meant that lines spoken on the stage would carry to the floor above. Indicating who is coming onto stage,

tor-Havard, 1892), 269; for details of the Théâtre de la Cité curtain, see Louis-Henry Lecomte, *Histoire des théâtres de Paris. Le Théâtre de la Cité 1792–1807* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1910), 3.

²⁹ Cox, "Stages of Captivity", 269–71.

³⁰ Joseph Quantin, *Trois ans de séjour*, II, 146.

³¹ *Roseliska*, Victoria and Albert Museum archives, THM/415/1/3.

or who is talking helps an audience who can hear the performance—but not see it—to follow the plot. Considering sound in the context of performance in the original setting has allowed us to reconceptualize not just the play but also the day-to-day experiences of the French conscripts held at Portchester.

As Emilio Sala has shown, French melodrama of the early nineteenth century was “*toujours fondé sur la rencontre entre musique et action dramatique*.”³² Without reducing Pixérécourtian melodrama to its ubiquitous *tableaux*, which performance has shown are not as static as critics make out,³³ it is nevertheless essential to explore what the actor brings to the non-verbal spaces in the text in particular and before looking at how those non-verbal spaces and the script interact with the score.

Gesture

The importance of gestural expression to melodrama has been widely acknowledged in theater scholarship.³⁴ On the one hand, large and stylized gestures underscored the “stereotypical and morally defined” characterization, starkly distinguishing the hero from the villain, the good from the bad.³⁵ At the same time, elaborate bodily expressions have been shown to contribute to that which scholars such as Matthew Buckley and Jeffrey Cox, building on Peter Brooks, have identified as the genre’s historically-condi-

³² Emilio Sala, “Mélodrame: définitions et métamorphoses d’un genre quasi-opératique,” *Revue de musicologie* 84.2 (1998), 235-246 (242).

³³ See Katherine Astbury, “Le tableau dans les premiers mélodrames de Pixérécourt” in the forthcoming *Mélanges en l’honneur de Pierre Frantz*, ed. by Sophie Marchand, Michel Delon and Renaud Bret-Vitoz (Paris: Garnier, 2021).

³⁴ See most recently the special issue “Le Jeu de l’acteur de mélodrame,” *Revue d’histoire du théâtre* 274 (avril-juin 2017) but also Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*, with a new preface (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995); Frederick Burwick, *Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), 80-114; Burwick ‘Georgian Theories of the Actor’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1732-1832*, ed. Julia Swindells and David Taylor (Oxford: OUP, 2014), 177-191; George Taylor, ‘Melodramatic Acting’, in *Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, 112-125; Patricia Smyth, “Representing Authenticity: Attitude and Gesture in Delaroché and Melodrama,” *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 1 (2011): 31-53; and Giannandrea Poesio, “The Gesture and the Dance,” *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 40-50.

³⁵ See David Mayer, “Encountering Melodrama,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, ed. Kerry Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 148-150.

tioned affective poignancy; its ability to leave audiences “emotionally ... intoxicated.”³⁶ After the trauma of the Revolution, melodrama, as Brooks has comprehensively argued, sought to make the unspeakable speakable by articulating emotions and meanings too powerful or bewildering for words. The confusion and anxiety provoked by the Revolution was unleashed through the intense gestural outpourings of emotion that worked to provide vicarious release to the audience’s own pent-up feelings.³⁷

That melodrama relied heavily on “non-verbal loci” of meaning, established not only through gestural spectacle, but also by powerful musical accompaniments (to which we shall turn shortly), adds fuel to the suggested inadequacy of centering melodrama scholarship around analyses of texts, and foregrounds the fruitfulness of Pearson’s and Shanks’ model of archaeological exploration as a framework for research-led performance. Pearson and Shanks ascribe to the archaeologist the role of working “with material traces, with evidence, in order to create something—a meaning, a narrative, an image—which stands for the past in the present.”³⁸ When working with historical plays, Pearson and Shanks show the most profitable traces and evidence to survive “as a cluster of narratives. Those of the watchers and of the watched.” Most commonly, these narratives are immortalized “in the writings of critics” because “their high rate of preservation in libraries and cutting agencies.”³⁹ These sources must be interpreted in conjunction with the play as it is printed, as they go some way towards painting a picture that moves beyond the source *text*, to encapsulate the source *world* of which the text was but a part.

For the researcher of gesture in nineteenth-century melodrama, several such narratives exist. Recent theater scholarship has drawn attention to the influx of acting manuals addressing gesture that pervaded Europe in the late eighteenth century. These manuals reflect a number of social and cultural innovations, including nascent theories pertaining to science

³⁶ Matthew Buckley, “Early English Melodrama,” in Williams, *Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, 13. See also Jeffrey N. Cox, “The Death of Tragedy; or, the Birth of Melodrama,” in *The Performing Century: Nineteenth-Century Theatre’s History*, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 161–181.

³⁷ See Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 4 and Brooks, “Melodrama, Body, Revolution,” in *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, ed. Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1994), 11–24. Also on melodrama and trauma see Matthew Buckley, “Refugee Theatre: Melodrama and Modernity’s Loss,” *Theatre Journal* 61, no. 2 (2009): 175–190.

³⁸ Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, 11.

³⁹ Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, 57.

and physiognomy, growing theater sizes, and visual illustrations found in novels and journals.⁴⁰ Giannandrea Poesio has also highlighted the usefulness of contemporary European dance manuals, ballet and opera treatises, given their considerable indebtedness to Andrea Perrucci's *Dell'arte rappresentativa* (1699), the ultimate manual for the commedia dell'arte from which melodramatic gesture took much inspiration.⁴¹ Aiming to acknowledge and exploit the wealth of narratives on offer to us, a comprehensive range of historical materials (reviews, eye-witness accounts, theatrical correspondence) were workshopped with our casts during rehearsals. Of our many sources, this article will pay particular attention to Johann Jakob Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785), translated into French as *Idées sur le geste et l'action théâtrale* (1788–1789) and adapted in English by Henry Siddons as *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action* (1807) as well as drawings of French performances of Pixérécourt's melodramas and those of his contemporaries, accessed via the Bibliothèque nationale de France.⁴²

Melodramatic gesture was addressed and explored early on in our rehearsals for both *Roseliska* and *La forteresse*. Illustrations and extensive descriptions of gesture from Engel and Siddons were introduced to our casts on day one. With different character types being recognized in melodrama by a distinguishing set of gestural features, or, to use Taylor's phrase, by "legible emblems as formulaic as the black and white hats of classic Westerns," the manuals were used initially to grant our actors a sense of the gestural motifs defining the stock figure they had been asked to perform.⁴³ At our opening rehearsal of *Roseliska* for instance, the actor playing the villain, Polowitz, was tasked with consulting and embodying illustrations of emotions associated with villainy, including "Menace" and "Anger." In doing so, he was able to familiarize himself physically with the clenched fists, hunched shoulders, rounded back, taut muscles and strained facial features that typically characterize the melodramatic villain.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ See Burwick, *Romantic Drama*, 80–114; Burwick, "Georgian Theories of the Actor"; and Taylor, "Melodramatic Acting."

⁴¹ See Poesio, "The Gesture and the Dance."

⁴² *Idées sur le geste et l'action théâtrale, par M. Engel ... le tout traduit de l'Allemand*, 2 vols. (Paris: Barrois, 1788–1789); Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action, Adapted to the English Drama. From a Work on the Same Subject by M. Engel* (London: Richard Phillips, 1807).

⁴³ Taylor, "Melodramatic Acting," 113.

⁴⁴ Alongside the works by Engel/Siddons, descriptions of gestural poses from *The Thes-*

We worked also on day one with early nineteenth-century prints capturing poses enacted by characters featured in performances of melodrama staged in Parisian theaters. Despite the frequency with which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century acting manuals were translated from one European language to another, scholars including David Mayer have emphasized that “different national cultures ... imposed their preferences and priorities in terms of how gesture ... might be employed.”⁴⁵ Keen to pay homage to a gestural language specifically indicative of French theatrical traditions, we gave prints produced by engraver Aaron Martinet to our *forteresse* cast, so that they could see postures and bodily expressions depicted by actors who featured in productions of the very play we were re-staging.⁴⁶ These were equally profitable to our *Roseliska* cast, as they granted a template for melodramatic gesture that was both temporally and nationally informed.

Actors were given prints delineating characters of pertinence to the roles in which they had been cast. For example, the actors embodying our plays’ protagonists (Olivier in *La forteresse* and Stanislas in *Roseliska*) were asked to study and enact illustrations of heroism exemplified by prints of Abelino from Pixérécourt’s *L’homme à trois visages ou Le proscrit* (created 1801), at the moment that he promises to liberate Venice,⁴⁷ and of Judes from Frédéric Dupetit-Méré’s *La forêt d’Edimbourg ou Les écossais* (created 1807), as he makes his magnanimous declaration “Je m’expose à la mort la plus terrible en protégeant votre fuite.”⁴⁸ Presenting upright and open postures, and conveying noble attitudes, these figures contrasted overtly with the round-shouldered, defensive and guarded-looking villains presented by Martinet’s print of Deifrène as Don Carlos in René Périn’s *Héléonor de*

pian Preceptor (1810) and William Scott’s *Lessons in Elocution* (1779) were also shared with our casts to grant further insight into the meticulousness of instruction around actors’ bodily expressions.

