

SENSING WATTEAU:  
THE ARTIST'S MUSICAL IMAGES  
AS PRELUDES TO THE AGE OF SENSIBILITY

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## ABSTRACT

PAMELA WEBBER WHEDON: Sensing Watteau: The Artist's Musical Images as  
Preludes to the Age of Sensibility  
(Under the direction of Dr. Mary Sheriff)

This dissertation examines images of music in the work of Antoine Watteau and argues for his position as an early painter in the French age of sensibility. Watteau lived and worked at a time in which scientific theories of sensibility aligned sensations with the neural mechanisms of the body. The layered and overlapping notions of physical and emotional sensibility prevailed in contemporary writings, which linked the body with the soul, causing emotions to tremble and pulsate as reactions to tactual stimulation. As such, music was the metaphor used by *medecins philosophes* for depicting vibrations that connected the senses with emotion. The history of the meaning of music as a transmitter of sensations unites earlier traditions of musical expression with the melodic allusions contained in the paintings of Watteau. His work addresses music's relation to the body, and its power over it while it incorporates contemporary perceptions of music that combine the measured simplicity of the French musical style with the colorful music of the Italians. Watteau's musical images are accompaniments for shared human sentiment as well as conduits for the vibrations of erotic love. French ideas of *honnêteté* offer insight into the artist's own participation in privileged social and music circles. The musical style and treatment of musical line by the artist's contemporary, French composer François Couperin, combine Italian and French sensibilities and contain melodic intonations that echo the visual cadences of Watteau.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to the loves of my life, my five boys, Zack, Jed, Sam, Matt, Joss, and my dear husband, Tom, who has been a devoted and supportive partner in my great academic adventure.

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## **Introduction**

This dissertation examines images of music in the work of Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) and argues for his position as an early painter in the French age of sensibility. It focuses on the musical images of Watteau as expressions of the senses often exemplified in both music theory and medical science in an effort to place his works within a broader definition of the age of sensibility. Scientific theories of sensibility aligned sensations with the neural mechanisms of the body. Notions of physical and emotional sensibility prevailed in contemporary writings, which linked the body with the soul, causing emotions to tremble and pulsate as reactions to tactual stimulation. As such, music was the metaphor for depicting vibrations that connected the senses with emotion. Although seventeenth-century physiologists had no means of observing music's effects on the nervous system directly, Watteau's blendings of musical, emotional and social milieus bridge that gap and provide visual embodiments that speak to the divergent sensibilities required to achieve a harmonious whole. As musical instruments were perfected, they gained nuance, or deeper sensibility, resulting in variety of expression. Watteau's knowledge of different musical instruments, the timbres that embody them, and their affective sentiments, invokes visual counterpoints and discords within unique pictorial and harmonic arrangements.

A question central to this thesis is: How does the affecting nature of music fit into the discourse on sensibility? The starting point for this study is an examination of the history of music and its power over the body, from ancient Greece to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French ideas about Italian music. Images of the aulos and lyre on surviving Greek pottery depict the contrasting timbres of winds and strings that relate to Dionysus vs. Apollo, emotion vs. reason, passion vs. temperance and strident horn vs. measured strings. Philosophical and artistic parallels exist between the musical images of

the ancients and the tradition of music in seventeenth-century genre scenes and connect these earlier works with the melodic allusions contained in the paintings of Watteau.

The dissertation also addresses issues of music as a signifier of morally gendered aesthetic guidelines as reflected in the shape of the instrument, how it comes into contact with the body, how it is held, manipulated and made to produce sound. In essence, musician and instrument become one. Hence, his guitars act as accompaniments for social connectedness and shared human sentiment. Watteau's musical images are also conduits for the vibrations of sexual passion. The candor and fluidity of his brush echo the musical notes that smooth the way for group affection as well as the initiation and reception of erotic signals. The anticipatory significance of a figure tuning an instrument is a frequent motif in Watteau's pictures, acting as a sweet overture to music and foreplay to love making. Music's relation to the body endows it with the power to anticipate, delay and transmit emotion. Tuning or teasing out the notes becomes a system of enticement.

The alliance of French music with poetry or measured expression is a significant factor as a representation of national political power and social class. The history of the courtier/musician provides connections between French musical expression and ideas of *honnêteté*. These ideas offer insight into the temperament of the period as well as the artist's own participation in artistic, music and social circles. Watteau's artful bodies are self-aware, visual displays of sensibility based on deportment, good taste and moderation. The artist's personal ambitions, his graceful themes and his painting technique, are all in keeping with the eighteenth-century behavioral requirements and tastes of an *honnête homme*. Furthermore, the study traces the seductive sensibilities of Italian music, which was growing in popularity in France. The views of the French on the potentially dangerous emotional excess of the Italians hint at ties between unchecked emotions and nervous maladies.

The art of Watteau is an inventive synthesis of both, seemingly disparate, sides of the debate between restraint and emotion, reason and passion, French and Italian styles. It is seduction tempered by repression. The unfixed and nuanced nature of music and its temporality that enables Watteau to blend both French and Italian sensibilities, mixing the sensations of Apollo and Dionysus. Watteau incorporates contemporary perceptions of music that combine the measured simplicity of the French musical style with the colorful music of the Italians. By comprehending the powerful and fascinating tensions between French courtly styles and Italian expressiveness, Watteau employs those traditions while, at the same time, repealing them and giving them a modern resonance.

The musical style and treatment of musical line by the artist's contemporary, French composer François Couperin, offer interesting parallels that echo the visual cadences of Watteau. Both the composer and the artist employ fluid, melodic lines while they also combine Italian and French sensibilities. Grace and the judicious use of *agréments* signified *le bon goût* of French musical styles. Watteau's *beau faire* is smooth, tempered and redolent with *la politesse du chant*, much like his musical contemporary, Couperin. The artist's easy, fluid lines are visual echoes of the composer's graceful melodic contours punctuated with ironic piquancy.

His works are also visual and acoustic embodiments of the ideas of philosophers like Jean-Pierre Crousaz (1663-1750) and Jean-Baptiste du Bos (1670-1742) who maintained that beauty was a feeling, an indescribable essence, a sentiment. In the distinctive visual medleys that inform his crayon and brush, the artist summons both the earthly and spiritual pictorial language of the senses to define the terms for French contemporary life itself. Watteau's paint flows with agility from one passage to the next; it is atmospheric and mutable. In this way both the fabric and spirit of music enable his images to permeate and efface temporal dimension. Watteau's artistic vocabulary may be

viewed in terms of melody, harmony, and rhythm. Like the oil that binds his pigments, music is the medium that unites both Italian and French sensibilities that underscore the images of the artist.

As a painter of sensibility, Watteau mediates between the ear and the eye. His paintings are evocative expressions of mixed emotions, contested modes and changing ideals. There are layered, secretive meanings concealed within his glazes; instead, his directness comes from the music. As Watteau engages in the art of describing, there is a nuanced dalliance to his scenes. He interlaces process, inspiration, performance and invention while conferring a gentle melodic splendor on small events and brief encounters.

Despite extensive scholarship on the art of Antoine Watteau, few studies, if any, have focused on Watteau as a painter of sensibility. To that end, this project argues that images of music and music making identify the artist as a significant early contributor to the French age of *sensibilité*. While the commonly accepted time frame of the age begins in mid-century and is associated with social empathy, this study demonstrates that earlier concepts of sensibility linking emotional response to physical sensation were fundamental to the notions of sensibility that developed later. In this thesis I focus on the musical images of Watteau as expressions of the senses often exemplified in both music theory and medical science in an effort to place his works within a broader definition of the age of sensibility.

In France, *sensibilité* existed on two distinct levels. The more prominent view widely addressed by art historians evolved in the mid-eighteenth century as a moral, metaphysical movement that attempted to fill the gap within eighteenth-century ethical thought created by the distinction between reason and faith. At one end of the scale stood the intellectual philosophy of Voltaire; on the other rested the fervent, emotional belief of the



Quietists.<sup>1</sup> A form of religion without priests and sacraments was needed to bridge the two disparities. This came in an attempt at reconciliation, a tempering or blending of the two boundaries, the emergence of the frequently documented ‘cult of sensibility’. The new genre of popular fiction, the novel, appealed to a growing number of literate women. The emotive and moralizing styles of theatre, with the *drame bourgeois* and *comédie larmoyant*, grew increasingly popular to French audiences. In art, the tender, domestic scenes of Chardin and the didactic narratives of Greuze corresponded to the sentimental leanings of the period.

The other level of sensibility, that of physical sensation, linking emotional response with physical and medical properties, had been developing much earlier. Along with analyzing the bodily functions, which fed the senses, doctors strove to develop a broad psycho-physiology that would explain the role of sensibility in human life. The *médecins philosophes* applied their scientific studies of the human body to a wide range of human emotion and experience.<sup>2</sup> Displacing the investigation of witchcraft and possession, the language of the physiology of nerves became a source of inquiry, describing them as musical keys or fibers with elastic sensibility, vibrating and transmitting sensations. These pulsations of the senses were transmitted to the brain, the essence of the soul. René Descartes (1596-1650) related the concept of expression to the medical arts and what one perceived through the senses had an immediate reaction on the soul. “The body acts on the soul, causing feelings and passions.”<sup>3</sup> These feelings and passions, having been

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<sup>1</sup> A type of religious mysticism which arose within the Roman Catholic Church in Italy and Spain during the latter half of the 17th century that sought to attain a state of inward peace by withdrawal of the thoughts and desires from all earthly matters and fixing them in contemplation of the divine.

<sup>2</sup> Anne Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France*, (Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 80.

<sup>3</sup> Gerard G. LeCoat, “Comparative Aspects of the Theory of Expression in the Baroque Age”, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, v. 5, n. 5 (winter, 1971-2), 219. LeCoat cites: Descartes, *Traité des passion de l’âme*,

experienced by the soul, manifest themselves physically. In such a system, motion and emotion conjoined and the cause of the passions was the agitation from spirits in the nerves and brain.<sup>4</sup> In 1694, Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715) wrote, “the sense organs...are composed of tiny filaments originating in the middle of the brain, that they spread out into all our members in which there is feeling... [and] when the end of these filaments is disturbed, the spirits contained in them transmit to the brain the vibrations they have received from without.”<sup>5</sup>

Hence, the varied concepts of *sensibilité* and emotion had multivalent connotations in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France. In 1694, the *Dictionnaire de L'Académie Française* defined *sensibilité* and *sensible* in this way:

*Qualité de celui qui est sensible. Il a une egale sensibilité pour le froid & pour le chaud, il a de la sensibilité pour tout ce qui regarde la gloire la sensibilité du coeur. Les parties nerveuses sont les plus sensibles... Il se dit aussi dans le moral. C'est un homme fort delicat & sensible... il est sensible aux maux des autres... il a esté sensible aux plaintes, sensible aux injures... Qui frappe les sens, qui se fait sentir. Une chose qui s'apperçoit, qui se connoist facilement par les sens ou par la raison. Ce mouvement est sensible... le flux de la mer n'est sensible que proche les costes... l'effet, l'operation de cette medecine n'est pas sensible...vous doutez de cette verité, je vais vous la rendre sensible. On dit d'une personne, que' C'est son endroit sensible', pour dire, que C'est ce qui la touche le plus.*<sup>6</sup>

Sensibility, or the quality of being sensitive was a function of the nervous system. The senses acted as carriers of emotions and feelings of the heart. Movement and touch propelled sensitivity in psychological and physical terms. Sensibility also had moral implications when considered in terms of compassion for the sufferings of others and an

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59.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search After Truth*, T. Lennon, P. Olscamp, trans. Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1980, 49.

<sup>6</sup> *Dictionnaire De L'académie Française*, 1st ed. (1694) 461-2.

ability to share feelings and sentiments. Later, in 1762, writers would expand the definition of *sensibilité*:

*Qualité par laquelle un sujet est sensible aux impressions des objets. Il est d'une grande sensibilité à toutes les impressions de l'air... Sa sensibilité sur le point d'honneur, sur tout ce qui regarde la réputation, est extreme... Des sentimens de tendresse & d'amour. La sensibilité de son coeur aux moindres impressions de l'amour, est surprenante.<sup>7</sup>*

Here, sensitive impressions not only circulated through the nerves and physical proximity, but they also transmitted through the air to touch and emotionally move the sensitive individual. As a moral issue, sensibility was also a point of honor, enhancing one's status and reputation. It also connected directly to the heart in sentiments of tenderness and love.

The layered and overlapping notions of physical and emotional *sensibilité* prevailed in the writings of Descartes and Malebranche on the physicality of sensibility. Sensibility aligned sensations with the strings of the heart, linking body and soul, causing emotions to tremble and pulsate as reactions to physical, emotive stimulation. The Chevalier de Méré, Michel Montaigne, Mme de Sévigné and Francois Fénelon were concerned with sensibility as shared sentiment, warm affection and courteous behavior. It was a sign of elevated worth and the civilized nature of polite society. Thus, Watteau lived and worked at a time in which notions of sensibility were being re-discovered and re-configured to express the political, cultural and emotive progressions of an age.

Literature about Antoine Watteau emerged just after his death with an obituary by Antoine de La Roque (1672-1744) and biographies written by friends and admirers such as Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694-1774), Jean de Jullienne (1686-1766), Edme-François Gersaint

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<sup>7</sup> *Dictionnaire De L'académie Française*, 4th ed. (1762) 710.

(1694-1750) and the Comte de Caylus (1692-1765).<sup>8</sup> One hundred and fifty years later, critics re-discovered Watteau detecting poignant meanings in the visual sensations of his work. The rococo revival in the nineteenth century brought new admirers to Watteau's picturesque images; his paintings were the source of inspiration for poets such as Théophile Gautier (1811-1872)<sup>9</sup>, Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867)<sup>10</sup>, Paul Verlaine (1844-1896)<sup>11</sup> and the Goncourt brothers, Edmond (1822-1896) and Jules (1830-1870).<sup>12</sup> The agility of the artist's brush and the grace of his figures newly identified him as a painter of *sensibilité*. In 1875, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt named Watteau the great poet of eighteenth-century French painting.<sup>13</sup> According to the Goncourts, Watteau bestowed on his art a grace that vibrated with a flowing rhythm and progressed like a measured, melodic dance.<sup>14</sup> Horace

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<sup>8</sup> Comte de Caylus, *Vies D'artistes Du Xviii Siècle. Discours Sur La Peinture Et La Sculpture*, ed. H. Laurens (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1910).

<sup>9</sup> Théophile Gautier, *Salon De 1848* (Paris: La Presse, 1848) 1. "*Un maître qui n'est pas apprécié à sa juste valeur, malgré l'engouement dont il est l'objet, c'est Watteau : on ne le considère que comme un peintre spirituel et facile, bon pour les fêtes galantes et les fantaisies amoureuses, et une certaine idée de frivolité reste attachée à son nom. C'est pourtant le plus grand coloriste qui se soit produit depuis Rubens, et l'originalité la plus tranchée que les derniers siècles aient à opposer à la splendide floraison de la Renaissance. Au reste, ce n'est pas M. Wattier qu'il faudra accuser de ne pas comprendre tous les mérites de Watteau, dont il est presque l'homonyme. Il s'est consacré au culte de ce maître charmant, et ce culte va jusqu'à l'adoration, jusqu'au renoncement absolu à sa propre personnalité.*"

<sup>10</sup> P. D. Edwards, "Watteau and the Poets," *Modern Language Assn. Notes* 74, no. 4 (1959): 295. Author cites "Les Phares" written sometime before 1855: "*Watteau, ce carnaval ou bien des coeurs illustres / Comme des papillons, errent en flamboyant / Decors frais et legers eclaires par des lustres / Qui veraent la folie a ce bal tournoyant.*"

<sup>11</sup> Verlaine wrote a collection of 22 poems entitled *Fetes galantes* based on the pictorial world of Watteau.

<sup>12</sup> Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal, T. 1, 1851-1863*, ed. A. Ricatte (Paris: Flammarion, 1959) 600. "*Décidément, Watteau bien plus grand maître dans le dessin que dans la peinture.*"

<sup>13</sup> Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *French Eighteenth-Century Painters: Watteau, Boucher, Chardin, La Tour, Greuze, Fragonard, Landmarks in Art History* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981).

<sup>14</sup> Goncourt, *Journal, T. 1, 1851-1863* 726. "*Le dessin de Watteau, c'est la silhouette, la ligne, le dessin du dehors de la chose, en ce qu'il a de caractéristique, d'animé, de mouvementé, de voluptueux, de spirituel.*"

Walpole remarked on the quintessential French taste of Watteau and his avoidance of the glaring effects of his Flemish countrymen.<sup>15</sup> These critics and poets recognized that the *sensibilité* of Watteau is located in the vitality of his brush and the fluidity of his paint; it rests in a nuanced mobility that utilizes exterior displacements and hidden interior movements in a series of relayed shadings and transmissions.

There is a large amount of modern scholarship on the artist. In 1984, Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg directed a seminal exhibition of Watteau at the Washington National Gallery. The accompanying catalogue is an authoritative collection of essays on the artist's milieu, his acquaintances, his theatrical references and the musical instruments employed in his scenes.<sup>16</sup> The catalogue provides a window into the artistic, social and political world in which the artist circulated with notes from experts in all related fields. In addition, Donald Posner and Marianne Roland-Michel have published monographs on the artist that provide solid background on his *oeuvre*.<sup>17</sup> Three contemporary musicologists, Florence Gétreau, A. P. de Mirimonde and Don Fader contribute directly to the subject of music as it relates to the images of Watteau; they look at the numerous instruments depicted by the artist and chronicle their structure, history and use.<sup>18</sup> The artist's accurate rendering of the musicians' hand and body positions sheds light on Watteau's intimate acquaintance with music and its production.<sup>19</sup> Fader's essay on

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<sup>15</sup> Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937).

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg, *Watteau 1684-1721* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> Donald Posner, *Antoine Watteau* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984). Marianne Roland Michel and Antoine Watteau, *Watteau: An Artist of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Trefoil, 1984).

<sup>18</sup> Florence Gétreau, "Watteau and Music," in *Watteau, 1684-1721*, ed. Margaret Morgan and Rosenberg Grasselli, Pierre (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1984).

<sup>19</sup> A.-P. de Mirimonde, "Les Instruments De Musique Chez Antoine Watteau," *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* 1963 (1962): 47-53.

French music and the *honnête homme* provides a solid starting point for the examination of French and Italian musical styles and how they relate to the work of Watteau.<sup>20</sup> Still yet to be explored, however, is the artist's use of musical themes as an artistic method of conveying the varied tempos of sensibility defined by social cohesion, collective harmony and amorous allusion. Watteau's visual musical references of communal texture – be they sedately amiable or erotically tinged – become not only an instrument of expression but an underlying accompaniment to his work.

Noted art historians provide valuable background research for this project. Methodologies concerned with the meanings in the work of Watteau parallel my own interest in the intangible musical sensations that accompany his images. To this end, the enigmatic timbres included in his scenes echo the ideas of Norman Bryson and James Elkins.<sup>21</sup> Watteau's mixtures of sensibilities pose questions that elude definitive answers, keeping them constantly in play. Watteau's meanings are complex and nuanced, not moralizing or didactic. The only certainty is a gentle, constant flux – much like the movements of music – conveying the primacy of perception and awareness. The artist introduces fresh psychological subtleties in his portrayals of musicians in these social scenes. The work of Watteau is about the varied harmonies of man and nature subtly altered by the passage of time as perceived in the angle of a shadow, the movement of a breeze or the striking of a chord. The social concomitance acted out in conversation, a focus of Mary Vidal's book, applies to my observations of similar exchanges that occur in musical sympathies.<sup>22</sup> Like the connectedness of music, Vidal notes the role of

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<sup>20</sup> Don Fader, "The Honnête Homme as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 1 (2003): 3-44.

<sup>21</sup> James Elkins, "On Monstrously Ambiguous Paintings," *History and Theory* 32, no. 3 (1993): 227-47.

<sup>22</sup> Mary Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature, and Talk in Seventeenth- and*

conversation in setting up identities and relationships. Antoine Watteau's social scenes are never indoors; the circulating open-air atmosphere provides the score on which each note is written. For the artist, music is a shared, playing-out of time, a collective process in which his figures willingly and pleasurably involve themselves. If there is delight in a specific kind of music, it is neither due solely to the music itself nor to the musicians. It depends rather on the subtle exchanges that occur between performer and listener; music is the container as well as the expression of those associations. The cult of the amateur musician as a member of polite society and the cultural and social contexts in which he/she performed receive important historical corroboration in the work of Thomas Crow who studies the society in which Watteau worked.<sup>23</sup> The portability of Watteau's musical instruments contribute to an artless mood of music making; players perform and move about in various locations, playing as the spirit moves them, reacting to the sensibilities of the occasion and its participants. Crow's ideas work alongside Amy Wyngaard's exploration of the dialectic relationship between different class distinctions in the work of Watteau and his blendings of theater and reality.<sup>24</sup> The ironic tones that inform the images of Watteau, which appear to comment on cultural and political concerns of the time are the subjects of an important book by Julie Plax.<sup>25</sup> Her work affords a piquant inflection to the nuanced angularities of the artist's social scenes and reinforces his tones of Italianate satire. My observations connecting the artist with the emerging Italian sensibilities that so captivated the French

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*Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>23</sup> Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>24</sup> Amy Wyngaard, "Switching Codes: Class, Clothing, and Cultural Change in the Works of Marivaux and Watteau," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33, no. 4 (2000): 523-41.

<sup>25</sup> Julie Anne Plax, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth-Century France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

*mondains* are in tune with Martin Eidelberg who proposes Italian landscapes as models for Watteau's foliate backgrounds.<sup>26</sup> Oliver Banks, in his study of the artist's Flemish ties, cites music as a recurrent theme in Dutch art drawing comparisons between the moralizing musical images of the north with Watteau's more refined and ambiguous pictures of melodic performance.<sup>27</sup> Noble behavior and social comportment are also the subjects explored by Sarah Cohen in her book on dance and the body in which she notes the musically-related postures of the elite as seen in the art of Watteau.<sup>28</sup> The subject particularly concerns the artist's depiction of *honnête* behavior regarding musical performance, a topic thoroughly addressed by Donna Stanton's work on the *honnête homme*.<sup>29</sup> These valuable sources support my argument that what matters are the sensations one seeks in Watteau's musical pictures and the correlation created between the music and its perception. Indeed, music awakens imprecise instances of sensation in the figures of his scenes – as well as his viewers. What is retained by the observer/listener after the last note fades away in each painting is an added dimension and a deeper understanding of the sensibilities contained in the art of Watteau.

Music is the metaphor for depicting the elusive shifts of the senses – from 'high' sentiments such as tempered delight and intellectual amusement to 'low' sensations such as unrestrained passion. Since classical antiquity, music has possessed these two disparate and distinct identities. The first was Apollonian, associated with the measured strings of

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<sup>26</sup> Martin P. Eidelberg, "Watteau's Drawings: Their Use and Significance" (Garland Publishing, 1977).

<sup>27</sup> Oliver T. Banks, *Watteau and the North: Studies in the Dutch and Flemish Baroque Influences on French Rococo Painting, Outstanding Dissertations in the Fine Arts* (New York: Garland Pub., 1977).

<sup>28</sup> Sarah R. Cohen, *Art, Dance and the Body in French Culture of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>29</sup> Donna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).



Apollo's lyre and the subtle emotions it expressed. The other was Dionysian, possessing a disordered, fiery quality: the music of the Greek god of wine and the pipes of Pan. These two alternatives to musical sensation incorporate opposing tone colors. 'Low' instruments produce often-strident timbres, unmodulated in pitch and volume thereby connoting emotional excess and rampant desire; 'high' Apollonian timbres contain melodic nuance and measured delicacy, echoing the attributes of refinement and taste. It is these interpretive, often contradictory, tonalities that allowed ideas of *sensibilité* to be applied in many ways during this period in French history. Watteau's musical images make use of the evocative language of both kinds of music, Dionysian and Apollonian. From the wind of the bagpipe in *Venetian Pleasures* (c. 1718-19) to the strings of the guitar in *The Singing Lesson* (c. 1716), the artist endows his musical themes with divergent and distinct shadings of thoughtful emotionality as well as erotic physicality. Accordingly, these ideas appear in his juxtapositions of French and Italian musical sensibilities and their associations with entertainment and pleasure.

Watteau suffuses his scenes with tonal, ambient auras, allowing the attentive viewer to sense distinct contrasting timbres in his images of music making. In *The Perspective of* c. 1714 (fig. 1) lush foliage gently enfolds the figures as filtered light reveals the luxuriant fabric of their attire.<sup>30</sup> The timbres of each note of the guitar's tuneful air suspend and linger, endowing the tranquil scene with a mellow mood. Theoretically, the most meaningful sentient quality of music is its timbre, its tone color or quality of sound that comes from its texture, its tangible consistency, rather than its pitch or volume. More than any other factor, timbre constitutes the nature of sound itself. Like the lambent pressure of Watteau's brush that stirs a sensual visual experience, so timbre is the vibrant spirit that puts the auditory world in motion and strokes each living soul, awakening it to life and experience. In *The*

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<sup>30</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

*Perspective*, the melodic timbre, the palpable quality of sound, of the notes of the guitar enter foliage and figures alike, making them one with nature around them; the music lives within those who are *sensible* to its vibrations. Reflecting a time that once placed a value on the pleasures of leisure and sociability, Watteau employs music in delicately structured yet somehow unaffected instances of gesture and reply. He traverses distance yet punctuates each proximity with a meaningful response. Like the interwoven verdant landscapes that enclose his figures, like the flowing fabrics that gleam in the ambient light, like the fluid brushstrokes and fusion of colors in the composition, his musical images are expressive, mutable and spontaneous.

The study will ask: How do Watteau's musical images relate his work to the discourse on sensibility? How are the Apollonian musical metaphors in French medical texts on the fine-tuning and balance of nerve fibers given visual resonance in Watteau? How do the higher, spiritual and the contrasting baser, Dionysian interpretations of *sensibilité* sound? How do they look? Is sensibility allied with Watteau's own identity as a uniquely French *honnête homme*? How do the drawings and paintings of Watteau combine a perceptive ear, an attentive eye and a responsive hand? Whereas vision conveys separation and distancing, music implies the opposite – the integrative and relational.<sup>31</sup> Can the art historian effectively study one discipline within the context of the other? How can a sound, only seen and not heard, be accurately described? How can a viewer of a picture perceive any auditory meaning, feel the timbre of a note or hear a pitch? What are the relationships between musical performance, emotion and vision? To what extent does social context govern emotional display? What do our feelings today have to do with emotions represented in historical sources?

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<sup>31</sup> Ruth HaCoen, "The Music of Sympathy in the Arts of the Baroque; or, the Use of Difference to Overcome Indifference," *Poetics Today* 22, no. 3 (2001): 608-49.

Musical ideas and their connection to the senses appear in the art and literature of classical antiquity. Where did those traditions come from? How did they evolve? How were they interpreted and applied in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? What were the purposes and contexts for the use of various musical instruments? Was (and, in fact is) music intended to delight or excite the senses – or both? Perhaps, just as the eye detects atmospheric perspective or tenebrous shadings and wisps of *sfumato*, the perceptive viewer can sense the implied texture, grain and tactile quality, that is, the timbre, of the sounds contained in Watteau's images. The history of music and the sensations that its instruments awakened can offer valuable clues, not only to the prevailing philosophies of musical expression at the time of Watteau, but also to the accompanying undertones of contemporary *sensibilité* expressed in the artist's brush. The sensations of music, from classical times onward, had deliberate, associative meanings that were still pertinent in the time of Watteau.

In Watteau's art, the nuanced physical sense of moving vibrations of sound connects the ear with spiritual and mental practices; physical sensation connects to and transforms interior emotion. A displacement of qualities occurs between performer and listener, painter and viewer. Sensibilities become anticipated, delayed and traversed by vibrating currents that weave together the physical and spiritual. These hidden movements and sympathetic displacements and exchanges describe the touch of Watteau and the traces of sensibility that cause his brush to linger languidly on one passage, then move fluently on to the next.

Chapter One, Tracing the Sensibilities of Music, outlines the factors that contribute to an understanding of the artist's works and their place in an evolving age of sensory awareness. The ideas of the seventeenth-century French *medecins philosophes* are a foundation for the discussion in terms of the physical mechanics of sensation. Moreover, the musical images in the paintings of Watteau also operate within the varied contexts of the

ancient ideas on music put forth by classic philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato. They equated music with the very essence of being; it was the embodiment of all emotion and character. Classical myth defined two spheres of music: the tempered, sweet music of Apollo's lyre and the unrestrained Dionysian style of the aulos, or pipe, of the god of wine. Perceptions of 'high' and 'low' musical instruments as perceived by the ancient Greeks were frequent subjects of the narrative art of their pottery. The chapter also provides a brief history of the evolution and use of musical instruments as illustrated in the careful drawing studies of Watteau, which examine their construction and manner of play. The recurrent theme of music in Dutch art, particularly in lower class genre scenes, acts as a prelude to the more refined references to music in the art of Watteau. An examination of these traditions and their evolution contributes to a clearer perception of Watteau and his use of musical expression as an accompanying sensation that enriches his art.

Chapter Two, Watteau's Sentimental Lyricism and Love's Subversive Strings, considers ideas of *sensibilité* as sentiment, which form the pictorial embodiment of social connectedness and shared human sentiment in the works of Watteau. His images become visual and acoustic embodiments of the ideas of philosophers who maintained that beauty was a feeling, an indescribable essence, a sentiment. It then considers the guitar, a descendant of the lute, not only as an informal medium for accompanying social leisure, but also as an amorous conduit for the erotic vibrations of poetic love. Music and its direct relation to the body in the sense of touch is a source of study, particularly in relation to erotically charged sensibilities regarding performance. As such, the moral and gendered aesthetic guidelines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are mediators for the consideration of Watteau's musical images.

Chapter Three, French and Italian Sensibilities in the Art of Watteau, is a chronicle of the divergence of French and Italian sensibilities reflected in their music and theater. It assimilates works of the artist into the cultural and artistic cadences of the new age of the

Regency, proposing his art as an inventive synthesis of both, seemingly disparate, sides of the Apollonian/Dionysian debate. Music as a social signifier becomes an important segment as it relates to the politics of French and Italian sensibilities. As a keen observer of the conflicting musical forces that shape his time, Watteau's varying musical and visual cadences express the divergence of changing tastes while blending disparate elements of public society. Watteau's depictions of Pierrot personify the conflicting sensibilities of the era as well. The alert viewer can detect visual signifiers of movement, or tonal vibrancy beneath the tranquil form, in these sympathetic depictions of the comic figure.

Chapter Four, *L'Art de Toucher: Watteau, Couperin and the Honnête Homme*, asserts that the musical style of the French composer and contemporary of Watteau, François Couperin le Grand, contains acoustic resemblances to the art of Watteau, especially in its combination of Italian and French sensibilities. Both the artist and composer have strong similarities in their choice of subjects and the artistic and social circles in which they moved. Couperin's *L'Art de toucher le clavecin* provides a useful parallel between the artistic touch of Watteau and the technical theories of Couperin. The section then looks at music as a component of *honnêteté* and its relationship to the courtier. The history of the courtier/musician connects musical expression with French ideas of *honnêteté*. I also argue that Watteau himself may be an artistic embodiment of *honnêteté* in his self-effacement, as documented by his biographers, as well as the seemingly effortless elegance in his works. Like the reserved and reticent artist, his musicians are often unobtrusive and play only at the pleasure of their company. The gatherings painted by Watteau and experienced in the hôtel of Pierre Crozat cohere through the bonds of exclusive friendships founded on the tenets of *honnêteté*. The signifier and signified come together in the *honnête homme* as an artful and poetic bonding of interior and exterior ideals; Watteau, the artist, and Watteau, the man, embody many of these principles.

By examining these issues within the discourse on sensibility and its relation to

music and the images of Watteau, this study contends that the artist, in his choice of musical subjects as emblems of human connectedness as well as the fluent use of his lambent brush, is a significant artist of the French age of *sensibilité*. His use of musical metaphors is unique in depicting the mysterious displacements that occur and vacillate between sensation and sentiment. As such, the images of Watteau offer valuable visual clues to the French Age of Sensibility and its attendant sensory timbres, which the artist's brush expresses with deliberate delicacy and nuanced *sensibilité*. His seemingly suspended, leisure scenes are pastoral frameworks for a significant and meaningful visual disclosure of the sensory tempo of his times.

## Chapter One: Tracing the Sensibilities of Music

The material in this chapter examines the history of the meaning of music in the context of its nature as a transmitter of sensations. It traces the philosophical and artistic parallels between the musical images of the ancients and the tradition of music in seventeenth-century genre scenes, connecting these earlier works with the melodic allusions contained in the paintings of Watteau.

Like so many of Watteau's dancers, the young girl in *Iris (La Danse)* of c. 1720 (fig. 2) is caught in her erect preparatory stance at the moment of the music's initial touch – anticipating, feeling, then taking in, its sympathetic vibrations.<sup>1</sup> The painting conveys a sense of the transitional, middle state of growing awareness – stirred by and borne on – the vibrancy of music.<sup>2</sup> As a constant moving source of communication, principle and inspiration, music is a vital component of human emotion, experience and spiritual expression in this work. *Sensibilité* or perception-as-awareness is, in effect, a three-stage process from the initial, first condition of not knowing or feeling – to an ultimate state of knowing. Between these two poles is an intermediate transitional phase, bridging the opposites.<sup>3</sup> Watteau captures the midway, ineffable yet instant moment of understanding. In the young subject of the painting, the viewer sees the transformative moment when the musical notes carry the transitional, middle state of learning and perceiving. In Watteau's tableau, the sense of touch punctuates the aesthetic experience of hearing the music. The music penetrates and awakens her – it is immediate and powerful. The artist's brush comes

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Rosenberg, "The Paintings," in *Watteau 1684-1721* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1984), 445. The title is from an anonymous quatrain that begins, "*Iris, c'est de bonne heure...*"

<sup>2</sup> Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

<sup>3</sup> Robin Maconie, *The Concept of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) 19.

alive as well as it traces the outline of her pale forehead, neck and bodice. Placed at the center; she is a triangular monument of anticipatory grace. She stands alone, apart, set proudly against a bright spot of blue sky that illuminates her responsiveness; she is radiant in the light. At the moment of her sensual awakening the little coquette prepares to dance in a rustic setting before her three young companions, one of whom plays a small recorder. The world to the left of the picture is one of childhood innocence indicated by the protective forest in which her three small friends sit. The artist configures the group in a rounded arc; the contented, sleeping dog mirrors the encircling format. Each young face looks toward the girl warmly, sympathetically. Completing the circle, the young boy at the rear left gestures with his staff and leans in toward her. Their outstretched legs and arms shield and yet, at the same time, encourage her. As the notes of the recorder reach her, she turns away from her three young friends and looks with a knowing smile directly at the viewer, blossoming into a young woman before our eyes. Her erect posture, accentuated by the dark gown's profile against the light and by the vertical embroidery on her skirt, forms the visual counterpoint to the relaxed poses of her seated playmates. The whiteness of her apron and lace cuffs reaffirms the glow of her young breast. The girl's vibrancy comes directly from her own self-awareness as the timbres of the recorder emanate outward and come to rest within her. She becomes the aesthetic object, bringing together nature and artifice and proclaiming her own youthful allegiance to adult elegance.<sup>4</sup>

Watteau's use of music to convey sensual and social awareness visually interprets contemporary ideas of the melodic vitality of the physical body. It was the physiological property of sensibility, the capacity for feeling that medical writers considered '*la base & l'agent conservateur de la vie*', the essence of life, as it would eventually be defined in the

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<sup>4</sup> For a thorough study of the artful body, see: Cohen, *Art, Dance and the Body in French Culture of the Ancien Régime*.



*Encyclopédie* in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Doctors had long focused on the state of people's nerves, which needed the proper degree of 'sensibility' to remain healthy and full of vitality. The sensibility contained in the young girl of *Iris (La Danse)* is a personal and unique life force. It is her experience alone; she is filled with promise, physically in tune and vibrantly alive.

Emotional awareness as expressed in the young *Iris* was a concern for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophers who looked to the ancients as they framed their own ideas of music in contemporary medical thought about senses and emotions. The metaphor used by ancient Greeks such as Aristotle and Plato in describing the elusive process of musical sensitivity was that of pressure, i.e. the things being heard pressed their individual shapes and qualities into the minds of living organisms via the sense organs, often through the medium of air. In this case, 'pressure' and 'touch' were virtually interchangeable. They did so by causing shapes, qualities and characters to appear in the mind of the perceiver.<sup>6</sup> Music, unlike the more tangible material objects of the sense of sight, expanded and respired infinitely to fill hollow vessels, resonating within the body of both performer and listener. Similarly, René Descartes (1596-1650) linked the purely mechanical impressions of music on the ear (the senses) with effects that could be clarified by the natural sensibility of the human brain (the soul) in registering – or feeling – those impressions.<sup>7</sup> As medical thought advanced, the connection between body and soul became embedded more deeply in the study of emotions and their effect on the body. The onset

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<sup>5</sup> Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie De Diderot Et D'alembert*, Parma: F. M. Ricci, 1970 ed., 13 vols. (Paris: Briasson, 1751-1772) *Sensibilité* 15:38.

<sup>6</sup> Göran Sörbom, "Aristotle on Music as Representation," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52, no. 1 (1994): 38.

<sup>7</sup> Rene Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, trans. Stephen Voss (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1989).

and subsequent progress of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ideas of tactual reception as emotional response involved a new application of these ideas in which musical motifs embodied and defined sympathetic perceptions of the period. Music, by its very nature, enabled an enrichment of these new sympathetic responses to varying stimuli by way of an expanding emotional vocabulary characterized by timbre, melody, rhythm and harmony. Musical expression was perceived as immediate and instinctive, especially when compared to the rationally configured, and somewhat distant, form of the spoken word. Theories regarding physical and emotional health used the mechanics of music as melodic paradigms for finely tuned human instruments. Watteau's *Prélude d'un concert* (c. 1716), fig. 3, correlates the workings of precise melodic tuning with the achievement of social harmony.<sup>8</sup> The viewer discovers the matching and echoing of mutual vibrations contained within similar pitches and timbres to the connectedness and amiability of the social gathering in the scene. At the center of the painting, a musician tunes his *theorbo* or arch-lute, a demanding task due to its long neck and the variant pitches of which it is capable.<sup>9</sup> The violinist gives the note for tuning while the player of the *viola da gamba* awaits the tonal accordance of the *theorbo*.<sup>10</sup> The young woman reads the musical score in preparation for her own performance, which she will attempt to match, note for note, with the music of the ensemble. Visual references contribute to ideas of music as touch; a little girl in the left foreground plays with a dog, gently teasing him, just as the musician tantalizes his listeners with tentative notes in search of the proper pitch. While the action takes place in the left portion of the painting, within the confines of a wooded glade, figures in the right distance come

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<sup>8</sup> Schloss Charlottenburg, Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten, Berlin.

<sup>9</sup>Gétreau, "Watteau and Music," 542.

<sup>10</sup> Évrard Titon du Tillet (1677-1762), a writer on French poets and musicians, described the theorbo in this way: "[It] is an instrument with an extensive range, gracious and touching, but difficult to play well." Ibid. Author cites: *Le Parnasse françois* (Paris, 1732), 406.

together in a triangular, balanced group that is a pictorial representation of closely-knit, harmonic sympathy. In essence, the group attunement portrayed in the tableau is paradigmatic of balance and harmony within one body, be it a physical or a social one.

Visual delineations of human sympathy appear in Watteau's *La sérénade italienne* (c. 1715-19), fig. 4, which presents us with five members of a troop from the Italian comedy.<sup>11</sup> Columbine, the heroine, sits near the edge of a wood, pale and distracted, with her hands folded contemplatively in her lap. Pierrot attempts to engage her with the persuasive notes of his guitar. Behind them a fool, characterized by his crested skullcap, prepares to strike his tambourine while Mezzetin looks over a musical score. Two other figures from the Italian comedy observe from the shadows. As the musicians try to coax the young woman out of her cheerless mood, she bends sympathetically into the circular arrangement of the illuminated group, responding – in the curvilinear angle of her pose – to the musical vibrations that draw her in. A sense of concordance and harmony visually deepens in the energy of the artist's marks and the directness of the music. As the tuneful pulsations reach her ear and enter her consciousness, her disposition begins to warm to the sounds, radiating from within, repeating the outwardly directed sympathetic curvilinear marks of the artist and the shimmering effects in her luxuriant, glowing gown. Here, ideas of sympathy include entering into, understanding and sharing another's feelings. The emotional, sympathetic expressions contained in the music penetrate temporal barriers between the sympathizers and the sympathized. Music, in its ability to envelop and surround Columbine, allows her senses to bridge the space between distance and affinity, materiality and affection. Music moves beyond its place as a metaphor for the operation of the physical body and becomes a metaphysical, spiritual essence that links her to her companions, making her responsive to

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<sup>11</sup>Originally the left half of a carriage door. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

proximities and conscious of psychic immediacy.<sup>12</sup> In concert with this notion, the *Encyclopédie* later would identify music as a social coalescent in this entry:

*La Musique, comme le son de se propager, de mettre en mouvement l'air & les corps environnans, surtout lorsqu'ils sont à l'unisson; l'autre maniere d'agir rigoureusement réductible à la premiere, est plus particulièrement liée à la sensibilité de la machine humaine, elle est une suite de l'impression agréable que fait en nous le plaisir qu'excite le son modifié, ou la Musique.*<sup>13</sup>

The *Encyclopédie* states that the sounds of music touch and move everything with which they come into contact, thereby unifying them; they are particularly tied to the emotional sensibilities of the human body which respond to, and become one with, the pleasurable vibrations of music. The *Encyclopédie* adds this account:

*Le corps humain que comme un assemblage de fibres plus ou moins tendues, & de liqueurs de différente nature, abstraction faite de leur sensibilité, de leur vie & de leur mouvement, on concevra sans peine que la Musique doit faire le même effet sur les fibres qu'elle fait sur les cordes des instrumens voisins... [elle] est plus particulièrement liée à la sensibilité de la machine humaine, elle est une suite de l'impression agréable que fait en nous le plaisir qu'excite le son modifié, ou la Musique.*<sup>14</sup>

The human body operates in much the same way as music: fibers and fluids move in sympathetic harmony. Music therefore allies with the pleasurable sensibilities of the human machine. *La sérénade italienne* is a visual embodiment of vibratory touch and inner sentiment. As such, it is in line with the theories of the French philosopher, Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715), a follower of Descartes, who related sensory vibrations to metaphysical theories of interiority expressed outwardly. Concurrent with the ideas

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<sup>12</sup> HaCoen, "The Music of Sympathy in the Arts of the Baroque; or, the Use of Difference to Overcome Indifference," 640.

<sup>13</sup> d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie De Diderot Et D'alembert* 10:898.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. *Musique, effets de la*: 10:907.

contained in Malebranche's Search After Truth of 1674, Columbine's sense organs respond to the exterior vibrations that touch and raise her spirits; vibrations travel from the exterior of her body to her mind and soul within, causing them to react and respond.<sup>15</sup> She is the embodiment of the notions of Malebranche who claimed there was an infinite variety of responses in the "aural fibers, the blood and the spirits" among those who enjoyed music.<sup>16</sup> Malebranche wrote of the unique *sensibilité* of man, declaring that, despite being composed of many parts, those parts come together to react as a whole to the many movements and vibrations that surround them.<sup>17</sup> So, Columbine, in *La sérénade italienne*, conveys, in the gradual softening of her mood, an attunement of her body to the rapport of the group around her. The viewer senses a form of communication that arises within a universally understood language of the senses, thereby identifying new relationships between music, art and life, blurring boundaries while combining the roles of listeners/spectators, and finding new rationales for emotional artistic expression.<sup>18</sup> Malebranche described the sensible emotions of the soul as being deeply affected by the flow of spirits; the soul reacts in concert with moving spirits that affect the body. He wrote: "Since the soul is joined to the body and the body to the soul, their motions are reciprocal."<sup>19</sup> Here, Malebranche clearly unites physical and emotional senses through a mutual give-and-take of movements. Then, using music as a metaphor for a vibrating connection between body and soul, he reasons that the human ear, in receiving the

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<sup>15</sup> Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, trans. P. Olscamp T. Lennon (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980) 49-50.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 64.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 338.

<sup>18</sup> HaCoen, "The Music of Sympathy in the Arts of the Baroque; or, the Use of Difference to Overcome Indifference," 612.

<sup>19</sup> Malebranche, *The Search after Truth* 349.

sensations of different musical intervals is able, when those vibrations travel to the mind or soul, to distinguish the proportionate ratios between the pitch of each note.<sup>20</sup> Thus, for Columbine and Pierrot, the pulsing sensibilities produced by the vibrations of music are the bridges between physical sensation and the feelings of the soul. Both figures recognize and understand the mathematical intervals between tones, sensing the benevolent mode that conveys the warmhearted timbres of the music.

Similarly, Watteau's arrangement of his figures in *Récréation galante* (c. 1717-18), fig. 5, evokes the musical shape of a crescendo: the composition is arc-like, starting with a diminuendo at the left, rising at the center, then decreasing again at the right.<sup>21</sup> The music contained in the scene appears as one in spirit and meaning. The image effaces strict distinctions between the sensations: it is both visually and audibly responded to by the viewer. As visual counterpoints, two couples at the far left and right turn their backs to leave, expanding the tableau with tension and resolution. Another couple moves upward and away toward a sculptured group, which echoes the triangular composition of the center figures, providing a modulated echo, a tonal accompaniment in a related key. The music of the guitarist at the center dissolves the bonds between sensation and spirituality, linking the cohesive group in the center to each other and to the nature that envelopes them. As such it is the high point of the visual crescendo; the notes of the guitar rise to propel the actions of each couple. Toward the left, three children play while at the far left a man, his fist on his hip, gazes out directly at the viewer. These compositional choices serve to counterbalance the theatricality of the grouping; they are syncopations in the picture's rhythmic unity. Each figural relationship, instead of being absolute or pure, is dependent upon its contingencies and correlations. As an accompaniment, airy brocades of musical

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 427.

<sup>21</sup> Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

circumstance appear to operate and weave through the atmosphere of the bucolic scene.

### **Musical Sensibilities: Reason vs. Passion**

A recondite world dependent on contingencies embodies the spirit of the age of Watteau who was witnessing multivalent cultural and musical changes. By the time of his birth in 1684, inventors were coming up with new mechanisms for making music and perfecting them with improved processes that expanded the expressive possibilities of each instrument. Musical instruments passed from professionals into the hands of amateurs, moving through developing diverse social classes. Musical tastes were also in a state of flux; Watteau witnessed fashionable innovations in music at the hôtel of Pierre Crozat (1661-1740) a dynamic artistic center of musical performance, where the artist often resided and made social contacts. Here, Watteau heard the modern style of Italian music. While he was familiar with Italian street music from the *foires*, this was a new, elevated form, derived from opera. Despite the fact that the French elite viewed Italian music as unrestrained and dangerously exciting, it was nonetheless becoming increasingly popular. The Italian style thereby threatened the supremacy of the French music of the *ancien régime*, which was deemed highly evolved and intellectual. The opposing concepts of musical reason versus musical emotion were the result of a long history of traditional ideas derived from ancient classical myth – that is the conflict between the tempered, sweet music of Apollo and the unrestrained Dionysian style of the god of wine. Order was the domain of the god Apollo; Dionysus was the personification of excess and intemperance. However, the *mondains*, or cultured, worldly French elite, including Watteau and his mentor, Crozat, were not deterred by the apparent lack of control or emotional expressiveness in Italian music; they enthusiastically responded to the innovative pleasures of the ‘new’ Italian style and embraced it willingly. The Italian style of *opera seria* was becoming a principal site where music expressed sensitive, poignant feelings. Music became emotion itself, expressed and felt simultaneously.

What exactly do these terms ‘Dionysian’ and ‘Apollonian’ mean in terms of musical ideas and from what historical traditions did they evolve? The dichotomy between the two realms of music, those of strings vs. winds, with their psychic, aesthetic, moral and social implications, is an interesting chapter of the history of music and musical instruments.<sup>22</sup> The origins of western musical ideas are founded in classic mythology, wherein a precise and ancient division between order and disorder prevailed. Order was the domain of the god Apollo: as protector of the harmony of life, he cleansed the soul of man and freed him of his tribulations. The ordered progression of Apollo through the universe induced worldly stability by epitomizing the harmony of movement and form. As the god of poetry, dancing and music, he embraced regulation, temperance, moderation and deference. Most importantly, Apollo symbolized the power of reason and balance. His antithesis was Dionysus, a foreign god. “He stood for the ‘wet element’ in nature – wine, the juicy sap of plants, the life blood of animals, semen and, by extension, creative powers.”<sup>23</sup> The realm of Dionysus was disarray and the vast forces of the irrational and lustful appetite of the senses. The clear, exact and measured world of Apollo opposed the fanciful, indistinct and fluid Dionysian domain.<sup>24</sup> Just as the *médecins philosophes* believed disease to be the result of imbalance, so too any excess in emotion expressed in the Dionysian class of music was to be avoided, especially by French traditionalists.

The world of music criticism operated, in some ways, parallel to the historic artistic debate over line and color of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Defenders of the theory of the supremacy of the line, the Poussinistes, named after Nicolas Poussin (1594-

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<sup>22</sup> Emanuel Winternitz, "The Inspired Musician: A Sixteenth-Century Musical Pastiche," *The Burlington Magazine* 100, no. 659 (1958): 52.

<sup>23</sup> Jamie C. Kassler, *Music, Science, Philosophy* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 2001) 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*



1665), were philosophically tied to ancient standards of classical order and balance; colorists, or Rubenistes, followers of Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1649) gave painterly qualities such as color and visible brushwork, precedence over more carefully studied linear conceptions. These ideas echo the musical ideas reflected in the debate between French and Italian musical styles.<sup>25</sup> The French embraced classical clarity and rejected the excessively colorful embellishments of the Italians. Just as classic philosophers deemed any excessive oratorical coloring and embellishment as shameful, any appearance of undue emotion or artifice was deceptive and immoral.<sup>26</sup>

The French theologian, abbé Jean-Baptiste du Bos (1670-1742) cited the benefits of both of these types of music, the tempered and the emotional. A contemporary of Watteau and a political academic who served the regent, du Bos was a student of the theory of music and wrote of its relation to art and the intellect. After retirement from political life, abbé du Bos gained distinction as an author and his *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* of 1719, highly praised by Voltaire, explained the theory of the arts with clarity and wisdom. The third volume is a treatise on music; in it, he unites musical arts with physical sensation, further aligning the vibrations of sound with the movements of the body. Abbé du Bos also acknowledged the ephemeral role of music, that of charming and even seducing the senses, as in a sympathetically piped, ‘Dionysian’ aulos, or flute. In volume three of his *Reflexions* he commented on musical sensations, writing, “Music with regard to the spirit...may be divided into that which... animates us and renders us gay, and that which calms us by quieting our agitations.”<sup>27</sup> By endowing music with the power to evoke

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<sup>25</sup> Georgia Cowart, "Watteau's 'Pilgrimage to Cythera' and the Subversive Utopia of the Opera-Ballet," *Art Bulletin* 83, no. 3 (2001): 461-79.