⁴⁵ David Mayer, “Encountering Melodrama,” 152.

⁴⁶ A print, for instance, of the actor Talon as the *Forteresse’s* *niais* Thomas was used to inform the postures and facial features that came to define our actor’s interpretation and embodiment of the comic figure. “Talon dans *La forteresse du Danube*,” costume print, [1805], 4-ICO COS-1 (1,33), Département des Arts du spectacle, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6400069n>.

⁴⁷ “Tautin dans *L’homme à trois visages*. Costume d’Abelino,” costume print, [1801], 4-ICO COS-1 (1,56), Département des Arts du spectacle, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6400415g>.

⁴⁸ “Marty dans Judes de *La forêt d’Edimbourg ou Les écossais*,” costume print, [1806], 4-ICO COS-1 (1,57), Département des Arts du spectacle, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6400215s>.

Portugal (created 1807).⁴⁹ These images allowed our casts to create clear gestural distinctions between the plays' heroes and villains in alliance with historical and national conventions.

While, at this early stage of the rehearsal process, we encouraged from our casts little more than a replication of the gestures, we soon progressed to exercises that demanded far greater physical and mental exertion. We were fully aware that the "material traces" with which we were working, while certainly surpassing the information about gesture available in play-texts, were not without limitation. As Pearson and Shanks identify, it is impossible to locate a single delineation or description of a past event which "appropriates singular authority," as "the same event is experienced, remembered, characterised in a multitude of different ways."⁵⁰ In the context of performance, where the same event is repeated night after night, images and accounts of events captured in print are going to differ based not only on the spectator's/author's preferences, but also on when and where the performance was viewed. This latter variable was of particular concern to us. Just as *Practical Illustrations* reflects the types of gestures witnessed and encouraged within the capacious arenas of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, so the drawings accessed via the Bibliothèque nationale depict stagings in large Parisian theaters, including the Théâtre de la Porte St Martin, the original venue of *La forteresse*. Contrastingly, our productions were to be staged in far smaller venues than those towards which nineteenth-century acting manuals were commonly geared. We thus had to encourage actors to see that while it was vital for them to uphold the illustrations' unambiguous depiction of emotion and characterization, such clarity could be achieved with less exaggerated gestures than those required in the commodious playhouses of London and Paris.

This was not the only challenge we had to address. In his reflections on the Jane Scott project, Poesio highlights two further restrictions attached to the types of visual sources we were using. First, he claims, images of stationary figures create a false impression of melodrama's motionlessness: "little can be derived," he argues, "from those printed sources in terms of dynamic, use of space, body weight, breathing process, effort and gestural accent."⁵¹ Second, and perhaps the biggest hurdle to overcome, Poesio insists that as

⁴⁹ "Defrêne dans le rôle de don Carlos, d'*Héléonor de Portugal*," costume print, [1807], 4-ICO COS-1 (1,100), Département des Arts du spectacle, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6400416w>.

⁵⁰ Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, 57.

⁵¹ Poesio, "The Gesture and the Dance," 40–41.

“expressive fixed gestures and postures depicting emotions [and] feelings ... are regarded today as part of a somewhat ridiculous and obsolete tradition” entirely averse to naturalism, a modern-day cast asked to model their gestures on such images is liable to present a “lifeless mimetic reproduction of the available illustrations or a slavish application of the given formulae,” unable to relate to these in any meaningful way.⁵² Each of these difficulties were meticulously grappled with throughout our rehearsal processes.

First, the idea of motionlessness. While gestural fluidity is indeed a defining feature of melodrama, the visual poignancy that the genre achieved through “held attitudes” should not be downplayed. As Taylor has shown, when acted well, these “would strike the audience with such power that they reward it with a round of applause.”⁵³ The images therefore provided useful inspiration for our scenes of tableaux. Our conclusion to *La fortresse*, for instance, which sees Evrard freed from unjust imprisonment, was informed in part by Siddons’ illustration of “Joy,” which was used as a template for the actor playing Evrard’s daughter, Célestine. Similarly, at the end of act 1 of *Roseliska*, when the eponymous heroine is captured by the villain Polowitz’s men, Siddons’ delineation of “Terror” was drawn upon to shape the statuesque communication of fear conveyed by the actor playing Stanislas, Roseliska’s husband.

These examples of course by no means negate the challenges highlighted by Poesio: the need to achieve gestural flow, and the simultaneous need to ensure that the gestures produced by our casts didn’t feel and appear “ridiculous” and “lifeless,” were focal concerns of ours. As for putting poses into motion, on day one of rehearsals, after having our actors imitate the illustrations of gestures best befitting their characters by recreating the static pose, we then had them bring the image to life, transforming the drawing from static illustration into living breathing form. Actors were asked to walk around the rehearsal space, interact with fellow cast members, and respond to varying scenarios (running late for an appointment, receiving bad news, etc.), while upholding the fundamentals of the image. Exemplifying the results of such a task, for the actor playing Polowitz, the walk manifested itself as a type of stagger, in which the fists remained clenched, the shoulders remained hunched and muscles clenched; when interacting with fellow cast members, the actor glared with the lowered eyebrows and strict frown seen in the illustrations of “Menace” and “Anger,” and with

⁵² Poesio, “The Gesture and the Dance”, 40, 47.

⁵³ Taylor, “Melodramatic Acting,” 118.

the folded arms and defensive posture seen in the drawing of Don Carlos; and when requested to react to a piece of good news, the smile produced was accompanied by a maintained narrowness of the eyes and only a slight relaxation of the fists, which resulted in a type of smirk entirely befitting a scheming melodramatic villain.

While this exercise helped actors to uphold consistent gestural characterization during the plays' more "straightforward" scenes of dialogue and action, more complex forms of gesture were demanded of our actors during the plays' moments of extended mime and dumb show. As will be explored in greater detail later, when rehearsing these scenes, the relationship between gesture and music became immediately apparent: in agreement with Poesio's insistence on the historical relationship between melodramatic gesture and dance, we found that music was crucial in facilitating the actor's fluidity of movement.⁵⁴ This did not mean, however, that it was fruitless for actors to rehearse these scenes when the orchestra was absent. It was clear that, in part at least, the gestural flow achieved by actors when moving to music resulted from the performers' ability to engage emotively with the score. And this precise capacity for emotional engagement—accompanied, somewhat paradoxically, by command and control—came to underpin the approach that we adopted when working with actors on bodily expression: both in tableaux, and scenes of mime and dumb show.

The potential for stylized gestures to appear "ridiculous" and "lifeless" is not unique to the twenty-first century, but was highlighted at the time of the plays' debuts. In his translation of Engel, Siddons uses the phrase "false gesture" to refer to bodily expressions that illustrate words spoken, rather than emotions felt. Such gestures, Siddons argues, convey an emptiness and mechanicalism that detracts from intended seriousness.⁵⁵ This theory was widely shared among nineteenth-century theater commentators: the *Thespian Preceptor* (1810) warned that when conveying an action as simple as "asking or replying to a common question, a majestic swing of the arm would appear a burlesque."⁵⁶ Nineteenth-century acting manuals recurrently instruct that the surest way to avoid such mechanical (and consequently farcical-looking) gestures is to allow bodily movements to emanate from authentic, deep-seated emotion. Leman Thomas Rede's *The Road to*

⁵⁴ See the "Music" section of this essay.

⁵⁵ See Siddons, *Practical Illustrations*, 213–243.

⁵⁶ *The Thespian Preceptor; or, A Full Display of the Scenic Art* (London: Joshua Belcher, 1810), 16.

the Stage (1827) suggests that “if the actor cannot feel” the emotion, “it will be useless to attempt to make him run the gauntlet through a set of emotions by rule.”⁵⁷ What can be identified here is a clear and perhaps surprising anticipation of that which we would recognize today as Stanislavski’s technique of emotion memory. Indeed, this relationship between melodramatic gesture and naturalistic theater practice was acknowledged by Stanislavski himself: in 1924, while directing a performance of a melodrama, Stanislavski reportedly instructed his cast that “[in melodrama] the right movement and right external actions follow from the correct organic state.” Without entering into this state, “you will have only the external form.” Therefore, each time you externalize your characters’ feelings, you must “think only of the personal equivalent that can generate this emotion in you.”⁵⁸ As the quoted advice indicates, despite its deviance from contemporary understandings of naturalism, melodrama relies on similarly naturalistic methods for its production of appropriately affective gestures.