<sup>26</sup> Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *The Eloquence of Color: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age*, trans. E. McVarish (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> abbé (Jean-Baptiste) Dubos, *Réflexions Critiques Sur La Poésie Et Sur La Peinture*, trans. Thomas

emotion, du Bos acknowledges the important role music plays in conveying a full spectrum of sensibilities. He referred once again to the ancient Roman rhetoricians as authorities on the performance and perception of music: “The sound of instruments, (says Quintilian, the best qualified writer to give us an account of the taste of antiquity) affects us, and tho’ it has no words to express itself, yet it inspires us with various sentiments.”<sup>28</sup> Du Bos also alludes to the civil etiquette served by music, writing that the ancients believed that music was a necessary art for polite people, and that those who had no knowledge of it were close to illiterate.<sup>29</sup> For de Bos, music is necessary in a proper education by way of instructing graceful inflections of the voice while involving the body in judicious and elegant gestures.<sup>30</sup> Here, he incorporates the emotional qualities of music while also promoting a tempered approach to music and its performance, aligning it with lucidity and reason.

These two spheres of sensation vs. intellect were further distinguished by the music and musical instruments associated with each; they possessed and projected special sensations, unique to each playing technique and the timbre produced. Dionysus, the Thracian god of wine and its intoxicating power, was linked to the rich, intense music of the *aulos*, the double-flute-like instrument that incited its listeners to revelry and ardor, if not madness. Wind instruments echoed the passions and tempests in the air conceived of as storms at sea. The Greeks developed this into an artistic, visual praxis for illustrating sensation through emblematic musical allegories. Greek art of the sixth century BCE used this musical motif as a signifier in evocative narratives. A black-figure hydria of c. 520 BCE by the Euphiletos Painter, signed by Pamphasios as potter, fig. 6, portrays Dionysus

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Nugent (New York: AMS Press, 1978) 32.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. v. III, 5.

rejoicing lustfully with maenads and satyrs who play the *aulos*.<sup>31</sup> A particularly straightforward and humorous depiction, by the Painter of Louvre G, fig. 7, appears on a cup where a musician plays an *aulos* for a listener who sports an unmistakable erection in vivid profile. The artist deliberately aligns the shape of the male organ with the aulos as well as the sexual arousal caused by the music.<sup>32</sup> An *oinochoe*, or wine vessel, fig. 8, from the first quarter of the fifth century BCE, contains a Dionysian scene illustrating the treachery of passionate, beautiful music to Odysseus and his companions as the melodious voices of the mythic Sirens lure them to dangerous waters.<sup>33</sup> Here, the ancient Greeks give visual representation to a traditional narrative that describes the perilous and sensational enchantments of music.

The classical myths illustrated in Greek pottery re-emerged as popular subjects in the seventeenth century. The music making conflict between Apollo and the satyr, Marsyas, in which the heavenly lyre triumphed over an earthly mortal pipe, was a familiar subject in ancient writings.<sup>34</sup> The lyre embodied noble music as opposed to the lascivious music of the reed instrument played by Apollo's half-human opponent.<sup>35</sup> The 1637 painting, *Apollo Flaying Marsyas*<sup>36</sup>, fig. 9, by the Spaniard Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652) is a visual

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<sup>31</sup> John Boardman, *Athenian Black Figure Vases* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1974) plate 222.

<sup>32</sup> John Boardman, *Athenian Red Figure Vases: The Archaic Period* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975) plate 278.

<sup>33</sup> Boardman, *Athenian Black Figure Vases* plate 286.

<sup>34</sup> "Marsyas." Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 1. 41 ff (trans. Rouse) (Greek epic C5th A.D.) from Theoi Project Copyright © 2000 - 2008, Aaron J. Atsma, New Zealand. <http://www.theoi.com/Georgikos/SatyrosMarsyas.html> He [Apollo] rejects the sound of breathing reeds, ever since he put to shame Marsyas and his god-defiant pipes, and bared every limb of the skin-stripped shepherd, and hung his skin on a tree to belly in the breezes.

<sup>35</sup> Emmanuel Winternitz, *Musical Instruments and Their Symbolism in Western Art* (London: Faber, 1967) 152.

<sup>36</sup> Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.

reminder of the lasting power of the lesson of Apollo's punishment of Marsyas, the satyr who dared to question the superiority of the melody of the divine lyre over the worldly sensuality of his flute.<sup>37</sup> The brutality of the image, seen in the violent movement and the vivid torn flesh of Marsyas confers immediacy and urgency to the ancient myth. By extension, the embodied principles of the other category of ancient music, strings, would also be refigured in seventeenth century genre painting as will be shown in the next chapter.

Pipe blowing was particularly distasteful because of the deformation of the face required, a notion passed down from the legend of Pallas Athena. Her fellow gods ridiculed her for her puffed-out cheeks when playing the pipes she invented.<sup>38</sup> Undignified and indecorous, blowing on a pipe debased the performer and barred her from respect and esteem. The ancient myth lived on in Flemish genre scenes in the work of such artists as Jacob Jordaens (1593-1678) who captured the undignified aspect of piping in his undated *Study of the Head of a Blowing Satyr*, fig. 10.<sup>39</sup> His figure's eyes bulge in concentration, his red cheeks protrude; even his hair appears windblown by the force of air he exerts. Another of Jordaens' satyr images is *The Peasant and the Satyr* (c. 1620), fig. 11, in which the satyr is amazed by the hypocrisy of humans: first a peasant blows on his hands to make them warm and then blows on his plate to make his porridge cold.<sup>40</sup> The satyr believes he is being made a fool of, since blowing is normally used to fan fire – or, by implication, to fan

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<sup>37</sup> "Oh, what is my repentance ! Oh, a flute is not worth all that ! Despite his cries, his skin is torn off his whole body; (...) his naked muscles become visible; a convulsive movement trembles the veins, lacking their covering of skin." Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Charles Martin (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004) VI, verses 386-90.

<sup>38</sup> Bodo Guthmüller, *Ovidio Metamorphoseos Vulgare* (Boppard am Rhein: H. Boldt Verlag, 1981). Pallas Athena, as the mythic inventor of the aulos, was embarrassed by the distorted appearance and puffed cheeks of her face when she played the pipes, so she discarded them.

<sup>39</sup> Private collection, Germany.

<sup>40</sup> Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

the flames of passion.

In this tradition, genre painters adapted the images of pipe music to portray contemporary scenes of the lower class engaged in revels and merriment. Along with the pipe's unseemly contact with and insertion into one's mouth, its physical appearance was a replica of the phallus, making it an unambiguous symbol of the male organ and erotic desire.<sup>41</sup> *Musicians' Fight* of c. 1625-30<sup>42</sup> by the French artist George de la Tour (1593-1652) illustrates the crude reality of unruly drunken festivities and it is the piper and his instrument at the forefront of the brawl (fig. 12). In a related theme, Jacob Jordaens uses the pipe as a moral tool in his *As the Old Sing, So the Young Pipe* of 1645 (fig. 13).<sup>43</sup> At this feast, three generations of the artist's family serve as models to illustrate a Flemish proverb, meaning that children repeat the stupidity of adults. The pipe is the instrument of the young who mindlessly emulate their elders. His image of *Three Itinerant Musicians* shows three youths singing and playing with abandon (fig. 14).<sup>44</sup> Close up and in profile, the juxtaposition of their strong, bare necks against the phallic-shaped recorder in the foreground alludes to the sexual nature of the bold music they produce.

Watteau's *L'indiscret* of c. 1715 (fig. 15) plays with this convention in a rare instance of the artist's depiction of phallic symbolism devoid of equivocation or nuance. The artist openly paints masculine desire and feminine compliance.<sup>45</sup> The Dionysian wind instrument, the *flageolet*, or recorder, stands in for the phallus and aims directly at the open

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<sup>41</sup> Simon Miller, "Instruments of Desire: Musical Morphology in the Early Work of Picasso," *The Musical Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (1992): 445.

<sup>42</sup> J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, CA.

<sup>43</sup> National Gallery of Canada.

<sup>44</sup> Museo del Prado, Madrid.

<sup>45</sup> Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

legs of a shepherdess. She holds a spindle and a distaff that by their form also suggest the male organ. The expressions and the glances of the two protagonists fully confirm an erotic interpretation. His expression is flushed and his smile is lustful while her face conveys a sense of suspended activity and thought. She is a barefoot country girl who allows herself to be seen but plays at being unaware of the attention of the man in the shadows; he, in turn, forgets his music and is lost in licentious contemplation as he peers up her skirt. This stands as a sharp contrast to *Iris (La Danse)*, mentioned earlier, a portrait of budding self-awareness and sensual attunement carried by the musical nerve endings of the recorder. Here, in *L'indiscret*, the instrument is not a transporter of sensory resonance, it is the physical embodiment, the signifier, the tool, of lustful longing.

As noted, the opposite of the strong, robust tone of the ancient piped *aulos* was Apollonian stringed music, which, with its measured notes, served an intellectual purpose. The *kithara* (lyre or lute) was the implement of Apollo, the god of light, sun and music; it accompanied poetry and enhanced its formal metered form, emphasizing the text it supported. A Greek *pelike*, a type of amphora, by the Syleus Painter of c. 500-470 BCE (fig. 16) portrays a young Apollo with his *kithara*, or lyre.<sup>46</sup> A hydria from the same era (fig. 17) depicts the poets Alcaeus and Sappho with a stringed lyre, presaging the eternal lyrical alliance of poetry with music.<sup>47</sup> These ideas reappeared later in medieval religious visual representations such as folio 1 of the ninth-century illuminated manuscript, the Paris Psalter, fig. 18, that illustrates David the Psalmist in classical style reasserting the artistic values of the ancient Greeks.<sup>48</sup> David sits with his harp in an Arcadian landscape playing within a harmonious world accompanied by the allegorical figures of Melody and the

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<sup>46</sup> Boardman, *Athenian Red Figure Vases: The Archaic Period* pl. 197.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. pl. 311.

<sup>48</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS 8824.

musical ‘Other’, Echo. Centuries later, scenes of music in daily life would resurface again in the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to express these same ideas of musical enchantment. Relevant images will be the subject of a later section in this chapter.

These ancient painted images illustrate the important visual symbolism contained in the ideas of Dionysian and Apollonian musical sensations; they would survive to the time of Watteau. Abbé du Bos would later refer to these ancient views on Apollonian music in his *Critiques*, writing that musical rhythm, “...prescribed rules for reducing all the motions of the body and voice to a certain measure, so as to beat time.... rhythm regulates gesture as well as recitation.”<sup>49</sup> Du Bos links the tempered measurements of Apollonian music not only to the regulation of musical beats, but also to the graceful movements of the body. He goes on to say that the measured tempos of music rely on the taste and judgment of the performer: “[The ancients] were obliged undoubtedly, the same manner as we, to depend on the taste and judgment of the person that beat the measure.”<sup>50</sup> In this passage, he introduces the concept of *le bon goût* or refined taste and legitimizes it by placing it in an alliance with the tastes of classical antiquity.

Watteau appears to give the words of abbé du Bos visual embodiment in *Fête venitienne* (c. 1718), fig. 19, where the measured gestures of the male and female figures indicate deliberate and careful performance.<sup>51</sup> They are, in the words of du Bos, “...obliged to depend on the taste and judgment of the person that beat[s] the measure.” Each figure leans slightly backward in symmetry. The implied hesitation and rhythmic movement of the

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<sup>49</sup> Dubos, *Réflexions Critiques Sur La Poésie Et Sur La Peinture* II, 15.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. II, 29.

<sup>51</sup> National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. The male figure is believed to be the artist's friend and fellow Flemishman, Nicolas Vleughels. Nicole Parmantier, "The Friends of Watteau," in *Watteau 1684-1721*, ed. Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1984), 49.

musical accompaniment confers a poetic, formal quality to the occasion. The poses of the two dancers are visual enrichments that allude to a purity of form. The gentleman's arms hold back his long cloak in a poised sweep to reveal his satin leggings as he prepares to step forward. The movement repeats in the graceful arms of the young woman who holds out her skirt at the sides. Both male and female extend a foot at a studied angle, hers barely detectable beneath the diaphanous fabric of her gown. The tall trees echo the open angles of the dancers' limbs as their performance is set in motion. The curving edge of the huge urn above visually reverberates the composition in which the figures arrange themselves around the center. The curvilinear contours of the fountain sculpture and the sparkling water reinforce the light on the array of observers and their elegant shimmering attire. Here, the artist gives resonance to the ideas of du Bos, painting his figures in movement while managing to convey seamlessly rhythmic and tasteful gestures.

The classical function of music as associated with reason in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries came from Apollo's lute, which was an ideal accompaniment for poetry and enhanced its formal metered form while emphasizing the text. It served as a musical enrichment of the rational rhythms of poetry, its purpose being to illustrate and clarify perception of form. Cicero's *De oratore* and Quintilian's *De institutione oratoria* devised tropes linking music to the measurable and lyrical forms of poetry.<sup>52</sup> Plato believed in the rational feature of music, that is the Apollonian component; this depended on the restraining of the sensual, Dionysian side. He considered music a precondition for the regulation of life and fundamental to proper education:

Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly

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<sup>52</sup> Simona C. Sagnotti, *Retorica E Logica: Aristotele, Cicerone, Quintiliano, Vico* (Turin: G. Giappichelli, 1999).



educated graceful, or of him who is uneducated ungraceful.<sup>53</sup>

In this passage, Plato is the source of the Cartesian idea of the senses (the ear) connecting to the brain (the soul); he also links the knowledge of music to the art of being an accomplished and graceful gentleman, ideas that would recur again in Baldesarre Castiglione's The Courtier of 1528, the essays of Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) and the writings of Chevalier de Méré (1607-1684). Musical knowledge would become an essential trait in the *honnête homme* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This subject will be examined at length in a later chapter.

### **Musical Transpositions: Sensibilities of Touch in Strings and Winds**

During the period in which Watteau painted, musical instruments evolved and their technical advancement enabled them, through the sense of touch by hand or mouth, to express a variety of musical sensibilities. Musical performance required direct contact of the instrument with the body, involving the act of touching, an extremely personal sensation that could be viewed as either welcome or invasive. Ideas of the performer as physical manipulator had loaded meanings with multivalent sensibilities. The tactile model of music and how it touched the listener informed the relationships between creation and emotion.<sup>54</sup> As with auditory sensations in music, deliberate palpable sensations created by other humans were signifiers of ambiguous and paradoxical meanings. Timbre, or the texture of the music, conveyed its own sensory information.

As musical instruments transformed, their range, expressiveness and purpose

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<sup>53</sup> Kathleen Marie Higgins, "Apollo, Music, and Cross-Culturality," *Philosophy East and West* 42, no. 4 (1992): 628. Author cites Plato Republic, bk. III, 401, as cited in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*, ed. Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 28.

<sup>54</sup> Daniel A. Putman, "Music and the Metaphor of Touch," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 44, no. 1 (1985): 61.

changed with them. The violin was the partner of strolling musicians, and, as such, was associated with the lower classes. Professionals were hired servants who played the instrument as an accompaniment for festivities. Compared to the lute, the violin had practically no musical or social prestige at all and retained a rural place in lower classes. Hired itinerant musicians employed violins or small fiddles to accompany lively country-dances. These instruments were ideally suited for underscoring rowdy revelry with spirited play. In this variegated way, Watteau's violinists, such as the musician in *Le bal champêtre* of c. 1713-4, fig. 20, operate across the borders of the high/low cultural divide, rising to the level of the highly regarded celebrants whom they accompany while also playing alongside the bagpipe and *flageolet*, instruments associated with lowly, peasant music makers.

However, by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the violin was growing in esteem and becoming an essential instrument in European theater and opera.<sup>55</sup> Following the ancient lyre, strings eventually came to be represented by the viol or *viola da gamba* and by the relatively new invention of an improved violin in Renaissance Italy, which employed a bow that, when applied to and drawn across the strings of the instrument, could produce broad changes in volume and intensity. Consequently, the concerto violin would become a premiere instrument in opera ballets and orchestras.<sup>56</sup> The improvement and redesign of musical instruments deepened their capacity for emotional arousal and enabled the performer to become a part of the instrument itself imposing his/her own willful touch to interpret the meaning of the notes.

Thus, the merry fiddle evolved into the vividly expressive violin. Watteau's red chalk drawing of c. 1714, fig. 21, now in Oxford, illustrates the new expressiveness of the

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<sup>55</sup> Miller, "Instruments of Desire: Musical Morphology in the Early Work of Picasso," 445-6.

<sup>56</sup> Jaap Schröder Christopher Hogwood, Clare Almond, "The Developing Violin," *Early Music* 7, no. 2 (1979): 155.

bowed instrument. The animated drawing is a dynamic sketch of a figure moving with the spirit of the music. On the left, several contour marks of different strength indicate the right forearm of a violinist as he draws the bow back and forth across the strings; the left hand, again layered with surging lines, bends at the wrist as it presses out each pitch and timbre with active fingering. While his body bends forward with the music, dark, slashing marks provide a fulcrum to the energy, indicating the furrowed brow and focused gaze of the violinist's facial expression, his eyes fixed on the instrument. The vitality of musical motion and the varied nuances of touch in this drawing make it an apparent, living visual record of an actual performance.<sup>57</sup> Here, the musical language of the emotions receives texture and sonority through Watteau's tactile force and articulation as his chalk meets the paper – just as the violin bow and strings are brought into contact with the musician's fingers. The violinist, to use a musical term, 'plays into the string' relying less on speed than on expressive variance of pressure for strength of sound.<sup>58</sup> So, too, the artist makes varied marks – light to dark, faint to forceful – to indicate the intensity of movement, concentration and sound.

As stated above, instruments played by the mouth were slow to gain favor in upper class entertainment. In Baldessar Castiglione's (1478-1529) famous Book of the Courtier, while he refers to musical knowledge as a desired attribute of the gracious courtier, wind instruments are forbidden to men who desire elevated standing since, in playing them one is unable to sing or use one's voice and the blowing action detracts from a gracious facial expression.<sup>59</sup> Castiglione's Book of the Courtier pointedly omits wind instruments, due to

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<sup>57</sup> Margaret Morgan Grasselli et al., *Watteau, 1684-1721* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1984) 94.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Donington, "String Playing in Baroque Music," *Early Music* 5, no. 3 (1977): 391-3.

<sup>59</sup> James Haar, *The Courtier as Musician: Castiglione's View of the Science and Art of Music*, ed. Robert W. Hanning and David Rosand, *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) 176.

their unsuitability to men of good standing since they had been scorned in antiquity by Alcibiades and by the goddess Athena, presumably because in playing them one gave up the use of expression through the voice and that they disfigured the mouth and cheeks and prevented one from achieving a *bella figura*.<sup>60</sup> Regarding the blowing of a wind instrument, Castiglione's courtier offers this amusing anecdote:

I heard a delightful blunder uttered by a Brescian who went to Venice for the Feast of the Ascension and ... heard so much music and singing, that it seemed a paradise. And when one of his companions asked him which kind of music he liked best of what he had heard, he said: 'It was all good; but I noted especially a man playing on a strange trumpet which with every move he would shove down his throat more that two palms' length, and then suddenly he would draw it out, then shove it down again; you never saw a greater marvel!' Then everyone laughed, understanding the silly notion of the man, who imagined that the player was thrusting down his throat the part of the trombone that disappears when it slides in.<sup>61</sup>

This story illustrates the comical and undignified view of horn blowing and the indecorous and degrading effect it lent to the human performer. It also acknowledges that the courtier, though he would not play it himself, needed to be acquainted with all musical instruments, including the "slide" trombone.<sup>62</sup>

Eventually, the idea of coarse or rude sounds produced by mouth-blown instruments came to apply solely to the bagpipe or its relative the *musette*, and to simple flutes such as the *flageolet*. Together with the mechanical *vielle* or hurdy-gurdy, these instruments were part of the life of peasants and itinerant musicians. Lower classes employed the bagpipe to accompany rustic revels. The unrestrained, raucous timbre of its music, produced without

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier: The Singleton Translation. An Authoritative Text Criticism*, ed. Daniel Javitch (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002) 112.

<sup>62</sup> Haar, *The Courtier as Musician: Castiglione's View of the Science and Art of Music* 180.

any capacity for shadings of volume, combined with its ungainly appearance, made it appear graceless and untamed. The bagpipe was “the location of sexual energy, since its chanter pipe and windsack together replicate[d] the male genitalia.”<sup>63</sup> A *trois crayons* study by Watteau of the relative of the bagpipe, the *musette*, fig. 22, gives the modern viewer a sense of the construction of the instrument, not only of its shape and size, but also of its cheerful decoration with satins, velvets and ribbons.<sup>64</sup> In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France, the aristocratic fashion for the pastoral idyll contributed to the development of the *musette*, smaller in size than the bagpipe and devoid of its more awkward and heavy parts. The *musette* replaced the blowpipe of the bagpipe (unbecoming in the mouth of a gentleman) with bellows. It consisted of an air supply, a bag, a chanter, and a drone. The chanter was the pipe upon which the melody was played. The drone was continuously sounded, producing a sustained pitch.<sup>65</sup>

The *vielle*, or hurdy-gurdy, traditionally carried by peasants, beggars and even the blind, was a popular symbol of pastoral life and, as such, was embraced precisely for the Dionysian, rustic and coarse sounds it produced. Georges del la Tour’s *Hurdy-Gurdy Player* of c. 1620-1630, fig. 23, illustrates the lowly status of the instrument.<sup>66</sup> A drunken, disheveled old man in rags sits in a deserted corner, cranking his instrument, leaning off-balance and singing out of a crooked mouth. Watteau’s drawing of a hurdy-gurdy, fig. 24,

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<sup>63</sup> Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>64</sup> The drawing is published on p. 124 of: Margaret Morgan Grasselli, "The Drawings," in *Watteau, 1684-1721*, ed. Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1984).

<sup>65</sup> Emanuel Winternitz, "Bagpipes and Hurdy-Gurdies in Their Social Setting," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 2, no. 1 (1943): 56-83.

<sup>66</sup> Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes, France.

illustrates the instrument's manner of play.<sup>67</sup> It was easy to operate and could therefore give the player the illusion of some ability.<sup>68</sup> Like the *musette*, ribbons and colored fabrics often adorned the instrument to lend a festive air to its appearance. As a highly mechanized instrument, it did not allow for control of volume or timbre, much like bagpipe. The player turned a crank, which was attached via a metal shaft to a wooden wheel mounted within the instrument. As the wheel turned, its edge rubbed against the strings causing them to vibrate creating a continuous drone-like sound similar to the bagpipe.<sup>69</sup> The lack of change in timbre and volume lent bodily, primal propulsions to the sound and projected a tone of bold intemperance.

While the ancient Greek double-reed *aulos* connoted music of a disreputable, Dionysian sound, another descendant of the *aulos*, the flute, evolved to signify a gentler musical character, recalling the song of birds. Its sound evoked the bodily spirit of man through its tonal similarity with the voice and its sound production by human breath. The bodily, earthly organ breathed air, acting as if the wind itself sounded through the body. Accordingly, "the many meanings of the word 'organ' were not ignored... From the Latin, 'organum,' it indicated both 'instrument' in the general sense of tool or implement and musical instrument, such as a pipe or large organ; as an instrument of the senses, a bodily 'organ' suggested a wind instrument, a symbol of the operation of air in [a] vocal organ, spirits in the body, the breath of God in all that he created."<sup>70</sup> Wind instruments eventually progressed from the simple recorder, or *flageolet* and were no longer simple pipes; they

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<sup>67</sup> Teylers Museum, Haarlem.

<sup>68</sup> Mirimonde, "Les Instruments De Musique Chez Antoine Watteau," 51.

<sup>69</sup> Emanuel Winternitz, "Bagpipes and Hurdy-Gurdies in Their Social Setting," Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin 2, no. 1 (1943): 58.

<sup>70</sup> Gretchen L. Finney, "A World of Instruments," ELH 20, no. 2 (1953): 105.

could also be technically intricate and able to produce more elaborately nuanced changes in pitch, timbre and volume. The drawings of Watteau include several studies of recorders that illustrate the position of the instrument in the mouth as well as the position of the hands, fig. 25.<sup>71</sup> An early instrument of this type, the *flûte à bec*, *flageolet*, or recorder, became extremely popular in the sixteenth century among musicians because of its unique ability to sound like the human voice. The recorder had become a significant element that linked the arts of music and painting in the Renaissance. The first textbook on the recorder, *La Fontegara*, included this passage, “Just as a truly able painter imitates the work of nature by varying his colors, with a wind...instrument you can imitate the expression of the human voice through breathing and modulation of the tone.”<sup>72</sup> The text reiterates the idea of the human body itself as a wind instrument, expressing itself through the life force of the air it breathes.

Eventually, the transverse flute transplanted the *flûte à bec* or ‘beaked’ flute. « *Le règne de la flute à bec touche à sa fin...grâce à la flûte traversière.* »<sup>73</sup> The transverse flute was also called a ‘German’ flute and was blown, not from the end, but from a hole in the side. Along with deriving its life from human breath, the flute had many expressive possibilities. Watteau’s observant drawings of a musician playing the transverse flute, figs. 26 and 27, depict, through the varying movements, postures and angles of the head of the

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<sup>71</sup> Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

<sup>72</sup> Gabriele Frings, "The 'Allegory of Musical Inspiration' by Niccolò Frangipane: New Evidence in Musical Iconography in Sixteenth-Century Northern Italian Painting," *Artibus et Historiae* 14, no. 28 (1993): 152. Author's note: The maxim (*De arte poetica* 361) was important to the theorists of Mannerism, such as Gian Paolo Lomazzo and Lodovico Dolce; see R. W. Lee "Ut pictura poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting," *The Art Bulletin* XXII (1940), 197-269.

<sup>73</sup> A.-P. de Mirimonde, "*Les Sujets Musicaux Chez Antoine Watteau*," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* LVIII (1961): 153.

flutist, the physical sensibilities of the musician as he interprets the music.<sup>74</sup> The artist conveys the expressive power of the instrument as it is articulated in the movement of the man's fingers and the pursing of his lips as it is brought into contact with the mouth. These accurate and carefully studied drawings suggest Watteau's firsthand knowledge of the transverse flute as well as the delicate sense of touch and breath required to play it correctly. Jacques Hotteterre (1674-1763), the chamber musician to Louis XIV, introduced the transverse flute into the Paris Opera House in 1690. The French composer, François Couperin (1668-1733), a contemporary of Watteau who will be the focus of a later chapter, declared the *flûte traversière* ideal for imitating the songs of birds. As the French aristocracy began to embrace their imagined versions of the bucolic pleasures of peasant life, they developed a sensibility for the beauty of these humble instruments of the shepherds which, they felt, embodied the sound of nature along with a pure and simple existence.<sup>75</sup>

The oboe (*hautbois*), another reed instrument to achieve status in its ability for sensitive musical expression, provided a constant stream of air with a modulation in pitch and level.<sup>76</sup> It required instead a careful manipulation of the embouchure or mouthpiece, which would allow the player to express a large range of timbres, volumes and pitches.<sup>77</sup> Watteau made a study of the precise, sustained mouth position required to produce the nuanced timbres of the oboe. In the drawing, fig. 28, the musician draws his mouth in a straight horizontal position, evenly distributing air through the double reed. The player, in

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<sup>74</sup> Private collection, Paris.

<sup>75</sup> Miller, "Instruments of Desire: Musical Morphology in the Early Work of Picasso," 445.

<sup>76</sup> For a thorough discussion on the evolution of wind instruments and their rise in status, consult: Bruce Haynes, "Lully and the Rise of the Oboe as Seen in Works of Art," *Early Music* 16, no. 3 (1988).

<sup>77</sup> Nora Post, "The 17th-Century Oboe Reed," *The Galpin Society Journal* 35, no. Mar. 1982 (1982): 56.



his expression, effects the deep concentration required to physically achieve the sound. Another technical and interpretive concern was responsive touch as well as the position of the oboe in the player's hands. Watteau's sketch of an oboe player, now in the British Museum, fig. 29, illustrates the delicate fingering required to elicit sensitive, nuanced tones from the instrument.<sup>78</sup> While the artist gives the oboe itself very little detailed treatment – just a few faint lines to indicate shape and size – it is the oboist's hands that receive careful attention. The articulation of each finger and the precise inflection of the hands, indicated with dark, vigorous marks, communicate the tactile nuances required for playing the instrument expressively.

Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687), court musician and composer to Louis XIV, was responsible for elevating the oboe and “from that time on, *musettes* were left to the shepherds, and violins...*theorbos*, and viols took their place.”<sup>79</sup> In 1668, abbé Michel de Pure (1620-1680), French scholar, novelist and commentator on the cultured salons of Paris, observed:

Oboes make a stately sound, and, played as they are nowadays at the Court and in Paris, they leave little to be desired. They make cadences as well in tune, trills as sweet, and diminutions as regular as the best-instructed voice and the most perfect instrument.”<sup>80</sup>

Here, he advances the rank of the wind instrument, comparing the qualities of the oboe to those of exquisitely tuned strings and the trained human voice. This underscores the evolution of musical instruments in their capacity to develop and improve, thereby expanding their ability to express the varied sensibilities required by each contextual setting

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<sup>78</sup> Trustees of the British Museum, London.

<sup>79</sup> Haynes, "Lully and the Rise of the Oboe as Seen in Works of Art," 324.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Author cites: M. de Pure, *Idees des spectacles anciens et nouveaux* (Paris, 1668), 274.

and audience.

### **The Instruments of Watteau**

Watteau's instruments range from those played by the lower, street-fair class of musicians, such as the bagpipe and hurdy-gurdy, to those of musician servants as in the violin, to the oboe, recorder and flute, to his most often used instrument, the guitar, favored by actors and gentlemen alike. His music makers melodically enhance the mixing of ranks and breaking of social barriers. Watteau paints this cultural and social dialogue as early in his career as 1708 in *Les comédiens sur le champ de foire*, fig. 30, in which he combines elegant spectators with members of a festive traveling troupe who play violins, a hurdy-gurdy and a *flageolet*.<sup>81</sup> They accompany a dance performed by two couples; in the distant background, tents shelter numerous on-lookers. Their pointed roofs repeat the sweeping gestures of the dancers and the celebratory draperies, which adorn the tree at right. Spectators observe the dance and relate to each other with affection. Behind them, to the right, a fortuneteller with a child on her back reads the palm of an actor seated at a long table. Elements of fantasy and theatre blend with lower and upper classes in the context of an outdoor fair. While the physical condition of the painting makes it difficult to read, there are passages of delicacy and careful execution in which Watteau imaginatively combines the make-believe worlds of the theater with a lively social moment. To the left, actors pass a hat while their comrades – a Pierrot, a masked Oriental, and a Turk – turn toward three elegant spectators seated on an embankment. The music of the violins accompanies the lighthearted mood and sprightly patterns of the dance while the hurdy-gurdy and *flageolet* offer a witty, amusing, Dionysian refrain. Here, music is Watteau's metaphor for spiritual blending and harmony in the material world. Two distinct zones of symbolic social practice blend

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<sup>81</sup> Charlottenburg, Berlin.

effortlessly. He informs the tableau with sensitive tones of sociability often accented with somewhat daring, erotic grace notes, which emanate from the hurdy-gurdy and the whistle-like *flageolet*. The musical boundaries of Watteau are flexible; their signifiers can be denied, subverted and transgressed. While notions of high and low continue to operate, the instruments and musical activities are fluid. As a result, *Les comédiens sur le champ de foire* is part of a dialogue – unspoken yet felt – with the contemporary opposing sides of reason and passion, high and low, established in the traditions of ancient myth.

The painted melodies of Watteau unfold as an art of process rather than product; they are studied yet transparent, appealing to visual and auditory moods. As such, Watteau's musical analogies are not merely acoustic; *sensibilité* exists behind the music ranging from the restrained to the bold. In *Le contrat mariage* of c. 1712, fig. 31, a hurdy-gurdy player and a violinist, positioned to the right foreground of the picture, play to the assembled crowd.<sup>82</sup> The vibrations from each proceeding note radiate outward, first moving the group nearest them who respond with dance-like gestures. The music spreads further to the other participants; their performance and interaction operate in an arc-like, radiant pattern, which centers on the bride herself. The bright light enfolding her, the crown of flowers and the circular contract table visually reinforce the rippling, concentric sensations of vibrant, musical dispersion. Even the tall, lush trees appear to respond to the emanating spirits. In this way, the musical notes of Watteau's musicians extend to the figures and their setting, eliciting response and causing each tableau to vibrate in sympathy. This acts as a visual expression of Nicolas Malebranche's ideas, which maintained that the senses were made up of organic fibers that projected from the brain outward to receive and transmit feelings back to the brain, or soul. Watteau paints this 'spreading-out' of feeling through filaments of musical sensation. By contrast, musical instruments are barely detectable and

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<sup>82</sup> Museo del Prado, Madrid.

do not appear to be integral parts of *La mariée de village* (c. 1712), fig. 32.<sup>83</sup> The lack of musical vibrations is evident in the stiff bearing of the observers. The numerous figures, numbered at 108, stand rigidly composed and make way for the processing couple.<sup>84</sup> Arranged in groups, they do not appear to coalesce as a whole; their configurations are vertical, separate. There is a stillness to the scene that belies any festive reading.

### **Music and the Dance**

The art of the dance was a synonym for human grace during the *ancien régime* and as such it is an inherent counterpart to Watteau's interest in music. As music was moving into secular and social realms, a collection of dance forms known as the suite evolved stressing poetic patterns of spirited steps and activities. The social dance confined improvisation to transitional gestures, forming an ideal harmony of refined action with musical expression.<sup>85</sup> These ideas play out again and again in the shifting sensibilities in the art of Watteau. His dance scenes show an awareness of the balance between social conformity and personal expression.<sup>86</sup> The subtly artful poses of Watteau's figures confer grace in even the most humble of circumstances; the artist is concerned with dance as a means of exploring the delicate workings of figural definition.<sup>87</sup> Accordingly, Watteau's paintings are about the active process of his brush; like his expressive marks, the movements of the dance become visual signifiers for the development of musical themes. In four diverse dance scenes, the musical abilities of various instruments comment on and

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<sup>83</sup> Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Berlin, Schloss Charlottenburg.

<sup>84</sup> Rosenberg, "The Paintings," 267.

<sup>85</sup> Cohen, *Art, Dance and the Body in French Culture of the Ancien Régime* 187-9.

<sup>86</sup> Wilfrid Mellers, "If Music Be the Food of Love.," *Modern Painters* 11 (1998): 68.

<sup>87</sup> For a thorough and important treatise on dance in this period, see: Cohen, *Art, Dance and the Body in French Culture of the Ancien Régime*.

facilitate social interaction.

*Les bergers*, *La danse champêtre*, *Le bal champêtre*, and *Les Plaisirs du bal* are united by the central theme of moving to music. In each, the vibrant notes inform the postures and social exchanges – from simple seduction to country pleasure to ornamented spectacle. Arms and legs extend in varying degrees of grace while the benevolent countryside affords a tranquil backdrop. *Les bergers* of c. 1717-19, fig. 33, is a sequence of episodes in the progression of love.<sup>88</sup> Watteau paints the discreet and varied rituals of erotic pleasure and unites them, through music, into one visual, sensory instance. At the left, detached from the group in a grove of trees, a woman turns her back as she sits on a swing, which, in its back and forth motion, alludes to her indecisiveness and hesitation. Calvin Seerveld writes, “...swinging is a model game for lovers. It simulates the delicate, back-and-forth tug of learning to love, with movements suggestive of coquettishness.”<sup>89</sup> In the nearer left foreground, a shepherd makes advances on a young maid whose resistance is gradually melting. Behind them, a couple lean in to observe and hear the piper who prepares to play. The bagpipe-like *musette*, through its phallic form and untempered drone, is a blatant reminder of male genitals and physical lust.<sup>90</sup> Here, music is the instrument that propels the action; feminine hesitancy, eased by the timbre of the rustic notes, gradually develops into romantic action. In the foreground, a young man, alone, enviously observes the dancing couple; they are paradigmatic of the inevitable consummation of the amorous chain of events.

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<sup>88</sup> Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Berlin, Schloss Charlottenburg.

<sup>89</sup> Calvin Seerveld, "Telltale Statues in Watteau's Painting," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 14, no. 2 (1980-81): 152.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Crow, "Codes of Silence: Historical Interpretation and the Art of Watteau," *Representations* 12, no. Autumn 1985 (1985): 9.

Watteau employs music as an artistic undertone as early as c. 1704 in *La Danse champêtre*, fig. 34.<sup>91</sup> It is a scene of rustic life, no doubt informed by the Netherlandish roots of the artist. Nestled in a shady bower, a young maid and man gesture and step gracefully to a tune supplied by three figures in the shadows to the right: a man playing a musette, another playing an oboe and a third, more prominent young boy who plays a recorder. In the foreground, the artist bathes his young peasants in a gentle, warm light, which emanates from the left. The two central figures, the lady on the left and man at right, perform a demure dance somewhat awkwardly. At the far left, a young child reaches up toward the woman, who in turn grasps the hand of the man who steps forward with his left foot. The two main participants figure forth a delicately balanced system of gestures, turns and sweeping arcs. The woman directs her body towards the man yet glances down in the opposite direction at the child. Here, the feminine restraint or hesitancy has a domestic source as she attends the youngster. In contrast to the other dancers in these paintings, her back is not to the viewer. She is, instead, frontal in pose, rendering her appearance more open and candid. The gesture of her right upward arm echoes the curving pattern of her white apron as she grasps it in her left hand. The man balances on his right foot while extending his opposite leg and bowing to the woman while taking her left hand in his right. He gestures downward with his left hand, pointing at the fourth, brightly-lit figure to the far right, a pale young maiden who beats the rhythm of the dance with a tambourine. At the left, the dense foliage parts to let in light from the sky which barely illuminates other figures in the left background who appear intent on their own amusement; they are set apart from the dance in the foreground yet in harmony with it. The framing arch of trees and the rustic structure in the far ground contain the scene and act as a proscenium for the spritely performance. The portrayal of refined, albeit peasant, behavior is central here. The figures

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<sup>91</sup> Indianapolis Museum of Art.

are not absorbed in capricious revelry but are restrained in their pastoral pleasure. The presence of the child contributes to the feeling of sincere domesticity and innocence. Their clothing is pretty yet homespun; it does not reflect the light as many of the opulent satins and silks will on Watteau's later figures. The fabric of the clothing is much like the timbre of the music contained in the image: it is rough and simple yet pleasing, serviceable for the occasion but not precious. The presence of the crude musical instruments brings a spontaneous quality to the image while also lending an air of subversive and desirous intentions. Hidden within the foliage, three musicians play simple tunes; while the celebrants outwardly perform a mannered ritual, the overtones contained in the musical instruments are teasingly lustful. The knowing outward glances of the young tambourine maid and the boy playing the recorder contribute to our awareness of the underlying desires that reverberate in the timbre of the wind instruments and the pulsing beat of the tambourine. Watteau, while keeping his narrative details to a minimum, gives tonal resonance to the scene by the instruments he chooses. The, *musette*, oboe and tambourine suggest the pastoral and countrified contexts in which their musical sounds are heard and felt.

The central woman in *Le bal champêtre* (c. 1713-14), fig. 19, clothed in a dark red dress is also in a state of hesitation.<sup>92</sup> Her pause, however, takes the form of a waiting stance for the music to begin. Her face, revealed only in profile, is unreadable as she gracefully holds her skirt outward in preparation. The scene takes place in an invented outdoor world of tall, Italian pines and poplars. Musicians accompany the couple with a violin, oboe and *musette*. A bright sky illuminates the man whom the viewer sees from the front. His vivid blue silk costume receives the highlights from the light revealed by the

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<sup>92</sup> Private collection.

break in the trees behind him. As he performs, inclining slightly toward his partner with legs flexed in preparation, he sounds the castanets as rhythmic accents to the music. Movement and music unite in a bucolic and courtly game of advance and retreat while the musicians, playing in the shadows to the left, supply subtle notes to carry the lovers forward. The young and handsome onlookers are in various states of social give-and-take, some turning to depart, others drawn in by the music. The foggy light shelters the musicians and observers while it illuminates three young women at the right who visually balance the scene. This is a scene of pleasure and courtship played out within the beauty of nature, punctuated by the castanets and underscored by the musical notes contained within the small forest clearing.

More opulent in portrayal is Watteau's small but elegant *Les Plaisirs du bal* (c. 1716-17), fig. 35. A multiple cast of characters engages in an elegant scene that mixes musicians, actors and aristocratic observers.<sup>93</sup> It is an imagined world, dominated above by a laurel-crowned bust within a shell and elegant caryatids supporting pillars that form a monumental arch. A sumptuous landscape and a shimmering fountain lie beyond the fantastic open foyer. Pierrot and a harlequin appear in the background at left; a fool sits on the ground in the foreground, his guitar on his lap. Children and servants, lovers, actors and musicians all participate in the festivities. In the center, a man and a woman dressed in theater costumes begin a minuet. Watteau recalls the arabesque designs of his early career, alluding to the symmetrical and ornate step configurations, calling on his past artistic practice of stylized aristocratic leisure and amusement.<sup>94</sup> The figures are pliant and loosely linked, relating in various directions with informal gestures. It is a visual game, a concoction

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<sup>93</sup> Sixty-five people and four dogs have been counted in the painting. Grasselli et al., *Watteau, 1684-1721* 368.

<sup>94</sup> Crow, "Codes of Silence: Historical Interpretation and the Art of Watteau," 11.



of reality and fantasy as present and past come together to place the scene outside of time. Here, music is incidental yet imperative; while the little orchestra plays, it, along with the fool's guitar across the way, is as much a part of the dreamy substance as the invented architecture and luscious landscape. The tonal atmosphere is polyphonic, underscored by the musical flourishes, caprices and refrains that permeate the air. Music is a part of the ornamentation, another intricate brocade that weaves a sensual thread throughout the painting. In these four works, *Les bergers*, *La danse champêtre*, *Le bal champêtre* and *Les Plaisirs du bal*, movement and the music behind it inform the social exchanges – from rustic courtship to pastoral play to garlanded fantasy.

### **Music and Poetry: Measured Sensibilities**

*Le bal champêtre* (fig. 20), mentioned earlier, gives seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ideas of poetic meter visual cadence in the measured steps of the two performers, accented by the castanets of the male dancer. Their dance, the minuet, is slow, ceremonious and graceful, performed with precise movements. The delicate stance of each figure, and the pattern they will perform, receive piquant resolve from the click of the castanets. Within the traditions of 17<sup>th</sup>-century French music, the art of poetic meter was echoed in song. The abbé d'Aubignac (1604–1676), associate of the statesman Cardinal de Richelieu and a theorist, playwright, and critic wrote: « *Le poète dit seulement qu' un musicien en avait parlé dans une chanson.* »<sup>95</sup> The poet merely reiterates what the composer states in his music. Poets are singers – poems are songs – songs are poems. Abbé du Bos, again referring to classic antiquity, reminded his readers of the importance of Pythagoras and his numerical musical theories:

When Virgil in one of his eclogues makes Lycidas say to Maeris: 'Repeat those verses I heard you sing one evening; I should soon recollect the

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<sup>95</sup> Abbé d'Aubignac, *Conjectures Academiques* (Paris: Hachette, 1925) 61.

numbers, could I but remember the words.' ...All he intends that Lycidas should say, is that altho' he had forgot the words of these verses, yet he remembered the feet and measure of which they were composed, and consequently their cadence. Wherefore Modi, a word, which the Latins use frequently, when speaking of their music, properly signified no more than the movement.<sup>96</sup>

Du Bos refers to the ancient Roman poet to point out the indelible metric feature of music; it is the beat, the measure and the rhythm of music that possesses the ability to suggest movement and propel the listener. Emotions, portrayed in poetry and paintings traditionally studied by theorists such as Charles Le Brun (1619-1690),<sup>97</sup> were emerging as subjects in such musical treatises as Marin Mersenne's *Harmonie universelle* of 1636 and in Kircher's *Musurgia universalis* (1650).<sup>98</sup> There was wide interest in the study of the emotive potential in all the arts; music and its use of thematic material was another artistic component to the power of emotional *sensibilité*. Cicero's *De oratore* and Quintilian's *De institutione oratoria*, the university texts of the time, aided music theorists in devising tropes and figures related to metaphor. The German musical expression *tonmalerei* or 'tone painting' is a fitting related designation.<sup>99</sup> While music is linked with poetry, so are the paintings of Watteau because he, like the poet and the musician, communicates the descriptive sensibilities of emotion.

Guillaume Colletet (1634-1659), the seventeenth-century French critic connected the English word 'sonnet' with the French word '*sonner*' (to ring or sound), alluding to the

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<sup>96</sup> Dubos, *Réflexions Critiques Sur La Poésie Et Sur La Peinture* II, 17.

<sup>97</sup> Charles LeBrun, *A Method to Learn to Design the Passions* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).

<sup>98</sup> Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie Universelle*, trans. Roger E. Chapman (The Hague: M. Nijhof, 1957). Athanasius Kirchner, *Musurgia Universalis / Atanasius Kircher: Mit Einen Vorwort Personen-, Orts- Und Sachregister Von Ulf Schharlau*, 2. Nachdruck ed. (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1999).

<sup>99</sup> Gerard G. LeCoat, "Comparative Aspects of the Theory of Expression in the Baroque Age," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 5, no. 2 (1971-72): 223.

poetic form as having a musical ancestry.<sup>100</sup> Unlike the lush and emotional Italian *bel canto* arias of the same period, French airs united words and music in an established courtly style of graceful expression. Watteau's *trois crayons* drawing, *Three Portraits of Musicians*, portrays a subject that is rare in his *oeuvre* (fig. 36).<sup>101</sup> The artist captures the essence of the art of singing, that is the performers translating the words and music into physical and emotional expression. The singers are identified as Giovanni-Antonio Guido, a composer, violinist and favorite of the Regent, an Italian castrato, Antonio Paccini, musician to the king, and Mlle d'Argenon, a noted singer. The artist draws his figures in the act of singing, conveying the angled posture of the center figure as he leans forward to read and interpret the music. The figure at the left, in spectacles, focuses on the same music sheet as his neighbor, his expression equally intent. Mlle. d'Argenon appears to know the music by heart as she looks off in reverie, wrapped in the melody.<sup>102</sup> Watteau reifies the art of singing, a uniquely human expression, in this drawing.

Jean Léonor Le Gallois de Grimarest (1659-1713), the noted biographer of Molière, wrote a small volume on manners and music dedicated to the Duchesse du Maine. In it, he devoted a chapter to the art of singing:

*La musique vocale est une espèce de langue, dont les hommes sont convenus, pour se communiquer avec plus de plaisir leurs pensées, & leurs sentiments. Ainsi celui qui compose de cette sorte de musique, doit se considérer comme un traducteur, qui en observant les règles de son art, exprime ces memes pensées, & ces memes sentiments.*<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> G. Colletet, *Poesies Diverses* (Paris: L. Chamhoudry, 1656) 131. "Ce n' est pas apres tout, que prenant le sonnet au pied de la lettre, il ne se trouve que sonnet soit presque la mesme chose que chanson, puis que le verbe sonner d' où il est tiré, est souvent pris par nos poëtes pour chanter."

<sup>101</sup> *Cabinet des Dessins*, Louvre.

<sup>102</sup> Or, perhaps her head study is not part of the group of three but a more realized version, as seen in the use of white chalk here, of the sketches at the bottom right.

<sup>103</sup> Jean Léonor Le Gallois de Grimarest, *Traité Du Récitatif Dans La Lecture, Dans L'action Publique, Dans La Déclamation, Et Dans Le Chant*. (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1707) 120.

Grimarest implies that singing is a unique, human art in which thoughts and feelings are communicated through song. Therefore, the composer is like a translator who must observe the rules and syntax of the musical language. Watteau accurately reads the postures and facial articulations of song performance; the open mouths and decisive gazes of his singers portray group harmony and attunement in a shared event of music and poetry. The artist gives visual cadence to Baldessar Castiglione's admonition, in Book of the Courtier of 1528, that a cultured person should be able to sight sing not only securely but '*con bella maniera*' thereby introducing the notion of stylish grace as part of musical performance.<sup>104</sup>

### **Musical Ornament and Musical Temperance**

Cultures that embraced music, poetry and dance were more emotionally aware than primitive societies, according to French intellectuals of the era. Claude Perrault (1613-1688), physician, anatomist, architect and translator of Vitruvius, believed that music could play a role in personal as well as social growth. Again, theorists referred to the traditions of ancient Greece, a period when music was taken seriously by the ruling classes. Perrault wrote that music of the ancients possessed a simplicity, clarity and distinction, which gave it a power and sweetness.<sup>105</sup> Melody and poetry were the main tools from the distant past for expression of religious, moral and political principles. By thus placing the study of music within classical, historical contexts, seventeenth-century critics gave authority and weight to the physiological and philosophical aspects of melody and harmony. Jean Laurent Lecerf de La Viéville (1674-1710), in his treatise on music, stated, « *En Grec la Musique étoit le*

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<sup>104</sup> Haar, *The Courtier as Musician: Castiglione's View of the Science and Art of Music* 172.

<sup>105</sup> Claude Perrault, *Du Bruit Et De La Musique Des Anciens*, Reprint of Leide, Pierre Van der Aa, 1721 ed. (Geneva: Éditions Minkoff, 2003) 321.

*fondement de toutes les sciences* », placing music at the foundation of all knowledge.<sup>106</sup>

The theories of music reflected the lucid order of all truth, even the cosmic universe. But its equally important, albeit elusive, meaning was that of delighting the senses. The beauty of music was sensory enchantment – yet, it functioned along with a rational understanding of melodic forms to blend mind and body into a unified whole. Thus, the French concept of ‘delighting the senses’ was infinitely more temperate and refined than the idea of ‘exciting’ them. It is an important reminder that the French idea of the passions still relied on self-control and good taste.