The relationship between melodrama and naturalism is of course an intricate one. An interrogation of this complex marriage has famously been offered by Eric Bentley who writes:

I am arguing ... that melodrama is actually more natural than Naturalism... It corresponds to an important aspect of reality. It is the spontaneous, uninhibited way of seeing things. ... Melodramatic acting, with its large gestures and grimaces and its declamatory style of speech is not an exaggeration of our dreams but a duplication of them. In that respect, melodrama *is the Naturalism of the dream life*. ... Melodrama is not so much exaggerated as uninhibited.⁵⁹

As Bentley’s hypothesis indicates, the key difference between modern notions of naturalism and the naturalism of melodrama lies in the version of reality that melodrama sought to depict. To use Cox’s definition, it “is not a pictorial but an experiential realism.”⁶⁰ By tapping into the repressed and raw emotion that each of us possess, what the actor of melodrama manages to reveal through gesture is a type of hyper-reality: it is the reality of the

⁵⁷ Leman Thomas Rede, *The Road to the Stage; or, The Performer’s Preceptor* (London: Joseph Smith, 1827), 77.

⁵⁸ Nikolai M. Gorchakov, *Stanislavsky Directs*, trans. Miriam Goldina, ed. Virginia Stevens (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1954), 292–293.

⁵⁹ Eric Bentley, *The Life of the Drama* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), 215–216, 205, 206.

⁶⁰ Cox, “Death of Tragedy”, 170.

psyche, the uninhibited expression of commonly concealed emotions that are too powerful for words.

How then do you go about encouraging twenty-first-century actors to express themselves on stage in a way that, to quote Brooks, demands that their bodies “behave nearly hysterically, if by hysteria we understand a condition of bodily writing, a condition in which the repressed affect is represented on the body”?⁶¹ The decisions we made about this were by no means instantaneous or fixed. Rather, we continually learned throughout the project which practices and terminologies proved most effective to our casts, before resolving eventually on a historically-informed acting method that seemed to provide an apt framework for bridging the gap between stylized gesture and unaffected emotion.

Despite the anticipation of Stanislavski’s methods detected in nineteenth-century acting manuals, invocations of Stanislavski were used only sparingly throughout rehearsals, and his system was not encouraged as a framework on which to draw on performance nights. These decisions were encouraged and reinforced by scenarios that occurred during an early rehearsal of *Roseliska* and a pre-rehearsal workshop with our *Forteresse* cast. In the former instance, while one of our actors was rehearsing a gestural monologue, he proved at first unwilling to externalize his anxieties about the safety of the eponymous heroine without a copy of *Practical Illustrations* close by for reference. When the director encouraged the performer to allow the actions to spring from authentic emotion—like he would do, she said, if employing the methods of Stanislavski—the actor responded: “but this is not naturalism.” Evidently, what we had here was a clash between the trained actor’s understanding of modern notions of naturalism, and the stylized naturalism of melodrama. Though both forms of theater need to be rooted in emotion in order to become effective, the actor could not easily reconcile the two, as he considered the pictorial demands of melodrama to depart entirely from those of the naturalistic styles which he had been taught. Thus, the reference to Stanislavski served to confuse, rather than define, his gestural expression, and in fact brought his acting closer to that of divergent modern-day forms.

When working with our amateur cast for *La forteresse*, the allusion to and use of Stanislavski-esque techniques again proved somewhat problematic, though for entirely different reasons. While, interestingly, the *Forteresse* cast expressed far fewer reservations about externalizing emotion in the bold

⁶¹ Brooks, “Melodrama, Body, Revolution,” 21.

manner required of melodrama than their professional *Roseliska* counterparts (a result that seems to have stemmed from the lesser tension apparent to untrained actors between modern-day naturalism and the hyper-naturalism we sought to encourage), the actors' willingness to delve unreservedly into deep emotional recesses while enacting scenes from the script proved at times unproductive. Exemplifying this, as part of a pre-rehearsal workshop/audition with our eventual *Forteresse* cast, during a run-through of the scene in which Alix, the faithful and loving servant of the imprisoned Evrard, is required to respond emotively through gesture to a letter seeming to confirm that all is lost for her master, the actor playing Alix was overcome with emotion, and was forced to cease the gestural display of grief that she had initiated, as, she informed us, "I tapped into too raw an emotion."

This highly emotive style of acting adopted by the actor had been encouraged by one of our warm-up exercises at the workshop/audition. Inspired by Dick McCaw's essay "Training for Melodrama", we initiated our workshop with a series of exercises based around mime.⁶² Adapting McCaw's exercises to home in on the unreservedness of melodramatic gesture, we asked our performers to externalize their feelings about the forthcoming audition. We encouraged them physically to express these emotions not as they would do in the context of everyday conversation, but to allow these emotions to manifest themselves freely without repression or inhibition. The point of the task was to encourage actors to see that, in melodrama, one's deepest feelings and passions are to be engaged with wholeheartedly: nothing is to be held back. The actor playing Alix had used the technique to inform her performance, as we had intended, but her engagement with raw, spontaneously-derived emotion was a hindrance. This alerted us to the need to rehearse the gesture thoroughly and meticulously once it had been found so that by performance night it was derived from imitation of the original, emotionally-guided gesture, rather than manifesting from a fresh experience of the underlying passion.⁶³ No longer spontaneous and unaffected, the actors remain in full control of their acting, and are thereby able to replicate with command the

⁶² See Dick McCaw, "Training for Melodrama," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 62–65.

⁶³ As Diderot advocated in his *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, which was a well-used treatise among nineteenth-century actors, and a useful source for us. On varying interpretations of the reception of the *Paradoxe* in the nineteenth century see Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion*, 157–159; Graham Ley, "The Significance of Diderot," *New Theatre Quarterly* 11, no. 44 (1995): 352–353; Burwick, *Romantic Drama*, 80–114; and Taylor, "Melodramatic Acting" 112–125.

melodrama's stylized form, while simultaneously capturing the essence of raw, uninhibited passion that allows for the genre's intensity of affect.

Poesio emphasizes the need to see nineteenth-century acting manuals as descriptive, rather than prescriptive sources, and thus to be utilized by modern-day actors with "interpretative freedom."⁶⁴ Indeed, only through such freedom of appropriation are melodramatic gestures capable of being adorned with an appropriately affective function. While it is of course impossible to revive for twenty-first-century theatergoers an affective experience mirroring that of melodrama's original spectators, the convincing articulation of a feeling that "refuses repression, or, rather, repeatedly strives towards moments where repression is broken through," is accessible to a universal audience.⁶⁵ As Bentley puts it, melodrama depicts a psychological state that is common to us all: "what we all have are the magnified feelings of the child, the neurotic, the savage."⁶⁶ Consequently, by mastering gestural expressions of uninhibited passion, it becomes possible for melodrama to function in the present as a form which retains emotive appeal. Like Pearson's and Shanks's definition of archaeology, research-informed performance "is a practice of cultural production, a contemporary material practice which works on and with the traces of the past and within which the archaeologist is implicated as an active agent of interpretation."⁶⁷ Working with materials pertaining to gesture in a pictorial and experiential sense, we were able to create a version of a historical genre that maintained the key stylistic features of the original, while allowing for an affective impact that speaks to the repressed emotions of its new, contemporary interpreters. That affective impact was significantly enhanced by music and it is to the function of music in the two performances that we turn for our final section.

Music

Pixerécourt's *La forteresse du Danube* is unusual in that it has four extant scores. The Parisian manuscript is labelled "reprise", but it contains music cues found only in Pixerécourt's manuscript play text and so is probably

⁶⁴ Poesio, "The Gesture and the Dance," 46.

⁶⁵ Brooks, "Melodrama, Body, Revolution," 19.

⁶⁶ Bentley, *Life of the Drama*, 217.

⁶⁷ Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, 11.

that of the Paris premiere, repurposed for the revival.⁶⁸ There are also three manuscripts from the regional theaters of Lille, Avignon and Montpellier.⁶⁹ We chose to work with the Lille score for two key reasons.⁷⁰ The first was that the Georgian Theatre Royal, where we were performing, was a provincial theater. The orchestration for the Lille score—string section, two oboes or clarinets, bassoon, two horns and timpani—fitted best, we felt, in terms of the theater’s size and acoustics. Secondly, the Lille score marked many of the same dramatic moments as the Parisian score.⁷¹ The music also was used similarly to shape stage movement, characterization, and emotional processes. This may suggest that the composer of the Lille score had a certain familiarity with Parisian conventions.

As musical director of the project, Diane Tisdall transcribed the Lille score of *La forteresse* and prepared it for performance. The opportunity to analyze the various functions of melodrama music through the transcription process proved an ideal preparation for her creation of the score for the project’s second melodrama, *Roseliska*. Here lay the crux of our research project. While the Victoria & Albert archives contained a manuscript of the play text for *Roseliska*,⁷² the musical score had not survived. But before we discuss the construction process in more detail, a little background detail is necessary.