In France, performance of a basic tune acquired a high degree of cleverness and luminosity through judicious use of musical ornament. The composer provided the starting-point, which the performer would poetically embellish with trills, melodic phrases and variations called ‘diminutions’ or ‘doubles’. The performer’s vocal ability was only as good as her/his taste, discernment and understanding of where best to apply the ornamentation.<sup>107</sup> Jean Millet (1618-1684), organist and vocal tutor, wrote in 1666 that the method of applying vocal embellishment or diminutions to music was the essential to ‘*le bel usage de chanter*’ or the fine art of singing.<sup>108</sup> Watteau’s artistic passages echo these very canons of discernment and judicious embellishment, for instance, in *Les plaisirs du bal*, fig. 35. The viewer notices pictorial paradigms of the kind of musical ornaments discussed by Millet. Ornamental, jewel-like embellishments delight and amuse the eye. The center couple poses in an intermezzo of sorts, a pause, while the male dancer imparts grace to his

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<sup>106</sup> Jean Laurent Lecerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison De La Musique Italienne Et De La Musique Française*, Reprint Geneva: Minkoff, 1972 ed. (Brussels: Francois Poppens, a Saint-Esprit, 1705) 261.

<sup>107</sup> David Tunley, "The Union of Words and Music in Seventeenth-Century French Song - the Long and the Short of It," *Australian Journal of French Studies* XXI, no. 3 (1984): 289-90.

<sup>108</sup> Albert Cohen, "L'art De Bien Chanter (1666) of Jean Millet," *Musical Quarterly* LV, no. 2 (1969): 171. Cohen cites "Jean Millet de Montgesoye (1618-1684)," in *Recherches sur la musique française classique*, Vol. III (1968), 15-23.

position with a tilt of the head, a lilt in his shoulders. Glowing flourishes emanate from the decorative caryatids, the ornate columns and the splash of the fountain in the distance. The various attendees suggest a figurative fugue of angles and attitudes that interweave and relate in closed and open arrangements. *Pizzicatos* come in the form of shimmering fabrics; *coloratura* is implied by the very sumptuousness of the entire scene. *Diminuendos* occur in the shady dark green of the trees. A seated fool on the ground, a tiny dog in the foreground and a small servant observing the scene from a balcony far above are the visual incidentals and grace notes of the composition. Just as French music required thoughtful, poetic ornament as well as a delicately restrained delivery, so too do Watteau's painterly passages achieve a kind of eloquence and *sprezzatura* in their measured discretion.

### ***Sensibilité: Balance vs. Excess***

In the pictures of Watteau, music is a crucial conveyor of the sensual and social aspects of human interaction. Musical expression is direct and its response is intuitive. Music expands the emotional and cultural vocabulary by its very components: timbre, melody, rhythm and harmony. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these reactive factors applied, as well, to the tenor of human relationships and their ability to sustain and nurture. Elevated notions of *sensibilité* as awareness and the ability to feel occupied a lengthy and significant place in French philosophical debate. French clergymen wrote of the superiority of man in his sensitive capacities.<sup>109</sup> Sensibility as tender affection and mutual awareness was ever present in the language of the letters of Mme de Sévigné.<sup>110</sup> François Fénelon, bishop and tutor of the grandson of Louis XIV, wrote a treatise on the

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<sup>109</sup> Jacques-Benigne Bossuet, *Méditations Sur L'evangile* (Paris: Vrin, 1966).

<sup>110</sup> Mme. de Sévigné, *Correspondance T.3 1680-1969* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).

proper education for the young dauphin, naming sensibility as an essential component.<sup>111</sup>

In the modern era, Michel Foucault would propose the idea of *sensibilité* as an imperative in the gaining of knowledge, identifying the role of sensitivity as one of resemblance linking the visible with the invisible to aid human understanding. Just like the moving vibrations of music, sensitivity “is a principle of mobility... a hidden interior movement... a displacement of qualities... in a series of relays.”<sup>112</sup> These hidden movements between the inner soul and exterior manifestation form the sympathetic displacements and exchanges in the musical subjects as well as the *sensible* brush of Watteau. He discovers equivalents for shifting transparencies and seemingly spontaneous qualities of pitch and modulation that interlace process, inspiration, performance and invention. Not only does Watteau paint musicians and their instruments, but the very sensations of sounds and their timbres are present in the expressive use of painterly passages. Watteau’s *La Perspective* (c. 1714), fig. 1, believed to be set in the park at Montmorency, the country residence of Pierre Crozat, causes each note of the player’s guitar to become a visual refrain in the tilt of his head as the tones gently strike the glowing breast of his attentive female listener; they reverberate out to the lustrous satin of the other figures and the ambient light in the trees. Every sparkle in the painting, conferred by a delicate dab of thick paint, becomes a resonant splash of sound, the fragment of a song, the verse of an air.

During the seventeenth century, music also became the quintessence of emotion in Italian opera, a principal site for the portrayal of sensitive feeling in music. Musical emotion, expressed and felt simultaneously, could incite and move listeners to, what French

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<sup>111</sup> François Fénelon, *Traité Des L'education Des Filles* (1687) (Paris: Ch. Delagrave, 1883).

<sup>112</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970) 18-22.

critics would deem, a ‘dangerous extreme’. This presented an inherent threat to the measured control of French music. As an admirer of Italian music, it is likely that Watteau appreciated its emotive forces and employed it to underscore the subtle, expressive *sensibilité* evoked in each of his tableaux. His *L’amour au theater italien* (c. 1716), fig. 37, celebrates the return of the Italian comedians to Paris in 1716 after their 1697 banishment.<sup>113</sup> Clothed in the darkness of night, Pierrot prepares to play his guitar while Mezzetin lights their way with a torch. Along with being an attribute of Cupid, the lighted torch may be the initial beacon of re-emergence, glowing in concert with the resonant note struck by the guitarist. Both light and sound act as attendant signals to a new era for Italian theater.

Watteau incorporates music in subtle and complex ways, embodying the physical and psychological nuances of melody with the fluid use of paint. In such works as *Récreation italienne* (c. 1715) fig. 38, his painted melodies appeal to visual and auditory moods or atmospheres.<sup>114</sup> Animated strokes exploit touch as an imitative and expressive sensation, exploring the affections produced by his musician while giving the scene a visual emotional tempo. While a guitarist plays for his sweetheart, other figures come together in similar groupings, seeming to cohere sympathetically with the sentiments of the courting couple. They lean, listen, converse and gently relate to each other in an informal yet orchestrated grouping of complex circularity. The artist’s active, transparent brushwork blurs outlines and effaces intention. Even the resistant lone figure standing at the far right appears drawn to the music. The subtle vibrating strings of the guitar receive visual resonance in the sinuous posturing and inter-weaving of bodies and drapery; through his lyrical brush, the artist conveys the emotive timbre and coming-together of the elusive shadings of this evocative scene.

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<sup>113</sup> Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

<sup>114</sup> Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Berlin, Schloss Charlottenburg.



The works of Watteau are not simple portrayals of communal events; they represent social groupings as part of an aesthetic and expressive system of social performance and desire. In his subtle renderings, his musical images relate directly to developments in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France: the connection between leisure and the reconfiguring of society, the flowering of music as an independent art, and the development of sensibility as a desirable physical and emotional attribute.<sup>115</sup> Watteau's music is part of an important sign system for engaging high and low culture; his images mix erotic love with good nature and taste. He identifies the improvisational, fluid characteristics of music making while calling attention to medium and process, informing his lucent brush with apparent facility while inventing a new mode of painting. Contrasting sharply with the old instructive pursuits of the Academy, Watteau combines the artistic progressions of music and painting to present the artist as a member of a worldly elite attuned to rustic pleasures. By incorporating music into his subjects, Watteau's art suggests a link with nuanced expression and the self-reflexive behavior of a multi-layered society. In his pictures of music, intricate passages of paint and sound shimmer and reverberate, involving both viewer and listener.

In opposition to those who view his art as purely ornamental, this thesis contends that his images contain socially resonant nuances that contribute, with careful discernment, to the multivalent, layered meanings to the discourse on sensibility. Watteau's observant portrayal of music and its players contribute to an understanding of the changing cultures of entertainment and leisure. A.-P. Mirimonde writes these words: « *L'étude des instruments de musique permet d'approfondir la connaissance de Watteau... L'histoire de la peinture ne peut que gagner à être ainsi rapprochée de l'organologie et de l'histoire de la*

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<sup>115</sup> Plax, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth-Century France*.

*musique.* »<sup>116</sup> The consideration of musical instruments allows a closer of understanding of Watteau the artist; the history of painting gains much from a comprehensive knowledge of the history of music. For Watteau, music is an important vehicle for the expression of the sensations of sympathy and love, both corporeal and incorporeal; the notes played by his musicians describe shared emotions and, at the same time, put new visual and auditory sensations into motion. Watteau's musical images are playful, beguilingly layered parables of desire that engage with the forces of life without being merely narrative. Watteau projects the varied practices of country pleasure and discreet eroticism and unities them through music.

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<sup>116</sup> Mirimonde, "*Les Instruments De Musique Chez Antoine Watteau.*" 53.

## Chapter Two:

### Watteau's Sentimental Lyricism and Love's Subversive Strings

This chapter argues that Watteau's images of the guitar connect with the historical traditions of string music. Not only do his guitars act as accompaniments for social connectedness and shared human sentiment, but they are also amorous facilitators and conduits for the erotic vibrations of love.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, ideas of sensibility expanded to include emotional awareness and tender affection. French clergymen such as Jacques-Benigne Bossuet (1627-1704) wrote of the superiority of man in his ability to feel and Pierre Nicole (1625-1695), a distinguished French Jansenist, asserted that intense emotive response elevated all of humanity.<sup>1</sup> His *Essais de Morale* include statements such as this: « *Il y a dans l'homme une sensibilité prodigieuse, capable de mouvements démesurés de tristesse, d'amour, de joie, de crainte, de desespoir.* »<sup>2</sup> The person endowed with exceptional sensibility has a boundless capacity for experiencing life to the fullest in the immeasurable heights of love and joy as well as the great depths of sorrow and despair. While religious philosophers traditionally linked sensibility with the spiritual mysteries of the church, by the seventeenth century these ideas had expanded beyond the confines of

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<sup>1</sup> Bossuet, *Méditations Sur L'evangile* 294. Bossuet, the priest, addresses the Lord, praising him for his sensibilité which empowers all penitents to face their sins and overcome them; asking for pity, the priest acknowledges how sensible, or knowledgeable, God is of our sins who hears our voices with compassion. This compassionate sensibilité follows Christ in all his dealings with those who suffer: "*C'est pourquoi par cette mesme sensibilité qui vous a fait compatir à nos autres maux... Les aveugles qui connoissent combien vous estes sensible à nos maux, vous disoient à cris redoublez: ayez pitié de nous, seigneur, fils de David; vous écoutastes leur voix, touché de compassion vous mistes vostre main miséricordieuse sur leurs yeux privez de la lumière et ils receurent la veue. Ce sentiment de compassion vous suit toujours, quoyqu'il ne soit pas toujours exprimé; c'est ce coeur tendre et compatissant, ce coeur émeu de pitié qui sollicitoit vostre bras tout puissant en faveur de ceux dont vous voyez les souffrances.*"

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Nicole, *Essai De Morale* (Paris: G. Desprez, 1701) 163.

sacred enlightenment. Responsiveness, as discussed by Swiss theologian Jean-Pierre Crousaz and abbé du Bos, occupied a lengthy and significant place in French philosophical debate.<sup>3</sup> The expansion and subsequent evolution of emotion as *sensibilité* and its incorporation into real life and social relationships required a new application of ideas; sentient, artistic motifs and emblems evolved to embody and define sympathetic perception. Adaptable forms of communication arose within an ever-increasing artistic vocabulary that identified new relationships between art and life; these ideas blurred boundaries and combined the roles of listeners/spectators while finding new rationales for creative expression.<sup>4</sup>

Sensibility as tender affection and mutual attentiveness was an important part of the language in the letters of Mme de Sévigné.<sup>5</sup> François Fénelon, bishop and tutor of the grandson of Louis XIV, wrote a treatise on the proper education for the young dauphin, naming sensibility as an essential component.<sup>6</sup> Like these earlier notions of sensibility, Watteau's compositions, as this chapter will argue, imply these multivalent ideas of group harmony and social awareness, endowing shared pleasure with a noble grace in such paintings as the aforementioned *Récréation galante* (fig. 5). Watteau arranges his figures in a chromatic chain of relaxed connectness, managing to interweave and mingle his figures in foliate textures that sympathize with and emulate their natural surroundings. His graceful

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<sup>3</sup> Jean-Pierre Crousaz, *Traité Du Beau*, facs. ed. Geneva, 1970 ed. (Amsterdam: 1715).

<sup>4</sup> HaCoen, "The Music of Sympathy in the Arts of the Baroque; or, the Use of Difference to Overcome Indifference," 612.

<sup>5</sup> Mme. de Sévigné, *Correspondance T. 1 1646-1675* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) 152. "Vous vous amusez donc à penser à moi, vous en parlez, et vous aimez mieux m'écrire vos sentiments que vous n'aimez à me les dire. De quelque façon qu'ils me viennent, ils sont reçus avec unetendresse et une sensibilité qui n'est comprise que deceux qui savent aimer comme je fais. Vous me faitessentir pour vous tout ce qu'il est possible de sentirde tendresse."

<sup>6</sup> Fénelon, *Traité Des L'education Des Filles* (1687).

figures lean in to hear the music of the guitar while they share the pleasures of the outdoors. The sequence of musical notes underscores the progressive series of social interaction.

As mentioned earlier, Watteau's *Les Plaisirs du bal* (fig. 34) gives visual resonance to the sentimental stirrings of music and the expressive meanings contained within its harmonic movements. Ruth HaCoen writes on the trends and motions of music in Watteau's era likening them to temporal coils. In other words, music circulates, touches and repeats, echoing and reverberating similar motifs in adjacent keys. To use her metaphor, musical time in *Plaisirs* moves in spirals, visually alluded to by the striped circular pillars that seem to whirl upward. Musical notes separate, then unite the primary couple, negating yet affirming their incipient measured movements. We see them in the hesitation before the first beat – like the inhalation of a breath, the performative figural unit is caught in a moment of suspension before it expands and contracts. Along with the music that accompanies them, their coming together has its own experiential duration and at the same time a symbolic dimension. The music of the *bal* brings disparate levels of reality—theater players, servants and nobles, close yet distant in time and in spirit—into a single arena of sympathetic action. Watteau's visual and sentimental harmony enables the ordered and continuous spiritual movement from left to right through diatonic modulations of swirling gowns and capes, striped arches with spiraling carytids, a flowing fountain and affable trees. Through his own flexible recursive structure the artist connects each participant or group with the sympathies of another. While dissecting each figural unit as he projects musical utterances throughout the painting, the artist causes a series of relays that reverberate outward and back again.<sup>7</sup> In this painting, Watteau achieves a luminosity of sentiment that spirals and vibrates vividly while managing to elude any precise grounding.

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<sup>7</sup> HaCoen, "The Music of Sympathy in the Arts of the Baroque; or, the Use of Difference to Overcome Indifference," 239.

It is intangible yet pervasively genuine in its sentient appeal.

Watteau's images reinforce the idea that musical language can neither be enunciated syntactically nor pronounced out loud. The melodic notes themselves are the starting point for musical concepts; as they come together sequentially and harmonically, the beauty they convey is elusive and often personal to the composer, performer and listener.<sup>8</sup> A scholarly attempt to identify intangible aspects of beauty – yet not verbally name them – was a subject of discourse during the period in which Watteau painted. The treatises of Swiss theologian and philosopher Jean-Pierre Crousaz and the aforementioned abbé du Bos searched for a non-verbal method for identifying beauty. Both were intent on re-defining aesthetics apart from an intellectual, text-based understanding.<sup>9</sup> Crousaz, in his *Traité du Beau* of 1715, wrote:

Ideas occupy the intellect, sentiments interest the heart; ideas amuse us, they exercise our attention and sometimes fatigue it, depending on whether they are more or less composed and combined. But sentiments dominate us, they seize us, they take us over and make us happy or sad according to whether they are sweet or annoying, agreeable or disagreeable. One's ideas are easily expressed, but it is very difficult to describe one's sentiments; it is impossible, even, through language, to give an exact understanding of them to those who have not had similar experiences.<sup>10</sup>

Intellectual thought often amuses but it also may lead to boredom; sentiments connect

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<sup>8</sup> Patricia Herzog, "Music Criticism and Musical Meaning," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53, no. 3 (1995): 301.

<sup>9</sup> Georgia J. Cowart, "Sense and Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Musical Thought," *Acta Musicologica* 56, no. 2 (1984): 253.

<sup>10</sup> Crousaz, *Traité Du Beau* 8. "*Les idées occupent l'Esprit, les sentimens interessent le Coeur, les idées nous amusent, elles exercent l'attention, & quelquefois la fatiguent, suivant qu'elles sont plus ou moins composees, & plus ou moins combinees entr'elles; mais les sentimens nous dominent, ils s'emparent de nous, ils decident de notre sort & nous rendent heureux ou malheureux, selon qu'ils sont doux ou facheux, agreable ou desagrees. On exprime aisement ses idées, mais il est tres difficile de decrire ses sentimens, il est meme impossible d'en donner par aucun discours une exacte connoissance a ceux qui n'en ont jamais eprouve de semblables.*"

directly to the heart. Senses take control of us and dominate our dispositions. This supremacy of sentiments makes them impossible to explain in any specific linguistic syntax. Du Bos contributes to the discussion, posing sentiment as the prerequisite of the aesthetic experience:

*Or le sentiment enseigne bien mieux si l'ouvrage touché, & s'il fait sur nous l'impression qui'il doit faire, que toutes les dissertations composées par les Critiques, pour en expliquer le mérite, & pour en calculer les perfections & les défauts. La voie de discussion & d'analyse, dont se servent ces Messieurs, est bonne à la vérité, lorsqu'il s'agit de trouver les causes qui font qu'un ouvrage plaît, ou qu'il ne plaît pas; mais cette voie ne vaut pas celle du sentiment, lorsqu'il s'agit de décider cette question. L'ouvrage plaît-il, ou ne plaît-il pas? L'ouvrage est-il bon ou mauvais en général? C'est la même chose. Le raisonnement ne doit donc intervenir dans le jugement que nous portons sur un poème ou sur un tableau en général, que pour rendre raison de la décision du sentiment, & pour expliquer quelles fautes l'empêchent de plaire, & quels sont les agréments qui le rendent capables d'attacher.<sup>11</sup>*

Du Bos maintains that sentiment is the guide to whether a work achieves its emotive goal; efforts of critics to explain its qualities have little meaning. One cannot delineate or debate sentimental effects. Reasonable discussion only serves to support the initial, primary response. Scholars fail to codify logically the various methods by which art pleases us. The first response must always be the nuanced sentiments elicited by the work of music or art. Only then can reason be employed to enumerate the various factors that contribute to, but do not define, those sentiments. As mentioned in the first chapter, the tall trees and verdant surroundings of the country estate in Watteau's *La Perspective* (fig. 1) invoke an initial sentiment of congenial inclusion. This is a privileged group and the viewer is invited to take part in the gathering. Figures sit comfortably in a lush outdoor setting. The protective forest shields and benevolently protects them while serving to soften the sounds contained within the park. Forming a *repoussoir* at the extreme left against the main

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<sup>11</sup> Dubos, *Réflexions Critiques Sur La Poésie Et Sur La Peinture* II, 310-11.

figural triangle, a gentleman to the extreme left gestures offstage, perhaps to indicate the verdant path he will explore with his female companion. Far off on the distant horizon at the center stands a magnificent arch-like open atrium that gestures to its providential guests. An open path through the parting of the trees persuades the viewer to participate in the tranquil visual procession. Watteau uses feathery strokes to paint the lush greens, yellows and faint golden light of the thick forest as it stands against the daylight. The artist's brush depicts a bright sky with scumbles that alternate between a pure cerulean blue and pale, misty clouds. Glistening fabrics catch the light filtered through the trees; a delicately applied impasto is the shimmer of the woman's silver gown at the left and the gleaming costume in the distance to the right. Splashes of light lead the viewer's eye from the satin stockings of the guitarist at lower left to the collar of the woman in the center distance. Visible allusions to passage operate as well in the clean angles in the dark space that light the way and impel the eye toward the bright opening in the far distance. These are the kind of sentiments – difficult to debate or rationalize, but nonetheless valid – to which Du Bos refers.

In the time of Watteau, pleasurable sensations went deeper, beyond the haptic and visual, to include the gratification gained from personal connectedness and human relationships. The interpretation of *sensibilité* as warmth of feeling appeared in the letters of Mme de Sévigné to her beloved daughter, Mme de Grignan, « ...*je vous aime; je vous embrasse, il ne m' est pas possible de vous dire avec quel sentiment de tendresse et de sensibilité... il n'a fait, ce temps, jusqu'ici, qu'augmenter la tendresse et la sensibilité que j'ai pour vous.* »<sup>12</sup> She expresses the tenderness and sincerity of a mother's sentiments, writing that there is no greater love, no greater sensibility than what she feels for her daughter. Correspondingly, in Watteau's *Prelude d'un concert* (fig. 3) a mother and her

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<sup>12</sup> Sévigné, *Correspondance T.3 1680-1969* 586.



family enjoy mutual leisure in a lovingly relaxed manner. There is no nurse or attendant to manage the children or care for them separately; instead they share a comfortable social ambiance with the adults. The loving affection is apparent in the relaxed postures and the closeness of the figures as they sit on the ground and lean comfortably on each other. In another correspondence, Mme Sévigné writes: « ...j' y pense à ma chère enfant, je m' entretiens de la tendre amitié que j' ai pour elle, de celle qu' elle a pour moi, de la sensibilité que j' ai pour tous ses intérêts. »<sup>13</sup> Mme Sévigné conveys the fondness shared by mother and daughter as well as a *sensibilité*, or mutual awareness of all their concerns and activities. To Mme de Sévigné, then, the term *sensibilité* encompasses not only loving tenderness but also attentiveness and understanding. This same consideration as loving affection receives pictorial embodiment in Watteau's tenderly portrayed *La Partie quarrée* (fig. 39) where the two central female figures lean into each other to share a common sentiment. They display a warm response to their companion, Pierrot, as their sheltered surroundings enclose them.<sup>14</sup> The radiance that emanates from the white skin of the woman on the left illuminates the face of her female friend in the shadows. They are linked by gestures of mutual affection and the glow of reflected light.

Ideas of good will and the beneficial aspects of close friendships appear in the writings of François Fénelon, a bishop and tutor of the grandson of Louis XIV. Sensibility, he maintains, is an important prerequisite of a ruling Frenchman. In his treatise on the proper education of the young dauphin, he states that a child should be spared exposure to extravagances and lavish entertainments. Simple pleasures are the most edifying for a youngster. Anyone who rears a child should expose him to a simple life that assures constancy in his happiness and prepares him for the years when he will begin to feel the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 922.

<sup>14</sup> Fine Arts Museum, San Francisco.

stirrings of adolescent passion.<sup>15</sup> He then goes on to state that nurturing the capacity for sensibility is an important component to a child's education:

*Il faut avouer que de toutes les peines de l' éducation, aucune n' est comparable à celle d' élever des enfants qui manquent de sensibilité...il y a une autre espèce de sensibilité encore plus difficile et plus importante à donner, c' est celle de l' amitié.<sup>16</sup>*

The most egregious fault in educating a young person is to raise him with a lack of *sensibilité*. Fénelon stresses that the most difficult types of sensibility to instill in a young gentleman are those of kindness, affection and friendship. Nothing is more essential to the successful instruction of a noble youth than embracing these various qualities of *sensibilité*. The young children in Watteau's *Iris (La Danse)* (fig. 2) mentioned in chapter one are not intentional models of these notions. However, they do appear to embody the simple life and could be miniature models of the ideas of Fénelon. As the young girl basks in the attention that the light of day conveys upon her, her small friends sit quietly and demurely, shaded by the trees. They appear to respond to her beauty; they are little examples of decorum as they engage in their affectionate, pastoral, musical play.

### **Body and Soul**

Notions of benevolence were integral parts of sensibility. Since the capacity for ineffable feeling was judged a quality fundamental, albeit elusive, to man's moral as well as

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<sup>15</sup> Fénelon, *Traité Des L'education Des Filles (1687)* 49. "Les plaisirs simples sont ... sont d'un meilleur usage; ils donnent une joie égale et durable, sans aucune suite maligne; ils sont toujours bienfaisants, au lieu que les autres plaisirs sont comme les vins frelatés, qui plaisent d'abord plus que les naturels, mais qui altèrent, et qui nuisent à la santé: le tempérament de l'âme se gâte, aussi bien que le goût, par la recherche de ces plaisirs vifs et piquants. Tout ce qu'on peut faire pour les enfants qu'on gouverne, c'est de les accoutumer à cette vie simple, d'en fortifier en eux l'habitude le plus longtemps qu'on peut, de les prévenir de la crainte des inconvénients attachés aux autres plaisirs, et de ne les point abandonner à eux-mêmes, comme on fait d'ordinaire, dans l'âge où les passions commencent à se faire sentir, et où, par conséquent, ils ont plus besoin d'être retenus."