Diane constructed a score and then went into a rehearsal period of nine days in London with the director Kate Howard and nine professional actors from the historical interpretation company Past Pleasures.⁷³ She played the music cues on her violin during the rehearsal; the actors used the audio of the score generated by Sibelius software for individual practice. Five profes-

⁶⁸ Musique Mat. TH (99), Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

⁶⁹ *La forteresse du Danube | Mélodrame | de Guilbert Pixérécourt | Mis en Musique [...]*, M 5010, Patrimoine musical, Bibliothèque municipale de Lille; *La forteresse du Danube*, Ms. M. 415, Patrimoine musical, Bibliothèque municipale Ceccano, Avignon; *La forteresse du Danube*, Série R 2/8 (60), Archives municipales de Montpellier.

⁷⁰ The score is signed E. Marty who was the *chef d’orchestre* of the Théâtre de Lille from September 1808 until 1810 and again from April 1814 until at least 1816. See *Tableau de la troupe*, 1T 298 1, Archives du département du Nord, Lille. We are grateful to Cyril Triolaire for providing this information from material gathered for <https://therepsicore.msh.uca.fr/>.

⁷¹ For a more detailed comparison of Parisian and provincial melodrama scores, see Astbury and Tisdall, “Sonorising *La forteresse du Danube*.”

⁷² See note 31.

⁷³ With thanks to King’s College London for providing rehearsal spaces. Cast list: Jeremy Barlow, Richard de Winter, Edward Elgood, Martin Hodgson, JP Lord, James MacLaren, Lachlan McCall, Ellis Pike, John Sandeman.

sional musicians joined rehearsals at Portchester Castle two days before the performance, which Diane again led from the violin.⁷⁴

The score-construction process began with a series of questions: how do you go about identifying which passages of *Roseliska* required music? Was it possible to establish a typology of musical excerpts for these passages? How familiar would the prisoners of war who wrote and performed *Roseliska* have been with Parisian melodrama conventions? The enthusiasm of theater professor Jens Hesselager for an experimental archaeology framework (as described by James R. Mathieu) to test hypotheses about melodrama performance, chimed with our desire to find a way of creating a melodrama score that would allow us to both test our research questions and to perform the whole work for an invited audience.⁷⁵

Hesselager worked with preexisting music in his experiment to sonorize a melodrama scene. In our recreation of the *Roseliska* score we constructed what Mathieu would call a “functional replica.” Excerpts of melodrama music that the original composer and the other prisoners may have known were weaved together—more of this later—to give us the means to test one functional aspect of the score, that is, the relationship between text, gesture, and music and two phenomenological aspects: the choices that the writers and the composer may have made; the knowledge that the actors and musicians may have needed to perform the melodrama. The reconstructed score acted as a multimedia artefact. It started in the hands of Diane as the composer-arranger but as will become clear, the score was also moulded by the actors, director, and musicians during the rehearsal process. The animation of the score-as-artefact by contemporary practitioners (and their interaction with it) thus formed a crucial part of the practice-led research process.⁷⁶ This was both surprising and empowering for the actors, director and musicians, who were expecting to work with a finished product.

Early melodrama was vilified both for being musically formulaic and for its synthesis of features from multiple genres. This contradiction plays out in early nineteenth-century composer Anton Reicha’s bipartite classifica-

⁷⁴ Second violin, Ed McCullagh; Viola, Chris Becket; Cello, Tom Wraith; French horns, Sam Pearce and David Horwich.

⁷⁵ Hesselager, “Sonorizing Melodramatic Stage Directions”; Mathieu, introduction to *Experimental Archaeology*.

⁷⁶ Gilli Bush-Bailey and Jacky Bratton, in collaboration with the musicologists Sarah Hibberd and Nanette Nielsen, also evoke this “fruitful dialogue” in their practice-led research. See the special edition of *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002) and in particular Bush-Bailey, “Still Working It Out,” 7.

tion of melodrama in his composition manual: 1) A one-act piece such as Rousseau's *Pygmalion*, where "the music is in conversation with the actor's monologue ... the composer expresses what happens on stage or within the actor's soul" and 2) long pieces à grand spectacle, with dances, marches and pantomime. Here the music, according to Reicha, had no artistic function or value: "the composer is in charge of selecting what he needs from preexisting scores, for either lack of time or talent to invent it himself."⁷⁷

Reicha's comments are important for two reasons. Firstly, he described the deep-rooted bifurcation of melodrama between Rousseau's philosophical experiment with music and text, from which the origins of early German-language monodrama can be drawn, and "mélodrames à grand spectacle", which, in the hands of Pixierécourt, dominated early nineteenth-century Parisian boulevard theater. But as Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks unpack in the introduction to their edited volume, the genealogy and form of melodrama is much more tangled than the high/low art binary evoked by Reicha. We find their *olla podrida* (Spanish stew) analogy invigorating, opening up the possibility of melodrama as both hybrid—including aspects of pantomime, farce, and historical drama—and conventional—using musical clichés such as low-register instruments and excerpts in a minor key to signal the arrival of the villain, for example.⁷⁸

Reicha's second comment acknowledged how melodrama scores were often written quickly to meet demand and so sometimes recycled music cues. His dig at boulevard composers perhaps came from his perspective as a symphonic one, writing works that were viewed as an entity, with thematic and harmonic threads spinning through them. In forgoing Reicha's expectation of a unified musical work and instead embracing Jacqueline Waeber's concept of musical communication via "the associations of instruments, melodic figures and harmonic effects," we can consider the individual, transient moments of melodrama music.⁷⁹ Without an obligation

⁷⁷ "La musique dialogue avec le monologue de l'acteur ... le compositeur exprime ... ce qui se passe sur la scène, ou dans l'âme de l'acteur." "Le compositeur est le maître de choisir dans les partitions connues ce dont il a besoin, quand il n'a pas le loisir ou le talent d'inventer lui-même." Anton Reicha, *Art du compositeur dramatique ou Cours complet de composition vocale* (Paris: Farrenc, 1833), 107.

⁷⁸ Hambridge and Hicks, "Melodramatic Moment," 20.

⁷⁹ Hambridge and Hicks, "Melodramatic Moment," 21. The reference is to Jacqueline Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte: Le mélodrame, de Rousseau à Schoenberg* (Paris: Van Dieren, 2005) and Waeber, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'unité de mélodie,'" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 62, no. 1 (2009): 79–144.

to build a fixed structure, we create the ideal experimental conditions in which to test our *Roseliska* score, or multimedia artefact. On the other side of the coin, the melodrama formulae, which worked in tension with the turn of the nineteenth-century aesthetic for transcendent rather than specific musical meaning, were a valuable starting point in the score construction process.

In his mention of compositional “talent” (or lack of it), Reicha leads us to a reflection on early nineteenth-century composers and their training. As Diane was a first-time melodrama score composer—she is a musicologist and professional violinist whose last formal composition training was in orchestration classes, as a first-year undergraduate—she was keen to find out about the original composer of *Roseliska*, Marc-Antoine Corret. What skills and knowledge were needed to compose a melodrama score? Corret was twenty-one years’ old, from the Garde de Paris and former member of the Paris Conservatoire.⁸⁰ He was thus a military musician with perhaps a little training in harmony and counterpoint.⁸¹ At Portchester, Corret was the musical director, or *chef d’orchestre*, as well as the composer. This was unusual as he was a horn player; it was usually a violinist who occupied the role. He must have been a more experienced musician than another prisoner of war who was a violinist and also listed as a military musician. While we do not know what class Corret took at the Conservatoire, or how long for—early records are tantalizingly patchy—the presence of one or possibly a family of Corret horn players in boulevard orchestras of the Théâtre de la Porte St Martin and the Théâtre de la Gaîté during this period is certain.⁸² This would lead us to believe that the Corret who travelled to Portchester had some experience of melodrama scores as a professional musician.

A former prisoner, Joseph Quantin, provided a list of prisoner-musicians at Portchester in his memoirs.⁸³ Corret had a violinist, three clarinetists, two flutists, a horn player who doubled as the timpanist and a group of un-

⁸⁰ Frédéric de La Grandville, *Le Conservatoire de musique de Paris (1795–1815): Dictionnaire des élèves et aspirants* (Paris: Institut de Recherche sur le Patrimoine Musical en France, 2014), 139, <https://api.nakala.fr/data/11280%2Fcf10d906/2079fbb15e2a476bfe290f328f539761f9064711>. Marc Antoine Jules Corret or Coret was admitted to the Conservatoire on the 16 Floréal year 8 (6 May 1800); there is no other mention of him.

⁸¹ Corret enrolled at the Conservatoire before formal composition classes had started there.

⁸² *Annuaire dramatique ou Étrennes théâtrales* (Paris: Mme Cavanagh, 1805–1822), s.vv. “Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin,” “Théâtre de la Gaîté.”