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 51-55.

physical essence, emotions related to warm feelings of friendship highlighted the relationship between interiority and exteriority. They were both signaled by the body while revealing one's innermost capacity for depth of feeling.<sup>17</sup> French philosophers and writers thought deeply about the question of man and how his own physical nature related to spiritual sentiment. Philosopher Pierre Charron (1541-1603) made an attempt to understand the connections of mind and body in his treatise, *De la Sagesse* in which he writes: « *Celle d'en-haut, où loge le cerveau spongieux, source des nerfs et esprits animaux, du mouvement et sentiment, et le throsne de l'ame raisonnable.* »<sup>18</sup> The receptive brain is the source of animated spirits as well as nervous and sentimental responses; it is the center of the rational soul. In these words, Charron connects mind and body (brain and soul) through the spirits contained in the nerves that animate emotion and sentiment. Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757), a French author and member of the Academy, entered the mind-body discourse as well:

*L'âme dépend absolument des dispositions du cerveau pour ce qui regarde le plus ou le moins d'esprit ; cependant si relativement à la vertu et au vice, les dispositions du cerveau ne déterminent l'âme que lorsqu'elles sont extrêmes, et qu'elles lui laissent la liberté lorsqu'elles sont modérées, en sorte qu'on puisse avoir beaucoup de vertu malgré une disposition médiocre au vice.*<sup>19</sup>

Fontenelle believed that the disposition of the soul was contingent upon the spirits of the brain and that the brain not only controlled the soul but the tendencies toward virtue and vice. Jacques-Benigne Bossuet, in his consideration of the operations of the human body,

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<sup>17</sup> Christopher Gärtner, "Remuer L'âme or Plaire À L'oreille? Music, Emotions and the Mind - Body Problems in French Writings of the Later Eighteenth Century," in *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the History of Art, Music and Medicine*, ed. Penelope and Hills Gouk, Helen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).184.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Charron, *De La Sagesse* (Paris: Chaignieau Aine, 1797) 100.

<sup>19</sup> Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, *Traité De La Liberté De L'âme* (Paris: G. B. Depping, 1700) 7.

united the mind with the senses in what modern scientists would judge as fairly close to an accurate understanding of the mind-body continuum:

*Le cerveau et les organes des sens. Au-dessus et dans la partie la plus haute de tout le corps, c'est-à-dire dans la tête, est le cerveau destiné à recevoir les impressions des objets et tout ensemble à donner au corps les mouvemens nécessaires.*<sup>20</sup>

The philosopher comprehended the central role that the brain plays in the reception of sensations and the initiation of emotional response to those sensations. Conversely, the path of emotions comes from a markedly different source in the writings of Pascal in his *Pensées* who sees the heart as the organ of knowledge, linking matters of the heart with feelings with this memorable quote: “The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know.”<sup>21</sup> Pascal calls attention to the paradoxical nature of man and reasserts his belief in an indescribable, unknowable cosmic and humanistic whole, summing it up in this way: “All our reasoning reduces itself to yielding to feeling.”<sup>22</sup>

Ideas of the ascendancy of feeling over reason called on musical references as sensibility entered the literature of the novel. Jean-Pierre Camus, the seventeenth-century novelist, wrote about the harmony of the universe and how that same harmony worked to create pleasurable sentiments in the human body:

*Si tout l'univers consiste en harmonie, et n'est autre chose qu'un instrument musical, le mesme se doit dire de nous qui sommes des petits mondes, et comme la maladie est un desaccord des humeurs, la santé n'est autre chose qu'un concert bien ordonné des élemens qui nous composent, ou la mesme*

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<sup>20</sup> Jacques-Benigne Bossuet, *De La Connoissance De Dieu Et De Soi-Même, Oeuvres Completes T. 23* (Paris: L. Vives, 1864) 88.

<sup>21</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Monroe C. Beardsley, *The European Philosophers from Descartes to Nietzsche* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002) 124.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 123.

*est en la temperature.*<sup>23</sup>

The author associates physical balance or interior concordance of the organs and fluids with physical health. To Camus, we are essentially harmonically tuned musical instruments, miniature counterparts of the cosmos. In another instance, the union of human voices in a gently harmonious chorus is novelist Honoré d'Urfé's (1567-1625) paradigm for friendship in his 1607 *L'astrée*: « *Voulez-vous que je vous die ce qu'il me semble de l'amitié? C'est une musique à plusieurs voix, qui bien unies rendent une tres-douce harmonie.* »<sup>24</sup> Camaraderie is the harmonic reunion of human voices. Musical metaphors such as those employed by Camus and Urfé were popular and useful methods for explaining and describing sensations. Pierre Charron uses the musical metaphor in this quote: « *La propriété, netteté, elegance, gentillesse [comme] musique...consiste en figure [de] correspondance, harmonie et proportion.* »<sup>25</sup> He allies elegance and propriety with balance and proportion, using musical harmony as his basis for comparison. Essayist Jacques Esprit (1611-1678) wrote on the methods for detecting the hypocrisy of others, using music to refine his logic:

*Cette gravité que ces sortes de gens semblent mettre devant eux comme l'enseigne de la vertu, est si visiblement fausse et affectée, que pour peu qu'on les pratique ou qu'on soit informé de leur vie, on voit qu'aux mines et aux contenancez près, ils sont faits comme les autres hommes, et qu'ainsi leur gravité n'est qu'une singerie serieuse et qu'une honnête pedanterie. Mais afin qu'on la puisse bien connoître et la distinguer de la veritable gravité, qui est l'air naturel de la vertu et son rejaillissement sur tout l'exterieur de l'homme, il est necessaire de considerer que le sage garde une certaine mesure dans tous ses mouvemens et dans toutes ses actions, et qu'il a dans sa parole, dans son port, dans ses gestes et dans ses*

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<sup>23</sup> Jean-Pierre Camus, *Palombe, Ou La Femme Honorable* (Paris: C. Chappelet, 1625) 270.

<sup>24</sup> Honoré d'Urfé, *L'astrée* (Geneve: Slatkine, 1966) 138.

<sup>25</sup> Charron, *De La Sagesse* 100.

*démarches une harmonie pareille à celle de la musique.*<sup>26</sup>

In order to distinguish between those who merely appear virtuous and those who truly are, wise men see that sincerely honorable beings have a certain measure to their actions, words and conduct. It is a kind of harmony similar to that achieved in music. Fénelon also finds in music the ability to stir the spirit onward toward valor in battle:

*C'étoit par la musique...qu'ils se préparoient aux combats; ils alloient à la guerre avec des musiciens et des instruments. De là encore les trompettes et les tambours qui les jetoient dans un enthousiasme et dans une espèce de fureur qu'ils appeloient divine. C'étoit par la musique et par la cadence des vers qu'ils adoucissoient les peuples féroces.*<sup>27</sup>

The trumpets and drums of armies prepare the soldier emotionally for combat as fury and enthusiasm overtake him. Music stirs the heart and imparts a glorious forceful spirit of combat. Yet, in the very next sentence Fénelon writes of the ability of musical harmony to furnish the wise adult with the means of entering and touching the heart of a child, « *C'étoit par cette harmonie qu'ils faisoient entrer, avec le plaisir, la sagesse dans le fond des coeurs des enfants.* »<sup>28</sup> Like the emotional, sympathetic expressions contained in Watteau's scenes, musical fibers and fluids operate like the sensational signals of the nervous system. And music, in its ability to envelop and surround, allows the senses to bridge the space between the real and the ephemeral. Music connects the listener to humanity, making her/him responsive to adjacencies and encounters. The author of the *Encyclopédie* would draw on longstanding classic traditions and synthesize them in this way:

*La Musique, comme le son de se propager, de mettre en mouvement l'air & les corps environnans, surtout lorsqu'ils sont à l'unisson; l'autre maniere*

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<sup>26</sup> Jacques Esprit, *La Fausseté Des Vertus Humaines* (Amsterdam: P. Mortier, 1710) 202-3.

<sup>27</sup> François Fénelon, *Dialogues Sur L'éloquence* (Paris: Dezobry, Magdeleine, 1846) 150.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 150.

*d'agir rigoureusement réductible à la première, est plus particulièrement liée à la sensibilité de la machine humaine, elle est une suite de l'impression agréable que fait en nous le plaisir qu'excite le son modifié, ou la Musique.*<sup>29</sup>

The *Encyclopédie* makes clear that the sounds of music touch and move everything with which they come into contact, thereby unifying them. They are particularly tied to the sensibilities of the human body which respond to, and become one with, the pleasurable vibrations of music. As such, music smoothes a path for sharing social communions or amorous glances, effacing all modes of resistance. The technique of Watteau mimics the musical styles of his time, which required that the “sound of string instruments should be transparent,” that is, crystal clear with a translucent fluidity devoid of any rough edges. In other words, voices and wind instruments require timbres that are smooth and lambent. A secondary constraint was that there should be a “clean cutting edge [and] a crispness of attack... A [violent and opaque] sound opposed the spirit and technique of [seventeenth- and eighteenth-century] music.”<sup>30</sup> Hence, the viewer detects in the painterly approach of Watteau the same fluent passages in the gossamer dress of Columbine in *La sérénade italienne* (fig. 4) coupled with the crisp, thick paint that describes the stripes of her gown as they catch and reflect the light. Watteau evokes painterly sensibilities that relate to musical ones. The moods he describes are similar to the euphony of the music; both move the viewer because they do not prefigure knowledge. Even when the musical notion is understood/known, the notation as a signifier is outdone by the feeling it enlists. Music eliminates any boundaries from the work of Watteau; vibrations emanate endlessly – movement never ceases.

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<sup>29</sup> *Musique, Encyclopédie*, 10:898.

<sup>30</sup> Donington, "String Playing in Baroque Music," 389.

## Musical Instruments and the Body

Regulating the relation of music to the body profoundly concerned both men and women, though for different reasons. “The danger of music lay in its putative power to destabilize virtually every social relation” notably including relations between men and women as well as disparate social classes.<sup>31</sup> The lute, being a stringed instrument, thus survived as an appropriate instrument for female musical expression, tempered, of course, by ladylike demeanor and sensual restraint. This instruction that appears in an early eighteenth-century instruction manual for young ladies is an effort to regulate these performative practices:

The Harpsichord, Spinnet, Lute and Base [sic] Violin, are Instruments most agreeable to the Ladies: There are some others that really are unbecoming the Fair Sex: as the Flute, Violin and Hautboy; the last of which is too Manlike, and would look indecent in a woman’s Mouth; and the Flute is very improper, as taking away too much of the Juices, which are otherwise more necessarily employ’d, to promote the Appetite, and assist Digestion.<sup>32</sup>

In this text, the author assigns the making of music to gendered bodies. Some musical instruments, those that require delicate touch, enhance the grace and beauty of the ‘fair sex’. Placing an instrument directly in the mouth is much too immodest an act for a lady, particularly in the case of the long, vertical shape of the oboe (*hautbois*), which, in its similarity to the male organ, implies licentiousness and immodesty. In his allusion to bodily juices which ‘promote appetite and assist digestion’, the author deliberately refers to the ‘juices’ of another female orifice, the sex organ, couching his distaste and censure in the guise of concern for a lady’s health and well being.

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<sup>31</sup> Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* 65.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 67. Author cites: John Essex, *The Young Ladies Conduct: Or, Rules for Education, under Several Heads; with Instructions Upon Dress, Both before and after Marriage. And Advice to Young Wives* (London: 1722), 84-5.



Watteau's female musicians play with decorum in all his paintings. As they relax gracefully in their verdant surroundings, they hold their instruments while managing to display their own artful bodies. There is an adherence to these proprietary maxims in the young woman playing the guitar in *Pierrot content* (fig. 40). She strums her guitar agreeably with the proper amount of feminine decorum and restraint. The slight tilt of her head and her gracious posture conform to the requirements of lady-like demeanor. She holds the guitar delicately and plays the instrument in a graceful and becoming manner. Despite her questionable trade as a professional entertainer, in her private life she is able to assume the identity of a perfect lady. The contentment felt by Pierrot and the admiration exhibited by Mezzetin in *Pierrot content* may well be expressed in the following anonymous sixteenth-century lute-poem:

When I see her so gracious and lovely,  
Plucking so gently the strings  
Of the pleasant lute, and matching her voice  
To the soft pitch spoken by the highest string,  
My whole heart leaps, thrilled with pleasure.<sup>33</sup>

As the female guitarist leans her head discreetly toward Pierrot, he looks out at the viewer with bemused pleasure. The heart of Mezzetin, at left, seems to leap with ardor as he listens to her in admiration.

A drawing by Watteau, *Three Studies of a Seated Woman* (fig. 41) is a fluent example of female aesthetic guidelines for playing a stringed instrument.<sup>34</sup> Here, she

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<sup>33</sup> Carla Zecher, "The Gendering of the Lute in Sixteenth-Century French Love Poetry," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (2000): 770. "*Quand je la vois si gentille et si belle / Si doucement les langues manier / Du luth aimable, et sa voix marier / Au son mignard que dit la chanterelle: // D'aise ravi tout le coeur me sautelle.*" *Author cites: Allem, Maurice, ed. Anthologie poetique francaise: XVIe siecle 2 vols. Paris: 1965, 2:203.*

<sup>34</sup> A preparatory drawing for *La proposition embarrassante* and the Pleasures of Life. Louvre, *Cabinet des*

maintains a firm, upright posture and her countenance is pleasant yet restrained. By angling her sitting stance and looking over her shoulder, she does not display herself frontally or appear ungainly. Moreover, by looking outward, she appears confident in her ability to play; she is not required to concentrate closely or appear studied in her presentation. Most importantly, the instrument displays the attractiveness of her feminine form through the angle of her forearm, the turn of her head and the graciousness of her pose. The artist achieves this through the use of shadow and light, employing decisive dark marks to indicate the contour of her form as it meets the instrument. A nuanced dalliance of the artist's touch portrays the pleasing shape of her arm, the flow of light on the rich fabric of her gown and the demure, downward turn of her face.

Traditionally, the lute received a special place in the delicate aural and visual aesthetics associated with female performance. It was initially the instrument of angels. In the mid-fifteenth century, female lute players appeared as foreground figures in the *Nativity* c. 1470-85 (fig. 42) of Piero della Francesca (1412-1492).<sup>35</sup> Angels play the lute in the fresco (fig. 43) at the Vatican by Melozzo Da Forli (1438-1494).<sup>36</sup> Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) includes an angelic female with a lute in his altarpiece *Feast of the Rose Garlands* of 1506 (fig. 44).<sup>37</sup> St. Cecilia, the patron saint of musicians is a frequent religious figure in art; in a painting by the Italian Carlo Saraceni (1579-1620), she plays a lute as she looks up at an approaching angel (fig. 45).<sup>38</sup> Women playing the lute could appear delightfully

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*Dessins.*

<sup>35</sup> National Gallery, London.

<sup>36</sup> Angel with Lute, c. 1480, fresco, Pinacoteca, Vatican.

<sup>37</sup> Now in National Gallery, Prague.

<sup>38</sup> Saint Cecilia and the Angel, c. 1610, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome.

chaste and virginal, as Burwell's instructions prescribe. Lovingly held and gently stroked by lambent fingers, the lute was an ideal complement to the human form. In addition to producing sensuous melodies, the lute also physically enhanced the player. Instructions on posture and deportment included in a seventeenth-century manuscript known as the Burwell Lute Tutor attest to the body as signifier in effective and engaging ways of playing the lute:

One must...sit upright in playing to show no constraint or pains, to have a smiling countenance, that the company may not think you play unwillingly, and [to] show that you animate the lute as well as the lute does animate you. Yet you must not stir your body nor your head, nor show any extreme satisfaction in your playing. You must make no mouths, nor bite your lips, nor cast your hands in a flourishing manner that relishes of a fiddler. In one word, you must not less please the eyes than the ears... All the actions that one does in playing of the lute are handsome; the posture is modest, free and gallant, and [does] not hinder society. The shape of the lute is not so troublesome, and whereas other instruments constrain the body, the lute sets it in an advantageous posture. When one plays of the virginal he turns his back to the company. The viol entangleth one in spreading the arms, and openeth the legs (which doth not become man, much less woman). The beauty of the arm, of the hands and of the neck are advantageously displayed in playing of the lute.<sup>39</sup>

Music's direct connection to and influence on the physical body thus receives moral and gendered aesthetic guidelines. Maintain a good posture so as not to convey exertion or effort. Demonstrate a smiling countenance to convey that you perform at the pleasure of your audience. While it is necessary to play with animation and sympathy with the instrument, do not make any broad gestures or facial expressions. Your deportment must replicate the delicate pleasures of and sympathies with the music you perform. The abbé François-Hédelin d'Aubignac, (1604-1676) while not putting it exactly in terms of bodily expression per se, does outline the methods for playing the lute sympathetically in his *La pratique du theater*:

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<sup>39</sup> Zecher, "The Gendering of the Lute in Sixteenth-Century French Love Poetry," 771. Author cites: Dart, Thurston. 1958. "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book for the Lute," *The Galpin Society Journal* II: 23, 48.

*Ainsi l'art de joüer du luth, s'il estoit reduit en regles, ne pourroit enseigner que des choses generales, par exemple, le nombre des cordes et des touches, la maniere de faire les accords et les passages, les tremblemens, et les mesures; mais il faudroit toûjours apprendre des maistres, dans l'execution, la delicatesse de pincer la corde diversement, d'alterer un peu les mesures avec grace, de donner un beau mouvement à son jeu.<sup>40</sup>*

Abbé d'Aubignac speaks of delicacy, grace and beauty of movement in playing the instrument; the lute is uniquely suitable in its design for demonstrating the attractiveness of the body. It does not necessitate showing your back to the audience, as a keyboard, or maintaining (decidedly unfeminine) ungainly postures of the arms and legs. In novels a woman enhanced her delicate beauty by playing the lute, as noted in this passage from Urfé's *L'astrée*:

*Elle estoit assise sur le pied de son lict, à moitié des-habillée et tenant un luth en sa main, duquel elle s'entretenoit, car entre les autres vertus de Circéne, elle joue du luth et chante en perfection.<sup>41</sup>*

As she sits attractively, half-undressed, holding her lute, her playing and singing reach the perfection of the nymph Circe.

A woman's association with the lute, as in time-honored female tropes of all kinds, could produce an impression from either end of the feminine spectrum. Linda Austern writes, "Women who possessed the natures of both Mary and Eve, were regarded as agents alternately of salvation and destruction even as music was perceived as an inspiration to both heavenly rapture and carnal lust."<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the lute took a decadent turn away from the angels when placed in the hands of Venus, the goddess of love, in whose possession it

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<sup>40</sup> François-Hédelin Aubignac, abbé d', *La Pratique Du Théâtre* (Algiers: J. Carbonel, 1927) 22.

<sup>41</sup> d'Urfé, *L'astrée* 520.

<sup>42</sup> Linda Phyllis Austern, "'Sing Againe Syren': The Female Musician and Sexual Enchantment in Elizabethan Life and Literature," *Renaissance Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (1989): 420.

carried licentious implications. The *Lute Playing Venus*, c.1555 by Parrasio Micheli (c.1516-1578) is a manifestation of the close connection between music and erotic love (fig. 46). The bare breasted goddess accompanies herself on the lute while Cupid holds the opened sheet music for her. As noted earlier, the lute's anatomy contained a feminine physical signifier in its rounded belly, which reinforced connections with fertility. A woman playing the lute appeared openly desirable and available to observers, thereby bridging the uneasy and indistinct boundary between sensory arousal through hearing and divine inspiration through audible harmony.<sup>43</sup> By the seventeenth century the lute was an attribute of procuresses and prostitutes, who carried it with them in public as a feature of their trade.<sup>44</sup> The Flemish word for lute, *luit*, was also the word for 'vagina'; this explains the many pictorial references from the region to prostitutes holding lutes.<sup>45</sup> The association of the lute with female depravity was a frequent theme for painters. Gerrit von Honthorst's (1590-1656) procuress, in the painting, *The Procuress* of 1625, joyfully displays her lute to her eager patrons (fig. 47).<sup>46</sup> Dirck van Baburen's (1594-1624) painting of 1622 of the same title is another vivid example (fig. 48.)<sup>47</sup> Her voluptuous breasts rest invitingly against the lute as she negotiates with her visitors. Whether courtesan or virgin, professional or amateur, shameless or pure, women had different associations with the lute that seemed to either venerate or disparage their femaleness. Watteau's *La finette*, c. 1717, while decorously posed, nonetheless has an air of mischief in her gaze. She sits in profile holding

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<sup>43</sup> Linda Phyllis Austern, "For, Love's a Good Musician: Performance, Audition, and Erotic Disorders in Early Modern Europe," *The Musical Quarterly* 82, no. 3/4 (1998): 614-53.

<sup>44</sup> Zecher, "The Gendering of the Lute in Sixteenth-Century French Love Poetry," 774.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. Author cites: Craig-McFeeley, Julia. 1994. "Women Lutenists in England 1530-1630." Unpublished essay.

<sup>46</sup> Centraal Museum, Utrecht.

<sup>47</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

her long-necked lute, or theorbo (fig. 49).<sup>48</sup> Finette, a name suggesting cunning or guile, turns to look straight at the viewer over her left shoulder.<sup>49</sup> Her loose, flowing sleeve falls brazenly to reveal the sensuous flesh of her forearm. The gleaming fabric of her gown reflects the ambient vibrant light that illuminates the magnetic power of her dark eyes set against the paleness of her face. She is out of doors – alone – perhaps seeking her own private pleasure. Yet, in her outwardly directed candid gaze, she shares the sensual implications of the instrument with her complicit observer.<sup>50</sup>

In the past, female poets were active in addressing the ‘rebellious lyre’ in their lute-poems. Carla Zecher notes the following unpublished riddle poem dated 1570 and attributed to Madeleine de l’Aubespine (1546-1596). Here the male body becomes the female subject’s instrument and, in the confusion of pronouns, which may be read as ‘it’ or ‘he’, the lute becomes the male organ itself:

Énigme

For the sweetest enjoyment I could choose,  
Often, after dinner, fearing that it/he misses me,  
I take the neck in hand, touching and working it/him,  
So that it/he will be in a state to give me pleasure.  
I throw myself on my bed, without letting go of it/him,  
Clasping it/him in my arms, I lean it/him upon my breast,  
And moving forcefully, all joyfully with ease,  
Among a thousand sweetnesses, accomplish my desire.  
If it happens, unhappily, that it/he slackens  
I straighten it/him with my hand, and I contrive  
To enjoy the pleasure of such sweet handling.

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<sup>48</sup> The theorbo was introduced into France from Italy in the mid-seventeenth century. Robert Spencer, "Chitarrone, Theorbo and Archlute," *Early Music* 4, no. 4 (1976): 413.

<sup>49</sup> The name 'Finette' is the diminutive of the French word, 'fin', which means prankishness, cunning, guile and adroitness. Rosenberg, "The Paintings," 390.

<sup>50</sup> The Louvre, Paris.

Thus my beloved, as long as the string draws it/him,  
contents and pleases me. Then from me, gently,  
I withdraw it/him at last, slack but unappeased.  
On a lute.<sup>51</sup>

Here the practice of lute playing is not innocent; it is wanton, explicit and directly connected to the physical act of sexual stroking and love-making. It becomes not a public pleasure, but a secret, private one. It is, after all, an expression of shameless desire phrased within rhythmic, tactile and lustful longing.

Watteau repeats this erotic association of the lute/guitar neck with the phallus in scenes such as *L'Enchanteur* (fig. 50) in which the 'enchanter' tunes his guitar; the bright sky silhouettes the long shaft of the guitar as it points suggestively to the expectant female listener.<sup>52</sup> *Le prelude au concert* (fig. 3) again poses an arch-lute player against a light background as he prepares his instrument. A statue of Dionysus appears in the foliate shadows, visually embellishing the theme of sensual desire. The emblematic image recurs in Watteau's *Leçon d'Amour* (fig. 51) where the guitarist is set against a clear sky

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<sup>51</sup> Zecher, "The Gendering of the Lute in Sixteenth-Century French Love Poetry," 788. "*Pour le plus doux esbat que je puisse choisir, / Souvent, apres disner, craignant qu'il ne m'ennuye, / Je prens le manche en main, je le touche et manye, / Tant qu'il soit en estat de me donner plaisir. // Sur mon lict je me jecte, et, sans m'en dessaisir, / Je l'estreins de mes bras, sur mon sein j l'appuye, / Et remuant bien fort, d'aise toute ravie, / Entre mille douceurs j'accompliz mon desir. // S'il advient par malheur rquelquefois qu'il se lasche, / De la main je le dresse, et derechef je tasche / A joyr du plaisir d'un si doux maniment. // Ainsi mon bien ayme, tant que le nerf luy tire, / Me contente et me plaist. Puis de moy, doucement, / Lasse et non assouvy, enfin je le retire. // D'un Luc.*" Author cites Aubespine, Madeleine de l', Dame de Villeroy. 1926. *Les Chansons de Callianthe fille de Ronsard*. Ed. Roger Sorg. Paris, 70 and Vivonne, Heliette de. 1932. *Poesies de Heliette de Vivonne, atribuees a tort a Madeleine de l'Augespine sous le titre 'Chanson de Callianthe'*. Ed. Frederic Lachevre. Paris, 42-43.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.: 780. As a symbol of the body, the lute also possessed male characteristics. In Renaissance paintings, the male lutenist often appeared in a group of musicians, the lute's long phallic neck extended wontonly, as in Caravaggio's *The Musicians* of c. 1594, located in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Entangled male bodies coalesce with glowing flesh as the neck of the guitar in the center takes on an anatomical role.

preparing to instruct young lovers on the art of amorous musical play. Three young women repose on the edge of a wooded area next to a path on which the guitarist stands. The angle of his guitar replicates the angled gesture of the arms of the woman at the rear who gathers flowers; in turn, she indicates the statue of a lively young nymph, symbolizing carnality, on a pedestal in the upper right. The statue, leaning down toward the group, participates in the action. As a symbol of youthful love, the nymph attends the musician who hopes for a response from his listeners to his romantic and auditory signal. Her long hair is carved in stone; yet it flows sinuously downward as if in sympathy with the musical notes. She may be the goddess, Echo, the nymph who listens.<sup>53</sup>

### **Male Musician / Male Seducer**

The strings of the lute have performed a resonant and seductive role for both men and women in amorous and poetic expression since classical antiquity. “In short, the lute was often regarded as an aid in ‘winning the hearts of ladies.’”<sup>54</sup> It was a seductive combination of both Dionysian and Apollonian sensibilities, combining the persuasive power of the human voice (a wind instrument) with the clarity and simplicity of measured strings. According to Wilfrid Mellers, French lute music was a social art mingling elegance and refinement.<sup>55</sup> While delighting the senses and playing for entertainment, the lutenist could also express his personal longings. The lute and its descendant, the guitar, complemented the singing voice with their rich timbres. Performative music consisted of a

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<sup>53</sup> Rosenberg, "The Paintings," 381.

<sup>54</sup> Simon Miller, "Instruments of Desire: Musical Morphology in the Early Work of Picasso," *Musical Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (1992): 446.

<sup>55</sup> Wilfrid Mellers, "The Clavecin Works of François Couperin," *Music & Letters* 27, no. 4 (1946): 234. The proportions of the whole were lucidly defined, though incidentally they might be very free in rhythm. They did not aim at the...dramatic effect of the Italians but at an elegant recreation and entertainment of the spirit; it was a 'social music' par excellence. The school of lute composers proper was the product of the mingling of [the] convention of elegantly disciplined freedom with the homophonic formalism of the dances of the *ballet de cour* itself.



top vocal line supported by the chords of the instrument. So clear was the lute as an amorous signifier that it became a universally accepted attribute of lovers.<sup>56</sup> The powerful transitive magic of its music, with its strong sympathetic connection to ancient history, imagination and memory also linked the lute directly with the passions expressed in poetry. The custom of addressing poetry to stringed instruments originated with classical poets who were inspired by the gods through references to the lyre. Later, the portability of the lute made it popular for impromptu declarations of love. It was an instrument ideal for *al fresco* concerts in bucolic settings – desirable both for their beauty and their privacy.<sup>57</sup>

French sixteenth-century lute-poems corroborate the sensuous aspects of lute playing in their attention to the sexual connotations tied to the physical aspect of making music. These poems combined music with the senses of touch and vision as well as hearing. They were concerned with how it feels to cradle an instrument in one's arms and to gently caress its strings. Another concern was how the musician looked while holding the instrument; it should physically enhance the grace of its player. The lute-poem existed as a short lyric text in which the poetic subject personified the lute as a muse, companion, or confidant. As noted in the previous section, poets invested the lute with human qualities, explicitly fusing it with sexual bodies and parts, using anatomical terms in deliberately ambiguous references. The lute was the explicit attribute of lovers and, as such, it was a visibly established signifier. In the emblematic literature of the period, the structural make-up of the instrument confirmed gendered ideas of instrumental practice in courtly circles as well as explicitly coded expressions of erotic desire.

The special affiliation between poetry and music allowed poets to embody the lute

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<sup>56</sup> Miller, "Instruments of Desire: Musical Morphology in the Early Work of Picasso," 446-7.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*: 446.

either as a self or an Other, female- or male-gendered, depending on the demands of each individual seductive circumstance. While poetic expression was a strong contributor to the emergence of the sixteenth-century lute-poem, the popularity of these texts also evolved as a companion to the written repertoire for the lute in Europe. Indeed, the instrument flourished as a vehicle for courtly and cultivated artistic expression. The lute, above other musical instruments, aided in collapsing the remnant barriers between medieval amateur and professional musicians; instrumental music performance spread beyond the specialties of traveling musicians to be incorporated into the cultural training of the elite and the education of a *mondain* society.

The poets of the sixteenth-century French Renaissance Pléiade group, significantly aligning themselves with the original ancient Pleiad of Alexandrian poets and tragedians of the third century B.C., were prolific in their production of lute-poems. A principal Parisian member was Pierre de Ronsard (1524 -1585) who wrote a book of *amours*, numerous sonnets, and *chansons* as well as a *Hymne de France* of 1549 in which the poet sings the praises of France directly to his intimate friend and companion, his lute.<sup>58</sup> Music was central to these poets and the conveyance of their ideas. Poetry, according to Ronsard, should be sung; it could only fulfill its potential for moving emotions when portrayed in music:

*...car la Poésie sans les instrumens, ou sans la grace d'une seule ou plusieurs voix, n'est nullement agréable, non plus que les instrumens sans este animez de la mélodie d'une plaisante voix.*<sup>59</sup>

Poetry without music and the graceful pleasures of one or more voices cannot serve to

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<sup>58</sup> Howard Mayer Brown, "'Ut Musica Poesis': Music and Poetry in France in the Late Sixteenth Century," *Early Music History* 13 (1994): 8.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*: 7. Cites: Ronsard, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. P. Laumonier, rev. and completed by I. Silver and R. Lebègue, 20 vols. (Paris, 1914-75), 9.

please anymore than music can delight the senses without the animated melodies of a beautiful voice. The progression from words to verse to song causes a series of reverberations and echoes, calls and responses that repeat and widen in ever-expanding circles. Other Parisian lute poets were Joachim du Bellay (1525-1560) who wrote love-sonnets, and Jean-Antoine de Baïf (1532-1589) a poet and classic scholar. To these may be added the many poets who lived and wrote in Lyons, an important center in France for the production of Italian musical instrument and ideas as well as a thriving hub for the publishing of printed lute music.

The fascination with lute-poems arose from the tones of sensual exchange between the instrument, its player and the listener/spectator. Watteau's *Mezzetin* (fig. 52) expresses his anguish privately and seeks inner release; his poet's voice rises from a similar introspection and solitude forging a musical union of cosmic contemplation with human experience.<sup>60</sup> In lute-poems, such as Maurice Scève's (1501-1564) *Délie* of 1545, the lute was able to change the mood of listener and player, as well as acting as a mediator, or agent of reciprocation, in lovemaking:

Resonant lute, with the sweet sound of strings, / And the accord of my affection, / How well you tune / Your harmony to fit my passion! / When I am without occupation / You incite my spirit so ardently, / That now to joy, now to mourning, you move me, / With your harmonies, so unlike mine. / For you declaim to her my woes better than I, / Corresponding to my trembling sighs.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Marlies Kronegger, *The Life Significance of French Baroque Poetry* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1988) 70.

<sup>61</sup> Zecher, "The Gendering of the Lute in Sixteenth-Century French Love Poetry," 776. Author cites Maurice Sceve. 1966. *Delie*. Ed. I. C. McFarlane. Cambridge, dizain 344. "*Leuth resonant, & doux son des cordes, / Et le concert de mon affection, / Comment ensemble vnymment tu accordes / Ton harmonie avec ma passion! // Lors que ie suis sans occupation / Si viuement l'esprit tu m'exercites, / Qu'ores a ioye, ore a dueil tu m'incites / Par tes accordz, non aux miens ressemblantz. // Car plus, que moy, mes maulx tu luy recites, / Correspondant a mes suspirs tremblantz.*"

Much like *Mezzetin*, the poet/musician addresses his instrument directly both as a love object and a sympathetic companion. The poet praises the lute for its ability to achieve harmonies he himself cannot attain; as such, it communicates and reverberates with unique passion.

Lute imagery was an integral part of seventeenth-century traditions in Italian and Flemish painting. Caravaggio paired a young Apollo-like youth with the lute in several of his paintings (fig. 53); *Serenade* of 1629 (fig. 54) by Judith Leyster (1609-1660) connects the lute to expressions of love as a young musician, lit from below, presumably by a candle, looks upward – perhaps to a window or balcony – to sing to his lady.<sup>62</sup> In Dutch genre scenes, male entertainers often bridged the gap between love and lust when playing the lute. Frans Hals (1580-1666) pairs the instrument with a leering comic entertainer in *Jester with a Lute*, of 1620-1625 (fig. 55). Hendrick TerBrugghen (1588-1629), in his *Duet* of 1628, portrays a lutenist singing lustily while a buxom young woman looks over his shoulder (fig. 56). The artist as musician even appears in the person of Jan Steen who paints himself as a lutenist in his self-portrait of c. 1663 (fig. 57). With his head thrown back in a state of joyous abandon, the artist is a lively and spirited entertainer.

Images of the lute became more restrained and ennobled as they moved south to France. The French *Lute Player* of 1640 by Jean de Reyn (1610-1678) is a well-dressed aristocrat who sits elegantly playing his music (fig. 58).<sup>63</sup> A 1690 portrait of Charles Mouton, the musician and composer of music for the lute, by Francois de Troy (1645-1730) is a sensitive observance of the man's nobility and acclaim (fig. 59). Louis XIV himself plays the lute in a costume drawing from the *Ballet royal de la nuit* of c. 1650. As

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<sup>62</sup> Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

<sup>63</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

the personification of the sun, or the god Apollo, the lute is his familiar attribute (fig. 60).<sup>64</sup>

### **From Lute to Guitar**

By the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, the guitar replaced the lute as a popular stringed instrument for vocal accompaniment. The guitar, a combination of Italian and Moorish musical traditions, became more standard because it was easier to master in tuning and performance than the more difficult lute. In the strings of the early guitar, the two lowest courses were doubled at the octave, as on the lute. The total span of the seven strings on the four-course guitar was roughly equivalent to the lute's six courses and eleven strings.<sup>65</sup> The shape of the guitar was not as reminiscent of the spherical, womanly womb; nevertheless, its figure-eight shape, like the violin, recalled the female torso. Thus, it retained its physiological connotation as a signifier of both the male and the feminine form in much the same way as its earlier relative, the lute.<sup>66</sup> A drawing by Watteau, *Study Sheet with a Guitar*, (fig. 61) emphasizes the torso-like shape of the guitar by placing it, not against the shapely upper body of its female payer, but against the delicate curve of her cheek.<sup>67</sup> The artist models his sketch with dark parallel chalk lines that follow the contours of the guitar and its neck. Thoughtful hatching marks portray the folds of dress fabric as they intersect between her upper arm and protruding breast. At the upper left, similar shadowed contours depict the subtle curve of her cheek and the upsweep of her hair, harmonizing the angle of her head with the presentation of the guitar against the female body.

The guitar grew in popularity in concerts as well as folk settings providing

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<sup>64</sup> *Bibliothèque nationale de France* Department of Prints and Photographs, Hennin Collection no. 3674.

<sup>65</sup> Daniel Heartz, "Parisian Music Publishing under Henry II: A Propos of Four Recently Discovered Guitar Books," *The Musical Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (1960): 458.

<sup>66</sup> Miller, "Instruments of Desire: Musical Morphology in the Early Work of Picasso," 446-7.

<sup>67</sup> Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

accompaniment for singing, dancing, and courting. Like the violin, the guitar could be used in the contexts of both high and low settings of entertainment. Music books for the guitar were intensely popular in Paris under Henry II; music publishing businesses flourished there and in Lyons. A certain Guillaume Morlaye (1510-1558), a pupil of the royal lutenist, Albert de Rippe (1480-1551), was known to give lessons on the guitar. His *Briefue et facile instruction pour apprendre la tabulature à bien accorder, conduire et disoser la main sur la guiterne*, was first printed by Adrian Le Roy in 1551. Marin Mersenne, the seventeenth-century monk and mathematician, recommended the treatises of Adrian Le Roy in his *Harmonie Universelle* of 1636, taking from Le Roy his illustrations of an older sixteenth-century lute and its relation to the guitar.<sup>68</sup> In an anonymous treatise devoted to stringed instruments, *La Manière d'entoucher* (Poitiers, 1556), the author writes that the lute and the guitar were ideal for achieving musical perfection.<sup>69</sup> Also included is a note about the enthusiasm for the guitar in France:

In my earliest years we used to play the lute more than the guitar, but for twelve or fifteen years now everyone has been 'guitaring,' the lute is nearly forgotten for Heaven knows what kind of music on the guitar, which is much easier than that for lute.<sup>70</sup>

Not only was the guitar easier to master than the lute, but it was also viewed as a fashionable, modern replacement for an outdated instrument. It was a fresh and novel prerequisite for enlightened members of the *mondain* elite to appear stylishly *au courant*. It, like the lute, became an important symbol for social contact and accompaniment gradually

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<sup>68</sup> Hertz, "Parisian Music Publishing under Henry II: A Propos of Four Recently Discovered Guitar Books," 455.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.: 460.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Author cites *La Manière d'entoucher les Lucs et Guiternes* which constitutes the final chapter in the anonymous *Discours non plus melancholique que divers de choses mesmement qui appartiennent notre France*, Poitiers, Engilbert de Marnef, 1556. The chapter is reprinted by Weckerlin in *Nouveau Musiciana*, Paris, 1890, 104-19.

replacing the older instrument in its role as a complement to matters of love.

A. P. de Mirimonde has written about Watteau's preference in his paintings for the guitar:

*Cet instrument fournissait un accompagnement discret pour le chant à mi-voix qu'on aimait alors. Watteau connaît bien la manière de l'employer. Il sait qu'il ne faut pas jouer avec l'ongle et que le timbre varie suivant l'endroit où les doigts touchent les cordes...L'impulsion donnée près des touches produit un son pur et doux: les personnages de Watteau y ont souvent recours pour accompagner ou suppléer de tendres confidences.<sup>71</sup>*

The guitar was ideal for furnishing a subtle complement to a voice of moderate range and Watteau understood well its advantages and manner of play. He knew that plucking the strings with the fingernails was no longer needed as the gentle intensity of stroking the strings could yield delicate and pure sounds. Furthermore, the location of the fingers as they strummed the strings varied the timbre of the notes. Watteau's musicians often use the instrument to match or underscore tender and intimate exchanges. Watteau's two drawings of a man with a guitar emphasize the social aspects of the instrument in the leaning body and turning head of the player (fig. 62). These ideas of heard and unheard harmonies gently caressed in the service of love and the promise of erotic satisfaction are brought together in the art of Watteau. Watteau's musicians, in their favoring of the guitar, recall the ideas of Malebranche that the strings of the heart cause emotions to tremble and pulsate; the guitar connects physical and emotive stimulation. Watteau continues the amorous traditions of the lute and applies them to its descendant, the guitar, endowing his paintings with the same promise of the satisfactions of love. To paraphrase Norman Bryson, the path of the desirous glance to the final destination of the desired must be smoothed of all resistance.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Mirimonde, "Les Instruments De Musique Chez Antoine Watteau," 49.

<sup>72</sup> Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancient Régime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 3.

Watteau's guitars perform this amorous task.

In *La partie quarrée* (fig. 39) the artist presents a clear statement of the prime importance of the guitar in portraying the progressive melodies of love in his images. Quietly draped over the shoulder of Pierrot, the silent guitar faces out directly toward the viewer, becoming one with the group who, like the instrument itself, are offstage, out of commission. Set against the gleaming backdrop of Pierrot's white costume, the instrument is a pivotal character in the scene. As such, it predicts its own importance as the carrier, the bearer of signified feelings – the vehicle of transmission for Watteau's expressions of love.

### **Watteau's Guitars: From the Sentimental to the Sensual**

The doctrines of classical antiquity and the Middle Ages handed down to early modern artists, musicians and writers placed music and love in a venerable and inextricable sensual bond. The nuances of music enabled it to represent sensation and emotion, either as an erotic embodiment or as a sensory signifier of spiritual and provisional attunement. Sounding a note or striking a chord was an auditory summons to love, both sacred and profane. As such, it was a means for traversing between higher love and the limits of earthly pleasures. Conversely, it was also a social lubricant, a means of clearing a sensual path toward erotic expression and fulfillment.

The stringed instrument is Watteau's preferred instrument of love.<sup>73</sup> With its relative ease in playing, its often-spontaneous context and its multiple tunings, it is a sensual symbol for the achievement of the love's harmony. The strings of the guitar are cohesive threads in the collective, social organization of erotic awakening in such paintings as the *Fête champêtre* of c. 1719-20 (fig. 63), which depicts a progressive romantic scene where

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<sup>73</sup> Haar, *The Courtier as Musician: Castiglione's View of the Science and Art of Music* 175. "The lute, already an instrument in prominent use when Castiglione began his work, was...regarded as the aristocratic accompanying instrument par excellence."



music is the central neural fiber, the emotive thread in the social drama.<sup>74</sup> Here, Watteau presents a subtle description of the nuanced stages of romance and love as the drama lyrically unfolds through the landscape. Three groups, read from left to right, are engaged in a seamless choreography of romantic development; the continuous narration moves from childhood innocence with three little girls who pick flowers at left to the amorous fulfillment of the couple disappearing to the right. A nymph-like statue observes the scene from the shadows at left. Seated to the immediate right of the children is a young woman, in a yellow skirt who, in glancing back at the young girls, bridges the gap between innocent childhood and ripening maturity. Beside her, near the center, a young man makes an overture to a demoiselle in a bright blue skirt leaning back in surprise. To the right, the guitarist forms an apex to the triangulated group as his music draws in a woman holding a musical score. The white page on the lap of her luminous skirt combines with the rich pink silk of the adjacent woman to become the radiant focal point of the image. The dark triangular unified form of three figures that repose in the foreground emphasizes the brightness of the two gowns. The woman in pink turns toward a gentleman who beckons her invitingly into the dark woods. Her back expresses hesitancy, yet, without a view of her facial expression, her mood remains a mystery. However, the presence of the man and woman who disappear arm-in-arm into the shadowy forest, at right, as well as the embracing couple also at far right, lends a certainty to the hesitant woman's ultimate decision. The guitar, in its position near the center, accompanies and facilitates the movement from left to right, from initiation to consummation. These three sequential expressions portray the passage of time in one continuous, flowing frieze. Adding to the transitory passages of the musical notes and their implication of the fleeting nature of love are the raking light of the late afternoon as the sun disappears behind the trees and the autumnal tint of the foliage. In

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<sup>74</sup> Art Institute, Chicago.

this scene, the decay of sound is a measure of the influence of time; yet music's reverberance is proof of the persistence of life. Our experience of change in the re-sounding of notes signifies that this moment is different from the preceding one; it therefore has meaning and purpose. Watteau's *fête* conveys passage of time on visual terms while underscoring its movement in each guitar note as it sounds, fades and ultimately echoes in the woods. The action associated with the sound that dies or recurs is his tool for mastering time. By giving it a visual and audible reality, time becomes an ominous and inevitable presence. The notes diminish and recur in the observer's eyes and ears. There can be no denial; there is no escaping it.<sup>75</sup>

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ideas incorporated the concept of both musical and visual movements in time into a new view of history. The past was not merely a series of separate, static events – it was, instead, an evolving, progressive continuum leading to an ever-changing future. The awareness of transience as it affected man and society brought a new philosophy to the concept of expression in the arts. Musical concertos were not definite in form; they possessed instead, styles, textures and timbres that opposed each other and contrasted to provide tonal perspective and melodic depth. Musical concertos were made up of sonorities produced by small bodies of instruments spotlighting certain instrumental combinations allowing the activation of one part moving against the background of the whole. The term concerto meant a style or texture rather than a definite form, implying opposing qualities, volumes, intensities, and melodic direction. This shift of tonal balances heightened the effect of one or more parts moving. “It [was] not by accident

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<sup>75</sup> Music as an expression of vanitas or the passage of time is not new in Watteau. A well-known earlier example is Hans Holbein's *The French Ambassadors* of 1533. The work gives contemporary resonance to this notion of sensitive continuity and flow in Nature, surrounding his two figures with attributes of music and loss. By juxtaposing musical symbols (a lute, a set of pipes and a hymnal) with a human skull, Holbein provides a reminder of vanitas or mortality, and the transitory delights of music. The lute and pipes are mere conduits, the hymnal a written trace, of music that passes away as it is made.

that the separate units of the sonata and suite forms [were] referred to as movements.”<sup>76</sup> In Watteau, the pulsing, moving sensibilities produced by the tuneful vibrations of the guitar are bridges of movement between initial spiritual innocence, a gradual sensual awakening and the eventual physical pulsings of erotic love. In the Chicago *Fête champêtre*, mentioned above, sensibility is shared as it reverberates gradually from left to right, from an idea (youthful virtue) to an act (sexual fulfillment). It is, in essence, a musical movement, a visual song that plays out in a melodic line and concludes with a lasting, reverberant refrain. The present, while in the act of moving forward, joins with the past, giving man a sense of his placement within a larger cosmic and humanist system. “More conscious of the present, man becomes also more conscious of the past, realizing the relativity of his own personal vision.”<sup>77</sup> Seventeenth-century artists and architects embellished and deepened pictorial movement with reflecting, moving surfaces, such as fountains and pools. Just as mirrors were used to increase the perception of space in interiors, so pools performed a similar function for the exteriors; their rippling reflections activated the static lines and masses of the structures. Watteau’s fountain in *Les plaisirs du bal* (fig. 35) acts as a moving, audible reflection; it is an active, moving participant, a player that echoes the pictorial motion and ambiance of the scene.

As noted in scientific writings of the period, motion and emotion were symbiotically dependent on each other.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, motions of music were limitless transgressors of boundaries; they had no such visual constrictions. Like the workings of the responsive nervous system, the very nature of music enabled it to freely invade temporal and spatial dimension. Thus, the alliance of music with love endowed it with qualities that could move

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<sup>76</sup> LeCoat, "Comparative Aspects of the Theory of Expression in the Baroque Age," 214.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. LeCoat cites: Leo Schrade, *Tragedy in the Art of Music* (Cambridge, MA., 1964) 99.

the listener to either feel deeply or vanquish the agonies of unanswered passion. As has been observed in texts from as early as the classical age, music as a curative measure has a long history. To the Greeks, Apollo, god of music, was also the god of medicine. Ancient texts on the origin of the world named music as a beneficial component in man's ability to 'know thyself' and connected the idea of celestial harmony with the health and pleasure of the human soul.<sup>79</sup> It was the prescribed remedy for transport, or relief from the toxic disorders that could result from the pangs of unfulfilled desire.<sup>80</sup> Music is the sought-after Pythagorean *katharsis* for Watteau's *Mezzetin* (fig. 52) who plays his guitar in an effort to relieve the torture of unrequited love. The female statue in the shadows behind him is a stony visual reminder of the obdurate, unresponsive object of his desire.<sup>81</sup> Mezzetino, the amorous and sentimental valet of the *Commedia dell'arte*, sits alone on a bench next to a wall surrounded by forest greenery.<sup>82</sup> Bright light pierces the woods to fall directly on the figure, illuminating his brilliant costume as well as his anguished facial expression. Despite the relatively small size of the painting, it captures the viewer's attention with its frontal depiction of torment draped in the rich, glowing palette of his costume. The blue and ochre stripes glisten on the satin fabric; the dark green foliate background intensifies the lustrous rose of his silk hat and cloak. His head, covered by his large red silk cap, is thrown

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<sup>79</sup> Brian P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 72.

<sup>80</sup> Austern, "For, Love's a Good Musician: Performance, Audition, and Erotic Disorders in Early Modern Europe," 646.

<sup>81</sup> Seerveld, "Telltale Statues in Watteau's Painting," 163. Statues have emblematic function and importance for Watteau. Author cites: A.-P. de Mirimonde, "Statues et emblemes dans l'oeuvre d'Antoine Watteau", *Revue de Louvre*, v. 12, n. 1, 12: "Les statues qu'il place dans ses parcs traduisent les sentiments et les pensees de ses personnages."