⁸³ See note 26.

named “four violins” at his disposal.⁸⁴ This set-up presented a methodological problem. What orchestration should we choose for *Roseliska*? We do not know how the size of orchestra listed by Quantin would have fitted in the performance space. If there had been an orchestra pit, it is long gone and we had to conform to modern health and safety measures, leaving emergency exits clear. It is possible that the “four violins” were a reference to the violin family of instruments (violin, viola, cello). If, however, we chose an orchestration with five violinists (and so no string quartet), should or could we produce a score for this less-than-conventional melodrama orchestra? This configuration might be representative of a group of military musicians that had been shipped around the Mediterranean—these instruments were all portable—but would this be an experimental step too far? By striving to be as historically informed as possible, would it still be possible to ask our larger questions about melodrama, including ones about Waeber’s “associations of instruments?” The final decision was to write a score for a string quartet and two horns. Our choice was based on the common orchestral set-up in provincial theaters at the time, with a nod to Corret as a horn player, and was made in consideration of our future performance conditions.⁸⁵

Our aim was to create a score that evoked a historically grounded sound world. In *Roseliska*’s case this was to be a firmly Parisian “cultural assemblage,” to borrow a phrase from Pearson and Shanks.⁸⁶ The only melody that we know was performed in the play—“Au bas d’un fertile coteau”—was the *air* indicated for the prologue song. Its presence in nineteenth-century song manuals would suggest that it was regularly used in Parisian vaudeville plays during the Napoleonic period.⁸⁷ Although the play was translated into English, we decided to keep the song in French, as a reminder of the play’s original language and sound world.⁸⁸ No other indications of

⁸⁴ Quantin, *Trois ans de séjour*, II: 153.

⁸⁵ The Montpellier score for *La forteresse du Danube*, for example, was written for strings and two horns: the Avignon orchestra contained a flute, a clarinet and a bassoon but they all played an auxiliary role. With thanks to David Charlton and Michael Fend for their thoughts on this subject. Thanks also go to Paul Cott, who generously gave his time to advise on composing for the French horn.

⁸⁶ Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, 64.

⁸⁷ Pierre Capelle, *La clé du caveau à l’usage de tous les chansonniers français, des amateurs, auteurs, acteurs du vaudeville et de tous les amis de la chanson* (Paris: Capelle et Renand, 1811), 338 (n. 794). With thanks to Benoît Louriou and Mark Tatlow for their harmonization and scansion suggestions.

⁸⁸ Translation by Dan Hall. A subsequent workshop with excerpts of *Roseliska* in French would suggest that the relationship between text, music, and gesture is significantly affected by

music are given in the *Roseliska* manuscript but Pixérécourt was the most performed playwright at Portchester, according to the play bills.⁸⁹ It therefore made sense to borrow and arrange excerpts from his melodramas. The scores for Pixérécourt's early melodramas have not survived so we extended the date range slightly and looked for cues that shared dramatic parallels with the *Roseliska* plot in *La femme à deux maris* (Gérardin-Lacour, 1802), *La forteresse du Danube* (Bianchi, 1805), *Robinson Crusoé* (Gérardin-Lacour et Piccinni, 1805), *L'ange tutélaire* (Piccinni, 1808) et *La citerne* (Piccinni, 1809).⁹⁰ The score also included excerpts of Corret's own compositions. After his liberation in 1814, Corret became principal horn at the Théâtre des Arts de Rouen. No melodrama scores of his remain but there are two collections of duos for horn.⁹¹ Diane arranged a march, several romances and a *polonaise*—perfect for a play set in Poland.⁹² Even though these works were composed later than *Roseliska* we felt it important to include the original composer's voice in the score.

From the first read-through, it was clear that the text of *Roseliska* had been written by amateur playwrights. The prisoners Lafontaine and Mouillefarine did not offer, like Pixérécourt, precise directions for the integration of text, music, and gesture. Places where music could foreground moral conflict and emotional changes were rare; spectacle and physical action featured strongly.⁹³ The work was created for actors that the authors knew well, which had an influence on the text. The prisoner playing the role of the villain Polowitz seems to have been the most gifted or charismatic actor, because his role dominates the work.

the rhythm and sound of different languages. English Heritage used the song as the soundtrack to its video about the theater—see *Portchester Castle: Recreating the Prisoners' Theatre*, English Heritage, YouTube, August 14, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2uL-h4svVg>.

⁸⁹ See Cox, "Stages of Captivity," 269–271 for a list of performances given between September 1810 and January 1811.

⁹⁰ For the transcribed scores of *La femme à deux maris* and *L'ange tutélaire*, see Pixérécourt, *Mélodrames*. The Parisian scores of *La forteresse du Danube* and *Robinson Crusoé* have not survived: we used the Lille manuscripts of E. Marty for *La forteresse* (see note 71) and *Robinson Crusoé* (*Robinson | Crusoé*, M 5299, Patrimoine musical, Bibliothèque municipale de Lille). With thanks to Fernando Morrison for sharing his transcription of *La citerne*.

⁹¹ With thanks to Joann Élard for alerting us to the Corret horn music in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

⁹² *20 Duos pour deux cors*, composés et dédiés à E. Devieux par M.A. Corret jeune, premier cor du grand Théâtre de Rouen (Rouen: l'auteur, s.d. [before 1820]).

⁹³ See the conclusions of Katherine Astbury, Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks, "The Melodramatic Moment: Researching Early French and English Melodrama through Performance."

The text specifically mentions music twice in act 1. There is also a prologue in the form of a song, and at the end of act 1, scene 2, “music is heard” as the celebration party gathers. Following the analyses of melodrama scores by Emilio Sala and Michael Pisani, and the practice-based research of Sarah Hibberd and Nanette Nielsen, we knew to mark moments such as the beginning and end of acts, entrances and exits of main characters, action such as dance, and the abduction of the heroine.⁹⁴ However, the key moment in the play, act 1 scene 5, is more nuanced. Polowitz’s advances are rejected by Roseliska: he sets in motion his plan to abduct her. The stage direction explicitly calls for the actor’s exteriorization of emotion: “Polowitz remains, lost in his thoughts.” We will return to this scene shortly.

Even Reicha acknowledged that the music required for this type of stage situation would need to be refined in dialogue with “le poète, le machiniste, les acteurs et le régisseur.”⁹⁵

NO.	DESCRIPTION	CUE	SOURCE
-	Air: “Au bas d’un fertile coteau”	Couplets d’annonce	<i>La clé du caveau</i> , no. 794
-	Overture and curtain rise	-	Corret, no. 20
1	Entrance of Roseliska	End Act 1/2; Fresca: I’ve just spoken to you about it in all seriousness. (Music).	<i>La femme à deux maris</i> (act 1, no. 3)
2	Roseliska evoking Stanislas	Act 1/3; Roseliska: ... but an even greater duty to one’s king.	Corret, no. 1 (first four bars)
3	Fresca & Walko leave	Act 1/3; Roseliska: Go, my friends, make sure everything in the castle is ready for his return. Corret, no. 1 (second section)	Corret, no. 1 (second section)

⁹⁴ Sala, *L’opera senza canto*; Michael V. Pisani, *Music for the Melodramatic Theatre in Nineteenth-Century London & New York* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014); Sarah Hibberd and Nanette Nielsen, “Music in Melodrama: ‘The Burden of Ineffable Expression?’” *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 30–39.

⁹⁵ Reicha, *Art du compositeur*, 107.

4	Polowitz entrance	Act 1/4; Roseliska: Someone's coming this way.	Corret, no. 13 (Polonaise, first section)
5	Roseliska tries to leave	Act 1/4; Roseliska: I know not why his presence is always so unwelcome (she goes to exit)	Corret, no. 8
6	Exteriorisation of emotion	Act 1/5; Roseliska: I will listen no longer (She goes to leave, Polowitz attempts to hold her back) ... Polowitz remains, lost in his thoughts)	<i>L'ange tutélaire</i> (overture, Flora entrance) <i>La citerne</i> (Act 1, no. 4)
7	Drama	Act 1/6; Polowitz: The only sentiments that shall fill it now are love—and vengeance!	<i>La forteresse</i> (Lille score; act 3, no. 9)
8	Musique champêtre	Act 1/7; Polowitz: Gullible husband.	Corret, no. 13 (Polonaise, second section)
9	Entrance of Stanislas	End Act 1/7; Polowitz: Let us move away and prepare to execute my plan!	End Act 1/7; Polowitz: Let us move away and prepare to execute my plan!
10	Ballet (interrupted by Walko)	Act 1/10; Walko: Come forward, he awaits you.	<i>La forteresse</i> (Paris score, act 2, no. 1)
11	All exit except Roseliska, Fresca & Walko	End Act 1/11; Stanislas: Walko ... do not leave her side.	<i>La forteresse</i> (Paris score, act 1, no. 12)
12	Abduction of Roseliska SEGUE	Act 1/12; Walko: There they are!	<i>La citerne</i> (act 1, no. 4)
13	End of Act 1	Tableau	<i>La femme à deux maris</i> (act 1, no. 19)

Fig. 1 Cues and musical sources: *Roseliska*, act 1

The poets of course were not available to discuss the plan for act 1, but we were able to refine the score with the actors from *Past Pleasures* and the director, Kate Howard. To give an example of this, we will take the abduction of Roseliska at the end of act 1 (see figure 1). We selected the music in act 1 of *La citerne*, where the heroine Clara is in danger of drowning, as a dramatic parallel to the danger faced by Roseliska. But the extract from

La citerne occurs mid-act, and the end of act 1 in a Pixierécourtian melodrama is normally in a minor key and rhythmically nervous. We therefore followed the extract from *La citerne* with the end of act 1 from *La femme à deux maris*. Here the two husbands swear to do battle—an instant which mirrored the struggle between Roseliska’s abductors and her husband. The music thus was chosen as it accompanied an analogous moment of high drama in the plot. It also had a suitable number of contrasting sections that roughly corresponded to the *Roseliska* stage directions at this moment. The overall piece of music for the end of act denouement and tableau was long (over fifty bars) but we decided to wait until rehearsals to see if any cuts needed to be made.

Diane split the stage directions into sections (see letters in figure 2) and together with the actors and the director, Kate Howard, came up with the following plan (figure 3).

Scene 12

Fresca: Do not worry, my dear mistress. Perhaps Walko’s fears are ill-founded.

Walko: Oh yes, ill-founded indeed if you’d seen them like I did. Big brutes they were, with ... beards.

Fresca: Oh do be quiet, you idiot!

Walko: I think can see them again! There they are!

A masked man enters. When they see him, Fresca and Walko run off screaming loudly. The masked man seizes Roseliska and despite her efforts, abducts her. Stanislas and his brother, alerted by Walko, run to her defence. Stanislas takes back his wife and there follows a violent fight between Stanislas and the kidnapper. Stanislas falls beneath the brigand’s blows. Another arrives at that very moment and carries away Roseliska. Tableau.

End of Act 1.

Act 2

Scene 1

Fig. 2 *Roseliska*, end of act 1. The musical director’s script from the 2017 performances

Act 1, scene 12 (The kidnap)

Walko: There they are! (Bar 185/6)

NB: Each bar has the “rule of 3” notes in the top melody line (until 4 bar moment for end of phrase)

2 bars: D enters, caped, bearded and masked via aisle—“Aggression” pose halfway up (*When he poses is when Fresca and Walko exit screaming*)

2 bars: D mounts stage proper, poses facing audience and pulls Roseliska to him. (*Roseliska shock and fear*)

2 bars: Pulls Roseliska to him

2 bars: She pulls away

4 bars: Pulls her to and across him. She falls into Stanislas arms as he enters (stage left)

22 bars for the following:

E enters in “masked aggressor” style down aisle. While Stanislas is distracted by looking at him, D pulls Roseliska back to him (*by pulling on her stage right arm*).

E mounts stage between Roseliska/D and Stanislas. Pushes Stanislas to the ground by his chest. Stanislas lies prone on back, head raised.

Stylised stamping 3 times on Stanislas head. Stanislas head on ground after first stamp.

E and D circle Roseliska.

One on either side, all 3 facing audience. Each push one shoulder down.

D grabs hair (*Roseliska grabs wig/his hand to hold hair on*). Drags Roseliska off up Tower.

E walks in “aggressive mode” off stage following behind (also off up Tower).

Polinski runs on stage left, discovers Stanislas with horror, lifts Stanislas’ head off ground, pointing to the exit of the kidnappers and Roseliska.

Stanislas reaches forward to his vanished bride. Polinski raises non-supporting hand and eyes, appealing to heaven.

Hold Tableau as follow spot fades for 20 seconds (21 bars) over music.

Fig. 3 *Roseliska*, end of act 1. The director’s plan (with thanks to Kate Howard)

Although this looks heavily choreographed, once we had rehearsed each section several times, and then put the action back together again, section-by-section, the actors felt comfortable to improvise within the frame-

work. As is evident in the video of the dress rehearsal, the plan was exactly that—a guideline—within which the actors were able to move freely yet with a sense of purpose and dynamism, maintaining the dramatic impetus towards the close of act 1.⁹⁶ No music was cut from this section in the end.

At other times in the play, the dialogue between the musical director and actors worked more organically. Take for instance the moment where Polowitz's amorous advances are rejected by Roseliska, the pivotal moment in the play (act 1, scene 5) where the villain exteriorizes his emotions. It was difficult to choose music for this. How long does it take for these emotions to unfold? No scenario in existing Pixérécourt plays seemed to fit. It was only after setting Roseliska's abduction at the end of act 1 to the storm music from *La citerne* that the choice crystallized. It is Polowitz's decision in scene 5 that then launches the abduction plan, so linking the two scenes musically made sense. Diane and the actor playing Polowitz discussed his journey from the emotion provoked when Roseliska leaves to when he makes his next speech, where he vows he will take his vengeance—a transition from emotional distress to anger.

We removed two sections of the draft score (see figure 4). The first reiterated block dynamics and a possible interpretation of emotional incertitude. The actor did not feel that Polowitz would be that indecisive. We removed the second section, a scalic flourish and block dynamics, as the actor felt it interrupted the feeling of anger that he wished to build. What we felt was important was to give the music to the actors and see what they did with it, to have their own spin on it, to inhabit it themselves. There is no director's plan for this section as there was a strong improvisational element. The actor said that the music gave him more of a sense of structure than sometimes the directorial notes. His comment offers ideas of the training that nineteenth-century melodrama actors may have had; he himself is an experienced musician and dancer. Expressing emotions through a series of linked gestures through the body is, we would suggest, a form of dance.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Roseliska, dress rehearsal of the July 2017 performances by Past Pleasures Heritage Theatre, video, 21:10–21:54, last revised March 26, 2019, <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/research/french/currentprojects/stagingnapoleonictheatre/roseliska/>.

⁹⁷ Future melodrama research within emerging choreomusicological frameworks could provide a fruitful way of interrogating the interaction of sound and motion. See, for example, Inger Damsholt, "Identifying Choreomusical Research," in *Music-Dance: Sound and Motion in Contemporary Discourse*, ed. Patrizia Veroli and Gianfranco Vinay (London: Routledge, 2018), 19–34.

98
Vln. I dolce
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.

Polowitz remains, lost in his thoughts.

103
Hn. I
Hn. II
Vln. I ff
Vln. II ff
Vla. ff
Vc. p

109
Hn. I f
Hn. II f
Vln. I p ff p
Vln. II p ff p
Vla. p ff p
Vc. p p

Detailed description: This musical score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 98-102) features four string staves (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc.). Vln. I is marked 'dolce' and plays a melodic line with slurs. Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. play sustained chords. The second system (measures 103-108) is marked 'Allegro agitato'. It includes two horn staves (Hn. I, Hn. II) which are mostly silent, and four string staves. Vln. I and Vln. II play a rhythmic, ascending pattern marked 'ff'. Vla. and Vc. play chords marked 'ff' and 'p'. The third system (measures 109-114) continues the 'Allegro agitato' tempo. Horns I and II play short phrases marked 'f'. Vln. I and Vln. II play a melodic line with dynamics 'p', 'ff', and 'p'. Vla. and Vc. play chords with dynamics 'p', 'ff', and 'p'.

Fig. 4. Piccinni (arr. Tisdall), *Roseliska*, act 1, no. 6 (Polowitz remains, lost in his thoughts)

14

The image displays a musical score for a symphony orchestra, continuing from the previous page. It is divided into three systems of staves, each starting with a measure number: 115, 121, and 124. The instruments are arranged as follows:

- System 1 (Measures 115-120):** Horns I and II (Hn. I, Hn. II) play a simple rhythmic pattern with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Violins I and II (Vln. I, Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.) play a more complex melodic line with dynamics ranging from *ff* to *p*. Handwritten scribbles are present over the string parts.
- System 2 (Measures 121-123):** Horns I and II play a sustained note with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The strings continue their melodic line with various dynamics.
- System 3 (Measures 124-126):** Horns I and II play a melodic line with dynamics *ff* and *p*. The strings continue with dynamics *ff* and *p*. Handwritten annotations, including circles and lines, are present over the string parts.

Fig. 4. (continued)

Musical score for measures 128-131. The score includes parts for Horn I (Hn. I), Horn II (Hn. II), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. Dynamics range from *ff* to *p*. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes.

7. Polowitz: The only sentiments that shall fill it now are love - and vengeance!

Musical score for measures 132-135. The score includes parts for Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The key signature changes to two flats (Bb, Eb) and the time signature is 3/4. Dynamics are marked *ff*. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes.

8. Polowitz: The celebration party is coming this way.

Musical score for measures 136-140, titled "Polonaise". The score includes parts for Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. Dynamics are marked *f*. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes.

Fig. 4. (continued)

Rehearsals had begun in London before moving to the performance space in Portchester Castle. We had blocked out the castle performance space in the London rehearsal rooms and so *in situ* there was no need to add or cut any entrance or exit music. The arrival of the musicians, however, had a bigger impact on testing the score than the change in location. Diane's role as musical director now involved the direction of musicians as well as actors. Those actors with less musical training found it a big shift to move from hearing Diane on the violin to hearing the whole orchestra. The relationship between gesture, music, and text became destabilized. This showed itself in musical entries that were dependent on the actor establishing the speed of the next musical entry through their speech or gesture.⁹⁸ This idea was unfamiliar for the musicians and they asked for upbeats from Diane at first violin to indicate the speed they were going to play at. This is a normal practice in stage shows where the band accompany singers and in a chamber music setting. However, in the context of melodrama, setting the speed for the musicians proved incredibly difficult. Diane only had a split second to grasp the speed from the actor's speech and or gesture and communicate it to the other musicians before playing; initial attempts often resulted in a clunky entry by the musicians which was not satisfying for the actors because of the resultant loss of fluidity. The actors had reached a point where Diane no longer needed to prescribe a tempo but the musicians needed guidance from her while the score was unfamiliar. As the musicians became more familiar with the score and the actors became more used to the orchestral sound, the tensions eased.

The dress rehearsal was the first time we went through the whole melodrama without stopping for discussion, and it was being filmed for research purposes. The lighting choice—natural light, plus one artificial spotlight—meant that the performance space was very dark, save the musicians' stand lights. This reduction of visual connection with the actors combined with Diane's switch in role from composer-musical director to musical director-performer meant that she had to focus much more on aural and oral cues than she had in previous rehearsals. In scenes with a sole actor exteriorizing emotion she felt a heightened awareness of the speed and inflection of speech, which influenced her interpretation of the music cues in terms of speed and dynamics. More unexpected was her own physical response to the style, weight, and speed of the actor's gestures with her bowing style

⁹⁸ When we subsequently recorded the score in a studio at the University of Surrey, without the actors, we had a similar problem.

and body movements. The strongest moment of this blurring of lines between gesture and music was at the beginning of act 3, where Polowitz enters, having captured Roseliska's husband Stanislas. Watching the actor's movements intently, she molded the music to the actor's sinuous gestures and facial expressions. Who was directing whom? It was not always the first violin; it was not always the actor. Diane was surprised to be drawn into this dance, as she had expected her role to be more in deference to the actors (drawing on experience in bands for twentieth-century musicals) than as an equal or sometimes dominant role, despite her theoretical research knowledge about the relationship of text, music, and gesture.

It is the malleability of melodrama that lends itself so well to stimulating and enriching practical research and theater practice; these two performances at Richmond and Portchester required dynamic and collaborative work across a wide-range of disciplines and expertise—academics (in literature, history, theater studies, music), creatives, and the cultural heritage sector. Both performances benefited enormously from the expertise of the directors: Sarah Wynne Kordas brought her experience of silent films and pantomime to Richmond, and Kate Howard had previously directed a performance of the Victorian melodrama *Maria Marten, or Murder in the Red Barn* which inflected her approach to *Roseliska* at Portchester Castle. Performance reveals so much to researchers, particularly in a genre like melodrama where the emphasis is not always on words. Experimental archaeology has proved an invaluable approach to the task of restaging melodrama. It has informed our practice and our theory by encouraging us to test hypotheses and explore some of the choices facing actors and musicians and how they react and respond to an audience. The one-off performance of *Roseliska* can only imperfectly be imagined from the recording of the dress rehearsal in front of a handful of spectators; when the keep was packed to the rafters, the actors “fed” off the energy created by the audience to create an unforgettable evening, a creative union that gave voice to the past, albeit for a single evening. How melodrama shifts when an audience enters into the dance of gesture, music and text, and how a replica artefact takes on yet another form is another avenue of research—one we hope to have the opportunity to explore in the future.

Works cited

Archival Collections

Département des Arts du spectacle. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Performance and Theatre Collection. Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Scores

La forteresse du Danube.

- Manuscript score and orchestral parts. M 5010. Patrimoine musical. Bibliothèque municipale de Lille.
- Manuscript score and orchestral parts. Musique Mat. TH (99). Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
- Orchestral parts. Ms. M. 415. Patrimoine musical. Bibliothèque municipale Ceccano, Avignon.
- Orchestral parts. Série R 2/8 (60). Archives municipales de Montepellier.

Capelle, Pierre. *La clé du caveau à l'usage de tous les chansonniers français, des amateurs, auteurs, acteurs du vaudeville et de tous les amis de la chanson.* Paris: Capelle et Renand, 1811.

Corret, Marc-Antoine. *20 Duos pour deux cors, composés et dédiés à E. Devieux par M.A. Corret jeune, premier cor du grand Théâtre de Rouen.* Rouen: l'auteur, s.d.

Robinson Crusôé

- Orchestral parts. M 5299. Patrimoine musical. Bibliothèque municipale de Lille.

Printed Sources

Andries, Annelies. "Modernizing Spectacle: The Opéra in Napoléon's Paris." PhD diss., Yale University, 2018. ProQuest (10907727).

Annuaire dramatique ou Étrennes théâtrales. 18 vols. Paris: Mme Cavanagh, 1805–1822.

Astbury, Katherine. "Présentation de *La forteresse du Danube.*" In Pixerécourt, *Mémoires dramatiques.* Vol. 3, 1804–1808, 263–289.

Astbury, Katherine, and Devon Cox. "Re-Examining the Sources for the Prisoner-of-War Theatre at Portchester Castle." In *Ser prisionero de guerra entre la Ilustración y Napoleón. Una aproximación por casos particulares,* edited by Evaristo C. Martínez-Radio. Madrid: Sílex, forthcoming.

Astbury, Katherine, Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks. "Researching Early French and English Melodrama Through Performance." Video-article. School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Warwick. Posted December 2017. <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/research/french/currentprojects/napoleonictheatre/performingmelodrama/>.

Astbury, Katherine, and Diane Tisdall. "Sonorising *La forteresse du Danube*: Functions of Music in Parisian and Provincial Melodrama of the Early Nineteenth Century." *Studi francesi* 191 (2020): 348–359.

———. "Une exploration du mélodrame parisien à travers la représentation d'une pièce des prisonniers de guerre du château de Portchester en 1810: *Roseliska ou amour, haine et vengeance.*" In *Musique de scène dans le théâtre parlé de Diderot à Hugo,* edited by Patrick Taïeb and Olivier Bara. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, forthcoming.

Bentley, Eric. *The Life of the Drama.* New York: Atheneum, 1964.

Brooks, Peter. "Melodrama, Body, Revolution." In *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen,* edited by Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and

- Christine Gledhill, 11–24. London: British Film Institute, 1994.
- . *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. With a new preface. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Buckley, Matthew. “Early English Melodrama.” In Williams, *Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, 13–30.
- . “Refugee Theatre: Melodrama and Modernity’s Loss.” *Theatre Journal* 61, no. 2 (2009): 175–190.
- Burwick, Frederick. “Georgian Theories of the Actor.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1732–1832*, edited by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor, 177–191. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- . *Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Bush-Bailey, Gilli. “Still Working It Out. An Account of the Practical Workshop Re-Discovery of Company Practice and Romantic Performance Styles via Jane Scott’s Plays.” *Nineteenth-Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 6–21.
- Butt, John. *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Chaillou, David. *Napoléon et l’Opéra. La politique sur la scène, 1810–1815*. Paris: Fayard, 2004.
- Cox, Devon. “Stages of Captivity: Napoleonic Prisoners of War & their Theatricals, 1808–1814.” PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2017. <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/103472/>.
- Cox, Jeffrey N. “The Death of Tragedy; or, the Birth of Melodrama.” In *The Performing Century: Nineteenth-Century Theatre’s History*, edited by Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland, 161–181. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Damsholt, Inger. “Identifying Choreomusical Research.” In *Music-Dance: Sound and Motion in Contemporary Discourse*, edited by Patrizia Veroli and Gianfranco Vinay, 19–34. London: Routledge, 2018.
- De Santis, Vincenzo. “La tragédie à Paris en 1809. Débats esthétiques et répertoire théâtral.” In *Fièvre et vie du théâtre sous la Révolution française et l’Empire*, edited by Thibaut Julian and Vincenzo De Santis, 179–193. Paris: Garnier, 2019.
- Engel, Johann Jakob. *Idées sur le geste et l’action théâtrale, par M. Engel ... le tout traduit de l’Allemand*. 2 vols. Paris: Barrois, 1788–1789.
- Gille, Louis François. *Mémoires d’un constrict de 1808*. Edited by Philippe Gille. Paris: Victor-Havard, 1892.
- Gorchakov, Nikolai M. *Stanislavsky Directs*. Translated by Miriam Goldina. Edited by Virginia Stevens. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1954.
- Hambridge, Katherine, and Jonathan Hicks. “The Melodramatic Moment.” In Hambridge and Hicks, *Melodramatic Moment*, 1–24.
- Hambridge, Katherine, and Jonathan Hicks, eds. *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and Theatrical Culture, 1790–1820*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- Hartog, Willie G. *Guilbert de Pixérécourt: sa vie, son mélodrame, sa technique et son influence*. Paris: Champion, 1913.
- Hesselager, Jens. “Sonorizing Melodramatic Stage Directions: The ‘Reflexive Performance’ as a Way of Approaching Nineteenth-Century French Melodrama.” *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 23 (2011): 20–30.
- Hibberd, Sarah, ed. *Melodramatic Voices: Understanding Music Drama*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.
- Hibberd, Sarah, and Nanette Nielsen. “Music in Melodrama: ‘The Burden of Ineffable

- Expression?" *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 30–39.
- Kershaw, Baz. "Performance as Research: Live Events and Documents." In *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, edited by Tracy C. Davis, 23–45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- La Grandville, Frédéric de. *Le Conservatoire de musique de Paris (1795–1815): Dictionnaire des élèves et aspirants*. Paris: Institut de recherche sur le patrimoine musical en France, 2014. <https://api.nakala.fr/data/11280%2Fcf10d906/2079fbb15e2a476b-fe290f328f539761f9064711>.
- Lecomte, Louis-Henry. *Histoire des théâtres de Paris. Le Théâtre de la Cité 1792–1807*. Paris: H. Daragon, 1910.
- Ley, Graham. "The Significance of Diderot." *New Theatre Quarterly* 11, no. 44 (1995): 352–353.
- Mathieu, James R., ed. *Experimental Archaeology: Replicating Past Objects, Behaviors, and Processes*. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2002.
- Mayer, David. "Encountering Melodrama." In *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, ed. Kerry Powell, 145–163. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- McCaw, Dick. "Training for Melodrama." *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 62–65.
- Nelson, Robin. "Introduction: The What, Where, When and Why of 'Practice as Research.'" In *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, edited by Robin Nelson, 3–22. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Newey, Katherine. "Embodied History: Reflections on the Jane Scott Project." *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 66–70.
- Pearson, Mike, and Michael Shanks. *Theatre/Archaeology*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Pisani, Michael V. *Music for the Melodramatic Theatre in Nineteenth-Century London & New York*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014.
- Pixerécourt, René-Charles Guilbert de. *Mélodrames*. Edited by Roxane Martin. 4 vols. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013–.
- Poesio, Giannandrea. "The Gesture and the Dance." *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 29, no. 2 (2002): 40–50.
- Przybos, Julia. *L'entreprise mélodramatique*. Paris: Corti, 1987.
- Quantin, Joseph. *Trois ans de séjour en Espagne, dans l'intérieur du pays, sur les pontons, à Cadix, et dans l'île de Cabrera*. 2 vols. Paris: J. Brianchon, 1823.
- Rede, Leman Thomas. *The Road to the Stage; or, The Performer's Preceptor*. London: Joseph Smith, 1827.
- Reicha, Anton. *Art du compositeur dramatique ou Cours complet de composition vocale*. Paris: Farrenc, 1833.
- Roach, Joseph. *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*. USA: University of Michigan Press, 1993.
- Sala, Emilio. "Mélodrame: définitions et métamorphoses d'un genre quasi-opératique." *Revue de musicologie* 84, no. 2 (1998): 235–246.
- Sala, Emilio. *L'opera senza canto: il mélo romantico e l'invenzione della colonna sonora*. Venice: Marsilio, 1995.
- Sarlós, Robert K. "Performance Reconstruction: The Vital Link between Past and Future." In *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, edited by Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie, 198–229. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989.

- Siddons, Henry. *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action, Adapted to the English Drama. From a Work on the Same Subject by M. Engel*. London: Richard Phillips, 1807.
- Siviter, Clare. *Tragedy and Nation in the Age of Napoleon*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020.
- Smyth, Patricia. "Representing Authenticity: Attitude and Gesture in Delaroche and Melodrama." *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 1 (2011): 31–53.
- Taylor, George. "Melodramatic Acting." In Williams, *Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, 112–125.
- Therenty, Marie-Ève. "Un comique trans: Robert Macaire. Transmédialité et transgénéricité d'une figure nationale." *Insignis* 1 (2010): 25–35.
- The Thespian Preceptor; or, A Full Display of the Scenic Art*. London: Joshua Belcher, 1810.
- Thomasseau, Jean-Marie. *Le mélodrame sur les scènes parisiennes, de "Coelina" (1800) à "L'auberge des Adrets" (1827)*. Lille: Service de reproduction des thèses de l'université, 1974.
- Waeber, Jacqueline. *En musique dans le texte: Le mélodrame, de Rousseau à Schoenberg*. Paris: Van Dieren, 2005.
- . "Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'unité de mélodie.'" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 62, no. 1 (2009): 79–144.
- Williams, Carolyn, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Abstract

This article offers a case study of how new performances of two early nineteenth-century French melodramas have enabled interdisciplinary dialogue on the ways in which text, score, and acting interact in a genre that is seen as highly codified. Piecing together clues about the play as a performance in the process of preparing for twenty-first century staging for a non-specialist audience is a task similar to that of an archaeologist reassembling an old pot from a handful of pieces. This metaphor of archaeology comes from Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks' seminal text *Theatre/Archaeology* and James Mathieu's *Experimental Archaeology: replicating past objects, behaviors and processes*. Shanks and Pearson in particular highlight the centrality of interpretation in both archaeology and performance and see both spheres as connected by a common aim to retrieve and reconstruct ephemeral events and understand the textures of the social and cultural experience of the object in the past. Experimental archaeology has thereby provided invaluable in the task of restaging melodrama, informing our practice and our theory by encouraging us to test hypotheses and explore some of the choices facing actors and musicians and how they can feed off each other.

Keywords: France; melodrama; music; experimental archaeology; research-led performance.

Katherine Astbury is Professor of French Studies at the University of Warwick. Her research focuses on how culture played an important part in shaping French debates about identity, nationhood, and political legitimacy during the French Revolution and First Empire. Publications include two monographs, *The Moral Tale in France and Germany 1750–1789* (Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, 7; 2002) and *Narrative Responses to the Trauma of the French Revolution* (Legenda, 2012), and a critical edition of Pixérécourt's *La forteresse du Danube* in *Mélo-drames III (1804–1808)* (Classiques Garnier, 2016) as well as dozens of articles on writers of the period 1750–1815. As Principal Investigator of a UK Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project on French Theatre of the Napoleonic Era (2103–17), she worked closely with English Heritage at Portchester Castle, advising on the reinterpretation of the keep, particularly the French prisoner-of-war theater housed there between 1810 and 1814. She is currently writing a monograph on theater during Napoleon's One Hundred Days in 1815.

Dr Sarah Burdett is Lecturer and Programme Lead in English at St Mary's University, Twickenham. After receiving her PhD from the University of York in 2016, she worked as a Post-doctoral Research Fellow on the AHRC-funded Staging Napoleonic Theatre Project at the University of Warwick, occupying the role of dramaturg. Sarah's research focuses on representations and receptions of arms-bearing women on the British stage during the French revolutionary and Napoleonic periods. Tracing the figure's reputation in late eighteenth-century Britain as a striking symbol of extreme political and social disruption, her work interrogates the extent to which Britain's perpetually shifting relationship with home and European nations, and the importation of new dramatic genres from Europe, serve to furnish the female warrior with a plethora of multi-layered, often allegorical, and frequently surprising theatrical meanings. Sarah's debut monograph is in press with Palgrave Macmillan and will be published as part of the Enlightenment, Romanticism and Cultures of Print series in 2022. Sarah has published research in journals including *Comparative Drama* and *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research*, and has held Visiting Fellowships at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, and at the Bodleian in Oxford.

Diane Tisdall is an educator, music historian, and violinist based in Clermont-Ferrand, France. Following her doctorate in musicology at King's College London ("Pierre Baillot and Violin Pedagogy in Paris, 1795–1815"), Diane joined the Staging Napoleonic Theatre team at Warwick. The performance of the Napoleonic melodrama *Roseliska* (1810)—for which Diane was composer, musical director, and performer—was awarded the Events and Activities Prize in the 2019 Discover Heritage Awards. Diane's interest in the relationship between text, music, and gesture, and what it can bring to our knowledge of early nineteenth-century theater, led to a postdoctoral research position at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Clermont-Ferrand. She was involved in preparing twenty-nine critical play editions (*Anthologie du théâtre révolutionnaire, 1789–1799*) with Françoise Le Borgne and Classiques Garnier (forthcoming). Diane has published articles on violin classes at the early nineteenth-century Paris Conservatoire, on representations of Amerindian women in early nineteenth-century Parisian opera (with Françoise Le Borgne) and on performance-based research of urban and provincial French melodrama (with Kate Astbury). She also draws on the creative and expressive potential of drama, music, and storytelling to teach English as a foreign language in higher education and professional development settings in Clermont-Ferrand.