<sup>82</sup> Mezzetin was a favorite role of Luigi Riccoboni, leader of the Italian Comedians and this may be a portrait of him. Harry B. Wehle, "Le Mezzetin by Antoine Watteau," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 30, no. 1 (1935): 16.

back in a gesture that looks up to the heavens for release. A short red coat, or *tabaro*, hangs from his left shoulder, emphasizing the angle of his shifting, convulsive form. The vivid white of his cuffs and collar resonates with the thick, brightly painted teardrop that glistens in his right eye. The red rosettes on his gold-toned shoes highlight the angle at which his muscular legs, wrapped in incandescent silk stockings, are crossed. Yet his strong, athletic physique is in direct opposition to the tenuous character of his unhappy temperament. Delicate foliage frames the figure, at the left forefront and rear right, echoing his angled pose while hinting at his fragile, sorrowful nature. Again, like all of Watteau's images of Italian comedy characters, *Mezzetin* does not perform onstage; he is alone in his personal despair as he plaintively strums his instrument with languish and longing. Mezzetin's passion is played out on the strings, seeking musical harmony not only in the music, but also within his discordant soul. Musicologist A. P. de Mirimonde, who has written at length about the musical instruments in the works of Watteau, provides a close analysis of the position and fingering of *Mezzetin* that may indicate the nature of the sounds the artist attempts to convey. The tight fingering and articulation of the guitarist's hands indicate a musical twang or a sharp pungency that imitates the piercing sensations of loss and despair.<sup>83</sup> Mezzetin plays 'into the string' relying on pressure to convey depth not only of sound, but also of emotion. There is a sense of controlled, focused resonance that directs the intensity of feeling. The passionate notes he plays are layered with a vibrato that is vital to expressive stringed instruments. Similar to the singing voice, vibrato gives the music its urgency and vitality.<sup>84</sup> The shimmering effects Watteau achieves in this painting in the

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<sup>83</sup> Mirimonde, "Les Instruments De Musique Chez Antoine Watteau," 49. "*Enfin, quand le doigt se pose près du chevalet, la sonorité est plus ouverte, porte plus loin, mais devient quelque peu nasillard. Le Mezzetin de New-York joue ainsi et semble même exécuter un tremolo. Les doigts de la main gauche pincent les cordes sur le manche et doivent posséder – en particulier l'index – fort et autonomie. Watteau choisit parfois un doigté que fait ressortir de manière saisissante l'extension des doigts.*"

<sup>84</sup> Donington, "String Playing in Baroque Music," 391-3.

luminant costume and the sympathetic, shifting foliage are direct visual references to the psychic *agitato* and lyrical vibrato expressed by his Mezzetin. The strong emotion of his frontal pose and his yearning gaze portray amorous suffering. The range of colors from the deep green trees to the delicate colors of his striped, satin costume, his red hat, cap and the rosettes on his shoes contribute visually to the plaintive tremolo of his song. Watteau poses his anguished Mezzetin with fingers pressed firmly against the neck of his guitar, producing a piquant stridency in concert with his personal longing. Hence, the music is appropriate to its meaning in mode, rhythm and timbre. Music, like love, affects its subjects because it is dynamic, vigorous and full of life. Its expressive nature is dependent upon continual change and vibrant, subtle movement. These movements and changes, both in music and the act of loving, cohere to effect a progressive unity that works to aid in the sensory drama.<sup>85</sup> In the words of Donald Callen, “Musical expression deserves the kinds of emotional involvement that are consistent with the claims of human sensibility. And a musical sensibility that makes no room for intense and rich sentiment is impoverished.”<sup>86</sup> This means that, without the intensity of dynamic and stirring emotion, music is rendered meaningless. To be human is to feel emotion; to respond to music is an expression of the very sensibilities unique to humanity. *Mezzetin*, in his expressive playing and strong, emotive bearing, is a visual model of the physical and spiritual human responses to the stirring sensibilities of love expressed in music. In *Mezzetin*, the throbbing intensity of the guitarist’s music is a palpable articulation of physical love discovered, consummated – and ultimately lost.

Musical terms are also explicit parts of the vocabulary of making love; ideas of rhythm, harmony, tension and resolution recall the rising cadence, *jouissance* and release of

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<sup>85</sup> Donald Callen, "The Sentiment in Musical Sensibility," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40, no. 4 (1982): 385.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*: 390.

the physical act of sex. Here, music transgresses the boundaries of meaning. And yet, it “...beats like the heart; it throbs, quivers, tenses, relaxes. Its pleasures occur again and again.”<sup>87</sup> The painted images of Watteau present in clear visual terms the relation of music to society by way of its connection to human sexuality; music is an erotic embrace. Yet, in its ephemeral nature, explicitness is distanced; music becomes an elevated, tenuously removed embodiment of sexual expression. In Watteau’s artistic couplings, erotic love tantalizes and beckons; yet, it evades consummation. Like the chords of his musicians, dissonance suspends each note artfully delaying resolution.

As primal as the sense of vision is, thinkers as early as the Renaissance regarded the sense of hearing as even stronger – for desires of the heart and soul are moved most deeply and most directly by acoustic beauty in the form of music.<sup>88</sup> Both music and love cause spiritual transport by connecting the body to transparent, vibrant spirits and amorous nerve endings that receive and interpret essences in the air.<sup>89</sup> Music derives its spiritual power from its engaging, transitory nature; it operates as a living entity similar to the souls of men or the intermediary atmospheric forces that relay corporeal perception to those souls.<sup>90</sup> As a summons to earthly love and spiritual rapture, music enters the body and seduces the soul. The direct captivation of the soul by music results from a substantive parallel between the two “for both music and the soul [are] regarded as vivified air.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* 215.

<sup>88</sup> Austern, "Sing Again Syren": The Female Musician and Sexual Enchantment in Elizabethan Life and Literature," 425.

<sup>89</sup> Linda Phyllis Austern, "Art to Enchant: Musical Magic and Its Practitioners in English Renaissance Drama," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 115, no. 2 (1990): 194.

<sup>90</sup> Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* 215.

<sup>91</sup> Austern, "Sing Again Syren": The Female Musician and Sexual Enchantment in Elizabethan Life and Literature," 426.

In Watteau's subjects, the sharing of melodic anticipation and/or pleasure serves as communication, depicting human types, not specific individuals, engaged in social comportment and sexual exchange. For his musicians, tuning up is a preparation for performance while the audience and the viewer are drawn in to sense pitches and timbres, unconsciously testing the sonorous mood. "In short, we also become attuned."<sup>92</sup> The musicians in Watteau's *Prelude d'un concert* (fig. 3) present a unified tonal exploration in an attempt to reach a mutual, harmonious cohesion and exchange of sensibilities. As they tease out notes in preparation, they set up a system of enticement. The tuneful accord they seek to attain, and subsequently perform, is a promise of desired fulfillment. Similar to the *Prelude, The Charms of Life*, c. 1717 (fig. 64), shows a similar group to the left – yet its sensibilities are more immediate.<sup>93</sup> The woman who perused a music book in the Berlin painting now holds a guitar and, through her glance over the shoulder and her right arm prettily displayed, is a direct allusion to music in the service of love. The pillars enclose the group and shelter them; the tiled floor further separates them from the distant landscape. While at the left Watteau's friend Vleughels, given prominence here in his red robe and hat, leans into the group, the right foreplane presents a dog and a black servant boy, who sits on the ground and prepares to serve wine. The bucolic backdrop is a grove of delicately articulated trees and a sky made up of alternately thick and thin passages of light blue and cream-colored paint. What one sees here is the artist's choice to portray a more intimate and straightforward scene of sensual enticement, mitigated and softened by the presence of children, and elegantly clad figures in a sympathetic landscape.

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<sup>92</sup> Tom Phillips, *Music in Art: Through the Ages* (New York: Prestel, 1997) 76.

<sup>93</sup> Wallace Collection, London.



## Lessons in Music/Lessons in Love

Music as an invitation serves as a premise within the context of learning to play an instrument; tentative touch and knowing response become metaphors for physical acts in the service of love. As such, the music lesson has been a traditional narrative setting for seduction. It provides an opportunity for the ravishment of a young virgin who is, despite her innocence, sensually curious. This was a popular subject for Flemish genre scenes in the seventeenth century. Two images of c. 1660 by the Leiden artist Frans van Mieris Sr. (1635-1681) engage this theme. In *The Music Lesson* the male instructor, to the left in the shadows, leans in toward the girl, echoing the angle of his violin (fig. 65).<sup>94</sup> The pale young female student appears lost in thought, unaware of his lecherous gaze. In *Duet* a man plays a lute alongside a young woman at the harpsichord (fig. 66).<sup>95</sup> While the title suggests that they play in concert with each other, the juxtaposition of the older man with the much younger woman suggests that he may play the role of the instructor. Jan Vermeer's (1632-1675) *The Music Lesson* of c. 1662-1665 (fig. 67) portrays a young woman, seen from the back, at a virginal being instructed by a gentleman to her right who leans on a staff.<sup>96</sup> While the viewer sees the white vulnerability of her pale neck below the upswept hair, her fresh face is visible in the reflection in the mirror above the instrument. Dutch painter Gerard ter Borch (1617-1681) often painted male music instructors with female students. His *The Music Lesson* of c. 1669 (fig. 68) includes three figures in an affluent interior.<sup>97</sup> To the left, a young girl sits holding a lute, one delicate foot elevated on a stool. Her male instructor sits at a table counting the beat. Another gentleman looks over his shoulder. The viewer

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<sup>94</sup> National Museum of Serbia.

<sup>95</sup> Staatliches Museum, Schwerin.

<sup>96</sup> Royal Collection, St. James' Palace, London.

<sup>97</sup> Toledo Museum of Art.

must decide if he is present to assist in the lesson or to protect the young girl. The same artist's painting entitled *The Suitor's Visit*, c. 1658, has two interpretations that both allude to seduction (fig. 69).<sup>98</sup> Has the arrival of the gentleman at left interrupted a duet, or is the suitor a client at a high-class brothel? In either case, the sheet music on the table and the figure in the right background playing a stringed instrument are preludes either to social harmony or passion, or both. Molière's *Malade Imaginaire* of 1673 includes a scene in Act II where the lover, Cléante, disguised as Angelique's music teacher, improvises a musical protestation of love.<sup>99</sup> The music lesson provides a pretext for depicting the seething passions between Cléante and Angelique in an acceptably sedate environment, within direct earshot of Angelique's unsuspecting father, Argan.<sup>100</sup>

In Watteau's *Leçon de chant* of c. 1716, the guitar acts as a sensory overture to the act of love in the guise of a music lesson (fig. 70).<sup>101</sup> Out of doors, a young guitarist tunes his instrument as his female student leafs through the music awaiting the signal to begin. While the figures lean away from one another, their eyes meet in a direct, expectant gaze. Her light gold gown contrasts with the dark foliage that grows beside the wall while the dark red costume of the male figure stands out against the bright sky. His stockings, set in contrast to the dark stone, catch the light and reveal youthful, muscular legs. He strums his guitar with tightly articulated hands as he eagerly leans forward. He sits above her on the

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<sup>98</sup> National Gallery of Art.

<sup>99</sup> Molière, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. E. Despois (Paris: Hachette, 1873) 342. Cléante: *Monsieur, j'en suis au désespoir. Je viens de la part du maître à chanter de mademoiselle votre fille. Il s'est vu obligé d'aller à la campagne pour quelques jours; et comme son ami intime, il m'envoie à sa place, pour lui continuer ses leçons, de peur qu'en les interrompant elle ne vînt à oublier ce qu'elle sait déjà.*

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. Act II, Scene II, 365. Angélique: *Je ne m'en défends point dans cette peine extrême: oui, Tircis, je vous aime.* Cléante: *Ô parole pleine d'appas! Ai-je bien entendu, hélas! Redites-la, Philis, que je n'en doute pas.* Angélique: *Je ne m'en défends point dans cette peine extrême: oui, Tircis, je vous aime.* Cléante: *Ô parole pleine d'appas! Ai-je bien entendu, hélas! Redites-la, Philis, que je n'en doute pas.*

<sup>101</sup> Palacio Real, Madrid.

wall while she languorously reclines below. Here, the artist conveys sensual anticipation as well as the impending dominance of the male instructor over his young, female pupil. The whiteness of her flesh and her bare neck and forearms impart an air of willingness and vulnerability that complement the delicate open, receptive pages of the music book. He strikes a chord; she is lushly silent. He calls; she will respond. Their expectancy is a gesture, an elastic, vibrating link between exteriority and interiority, signaled by one body while it, at the same time, connects to a potential depth of feeling in another body. The notes sounded by the instrument are a musical proposition; the tentative striking or teasing of strings forecasts future pleasure. They are metaphorical nerve endings that alertly vibrate in anticipation.

In *The Love Lesson*, c. 1717 (fig. 71) the guitarist stands at left, illuminated by a bright sky, before a group at the right who are shaded by a leafy enclosure.<sup>102</sup> Again, in the foreground, the artist presents us with the same sensibilities; a woman holds a music book and an eager gentleman leans over her shoulder. Her pale neck is exposed to him as he points at a passage in the music. Two other young women converse quietly as they gather roses. Their gestures connect with the statue of the nymph who leans in toward them and appears lifelike in her movements. The flowers add visual abundance to the preparatory notes of the guitar's auditory allusions to amatory delights. Watteau's *The Music Lesson*, c. 1719 (fig. 72), a close-up variation of *The Charms of Life* and *Prelude d'un Concert*, is an intimate portrayal of music as an overture to the act of love.<sup>103</sup> The small scale of the painting draws the viewer in close to hear the subtle notes of the *theorbo* player as he tunes the strings, to feel the rosy enchantment of the children and to sense the erotic tension between the woman and her shadowy companion. The forward angle of the neck of the

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<sup>102</sup> Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

<sup>103</sup> Wallace Collection, London.

instrument is a visual counterbalance to the backward lean of the two figures at left. The musician's gaze focuses inward, intent on finding the desired pitch. The two figures at the left, a man and a woman, appear to peruse the music book. However, in reality their concentration is on what erotic pleasures may be in the offing. While she appears to leaf through the book, her posture is audaciously immodest as she leans against the man, almost touching him. The bold exposure of her milky flesh forms a sensuous curve that extends from brow to ear to yielding neck to rounded bodice. Pink rosettes adorn her hair and bosom framing her glowing skin and hinting at a psychic piquancy below the surface. The slightly backward angle of her pose suggests the languor of incipient delight. While he appears to look over her shoulder at the music, the man in the shadows revels in her closeness and breathes in her scent. Here, both the man and the woman are the students, eager to learn and participate in the sensual promises of the music to come.

### **The Erotic Sensibilities of Music**

As shown in chapter one, classical antiquity was foundational in aligning music and its instruments with love and desire. An additional ancient reference is a book in the Hebrew Bible, the Song of Songs, a frankly sexual collection of poetry on the theme of human love connecting music with sensual eroticism. Presupposing two primary figures, a male lover and a female lover, the Song of Songs has played a fascinating role in Western culture. Steven Plank writes, "Probably no other ancient text, at least in Western civilization, has been more often or more variously chanted, sung, and set to music [while] the sounds of voices...[acted as] erotic enticements."<sup>104</sup> The Song of Songs, a subject of constant reinterpretation and discussion among religious scholars, was an imaginative work originally designed to entertain. It placed a private human exchange in the public realm;

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<sup>104</sup> Steven Plank, "Music of the Ravish'd Soul," *The Musical Times* 136, no. 1831 (1995): 466. Author cites Marcia Falk: *The Songs of Songs: a new translation and interpretation* (San Francisco, 1990) 113, 161.

divine love was portrayed as occupying the same psychic and sensual tier as human, sexual love.<sup>105</sup> This basic text brought gender and sexuality to the forefront of philosophical debate. After later criticism arose for its prurient nature, the canticles received a more spiritual reading. The book's explicitness, and its presence in the Old Testament, was a continual source of dispute throughout religious history. Scholars still continue to argue at length over whether it is a depiction of physical love or an allegorical allusion to higher, spiritual love.<sup>106</sup> It illustrates the way artists and poets were developing techniques to arouse and manipulate desire while philosophers and critics were inventing new ways to interpret and control it. This would persist well into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as philosophers and music critics such as Jean Millet (1618-1684) and Nicolas Ragot de Grandval (1676-1753) attempted to place 'tasteful' restrictions on amatory musical expression.<sup>107</sup>

The capricious and dangerously emotive essence of music and its direct contact with the senses privileged it as the most delightful and enticing object of hearing. Because the light, ethereal notes carried in the air entered the body through the circuitous and winding designs of the ear channels, it gently combined with and altered the bodily spirits: "From this process there was no escape, no closure of the sensory orifice to stop the invasion and its catalysis of inward change. In the end, it was music that served as 'a fire to pleasure.'" <sup>108</sup> In other words, the ear was always open, vulnerable and receptive to musical

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<sup>105</sup> David Carr, "Gender and the Shaping of Desire in the Song of Songs and Its Interpretation," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119, no. 2 (2000): 244.

<sup>106</sup> William E. Phipps, "The Plight of the Song of Songs," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 42, no. 1 (1974): 82-100.

<sup>107</sup> Cohen, "*L'art De Bien Chanter* (1666) of Jean Millet.", Nicolas Ragot de Grandval, *Essai Sur Le Bon Goust En Musique* (Paris: Prault, 1732).

<sup>108</sup> Austern, "For, Love's a Good Musician: Performance, Audition, and Erotic Disorders in Early Modern Europe," 622.

vibrations that could move and influence desires. While words could communicate erotic desire and response to the minds of those involved, the ephemeral and sympathetic pleasures of music and its illusory and redolent nature linked it with love, passion and desire.<sup>109</sup> Music as this ‘fire to pleasure’ achieves visual resonance in *L’amour au théâtre italien* (fig. 73). The burning torch which radiates from its source outward to touch and illuminate all figures in its path acts in much the same way as the guitar strings played by Pierrot. The warm rays of light are paradigms for the tender love Pierrot feels for Flaminia, the center of interest. Enclosed in darkness, the figures cannot escape the incursion of heat and sound upon their exposed sense receptors.

### **Music and the Sense of Touch**

In Watteau’s painting, *La sérénade italienne* (fig. 4) the musicians attempt to soften Columbine’s affections, hoping to warm her disposition. As he leans toward her with his guitar, her reluctance seems to soften in the turn of her head and the hint of a smile on her lips. The gleaming stripes of her dress curve in concert with the inclination of her body. The immediacy of the music reaches her; she is touched and caressed by the loving musical sounds of her sympathetic companions. The music has a tactile, physical effect on her as well as an emotional one. Like the palpable sensations that define physical love, the acts of making music and hearing it contain subtle and rich sensory meanings. Music, like love, does not afford us distance and clarity; it is intimate in its ability to invade through tactile and auditory sensations. The innate elusiveness and abstraction of musical sounds are reinforced and elucidated in their association with the sense of touch. “From whatever different sensations the arts may derive – from touch or hearing – they are one in spirit and

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.: 622-3.

meaning.”<sup>110</sup> Similarly, they are also at one with the spirited and expressive touch of Watteau, the artist. The tactile quality he achieves with his brush is his painterly, communicative method for reaching out to the viewer. Like the timbres of different sounds, his strokes are alternately smooth and rough, applied with layered glazes punctuated by splashes of *impasto*. The ariose lines of notes affect Columbine, the listener, just as the nuanced marks of Watteau persuade the viewer to visually respond.

As maintained in the previous chapter, the aesthetic experience of music originates in its timbre or texture, its surface quality, its consistency. Touch overcomes the inadequacy of a verbal description of the sensations of music; it is invasive and palpably immediate.<sup>111</sup> Aristotle also saw the sense of touch as a medium, a communicator of material and immaterial essences:

The organ for perception...is that of touch – that part of the body in which primarily the sense of touch resides...for all sense-perception is a process of being so affected...touch has for its object both what is tangible and what is intangible.<sup>112</sup>

Aristotle asserts the primacy of the sense of touch in relation to all the other senses, i.e. light enters the lens of the eye, odors enter the nose, taste makes contact with the tongue, sound vibrations strike inside the ear. Therefore, touch is the sensational tool in music – in its initial expression as well as its physical reception as it mechanically commences with the striking of a note, the gentle impact on the listening organ and finally the movement and alignment of sentiments. The *Encyclopédie* would define *sensibilité* in this way, using the

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<sup>110</sup> LeCoat, "Comparative Aspects of the Theory of Expression in the Baroque Age," 208.

<sup>111</sup> Putman, "Music and the Metaphor of Touch," 61.

<sup>112</sup> Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001). De Anima, Bk. II, Ch. II, 579.

sense of touch as a metaphor for emotional union: « *Sensibilité: [Une] disposition tendre & délicate de l'ame, qui la rend facile à être émue, à être touchée.* »<sup>113</sup> Sensibility employs touch as its conduit; sensibility is the gift of being able to sense, to come into contact with, delicate and tender spiritual nuances. Being touched becomes the emotional result of reaching outward. The Cartesian concept discusses the pineal gland, the little gland that exists “in the middle of the brain, from whence it radiates forth...by means of the animal spirits, nerves...participating in the impressions of the spirits.”<sup>114</sup> Descartes charts the movement and touch of sentiments and feeling, and their sensual progression outward to a physical manifestation. Again, motion and emotion are one.<sup>115</sup> They operate and arrive together in the sense of touch.

French *médecins philosophes* employed studies of the physical sciences to explain human sentiment and emotion; the sense of touch, and our understanding of it, is a direct and compelling metonym for coming into contact with, or feeling, the emotional qualities of music. Here, the sense of touch is paradigmatic for the language of physiology that was dominant during seventeenth- and eighteenth century trends of thought. As the Cartesian mechanist concept maintained that senses experienced and felt by the soul took the form of physical manifestations, so too the sense of touch becomes another direct method for comprehending the elusive sentiments educed by music. The texture perceived in music relates meaningfully to the somatic properties of real, exterior textures felt by the tactual nerves of the body. Nicolas Malebranche saw this as an appropriate way to explain the sense organs as physical receptors that transmitted spirits to the brain: “The soul is immediately

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<sup>113</sup> d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie De Diderot Et D'alembert Sensibilité* 15:52.

<sup>114</sup> René Descartes, *Passions of the Soul*, ed. Monroe D. Beardsley, trans. Haldane and Ross, *The European Philosophers from Descartes to Nietzsche* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002).Article XXXI, 94.

<sup>115</sup> LeCoat, "Comparative Aspects of the Theory of Expression in the Baroque Age," 219.



joined to that part of the brain where the filaments of the sense organs end.”<sup>116</sup> The aesthetics of touch, then, have a tangible as well as spiritual meaning in musical perception. This tactile model for sympathetic musical experience is a useful trope in understanding musical discernment and the feelings it contains. The immediacy of music is akin to the sense of touch; it is “nonconceptual, frequently imprecise, often emotionally powerful, [and] definitely informative.”<sup>117</sup>

Touch becomes significant again as it relates to the manner of play of patently descriptive, suggestively shaped musical instruments. A guitar’s long neck implied the phallus; the body of the instrument echoed the curved shape of the female torso. As such, the guitar, in Watteau’s *L’Enchanteur* of c. 1713 (fig. 50) becomes a link between the sensations of strumming or stroking and the embodiment both female and male sexual elements. The musician tunes his guitar, appearing to summon his guitar/companion toward the captivation of his expectant female listeners. Since the soul of the player is joined to the body of the instrument, the identity of each is reciprocal. Sensational boundaries are transgressed: lover and instrument are one. The extremity of one denotes the beginning of the other. The musician stands at left in a commanding profile, set against a light blue sky. From the top of his tricorne hat to his artfully pointed foot, he cuts a fashionable figure in his ochre satin costume and cape. Two young females, elegantly attired in white and pink silks, sit before a dark mass of trees. The young woman in pink, sitting to the far right, focuses her attention on the musician while her companion in a luminous white gown, looks directly out at the viewer. What does her direct gaze imply? Is she in on the amorous scheme? Is she aware of Mezzetin lurking in the shadows? Is he merely an observer or is he a co-conspirator in this plot to enchant and seduce? While the context is ambiguous, the

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<sup>116</sup> Malebranche, *The Search after Truth* 50.

<sup>117</sup> Putman, "Music and the Metaphor of Touch," 60.

musician and his instrument intend to please and win over their listeners. A proposal is in the making that will appeal to the delicate, or hopefully erotic, sensibilities of the ladies.

As will be shown later regarding the debate over Italian and French sensibilities, once music's erotic abilities were fully and publicly recognized, moral questions arose concerning its ability to move, touch and persuade. This was more significant than the theory of written music, its harmonic ratios and its scale systems, which lacked the physical presence of sound when viewed on the page. The ideal of a wholly 'intellectual' music was not as compelling as the actual production and consumption of musical sounds; performers depended upon the necessarily embodied state of music production.

### **The Poetic Meter and the Melodic Lines of Watteau**

The sensualities that linked melody with poetry in lute-poems evolved into a less explicit, more distanced and measured element of *sensibilité* in 17th-century French music in which the artistry of poetic meter was echoed in song. The abbé d'Aubignac (1604–1676), associate of the statesman Cardinal de Richelieu and a theorist, playwright, and critic wrote, « *le poète dit seulement qu' un musicien en avait parlé dans une chanson.* »<sup>118</sup> The poet speaks solely what the musician has expressed in song. Guillaume Colletet (1598–1659) the seventeenth-century French critic and poet connected the word 'sonnet' with the word '*sonner*' (to ring or sound):

Ce n' est pas apres tout, que prenant le sonnet au pied de la lettre, il ne se trouve que sonnet soit presque la mesme chose que chanson, puis que le verbe sonner d' où il est tiré, est souvent pris par nos poètes pour chanter.<sup>119</sup>

It is not a meaning or reference to be taken literally; a sonnet is not the same thing as a song. Rather, the verb '*sonner*' (to ring or sound) from which it is derived is a common

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<sup>118</sup> d'Aubignac, *Conjectures Academiques* 61.

<sup>119</sup> Colletet, *Poesies Diverses* 131.

term used by poets for the art of singing. A quality unique to the French composers of the period was that of melody, the phrasing and linear structure of a piece of music linked in expressive ways to poetry. The close affiliation of music and poetry in French airs and their distinctive melodic shapes sprang less from musical stratagems than from the truth of the text. These lyrical contours were also traced in instrumental compositions.<sup>120</sup> David Tunley puts these ideas in a particularly expressive way:

It is discerned in those shapes or spans of notes that reach out to others, each span complementing the other and exploring new levels, now rising, now falling until a climax is reached after which the notes fall to the final point of repose with a sense of achievement. Its essence seems to be in the dynamic process of 'unfolding'... What is common to all fine melodies seems to be the presence of shapely phrases...a variety of contours, balance of tension and repose, all interact to give [these] melod[ies]...a superb degree of control and design.<sup>121</sup>

Musical phrasing and melodic contour take on tactual as well as visual sensations. Here, the nuance, range and line of each expressive and shapely tune take on somatic and illustrative meanings. Too, the notion of rising and falling, of chordal tension and resolution become living, breathing embodiments; they are the very signifiers of love and life.

Musicians and music lovers praised French music for its polished and charming melodic structures. The phrase '*la douceur du chant français*' was a common reference to a particular style deemed desirable in instructional and critical writings on music. In the French air, harmony and chordal structure were mere supports for the prime energy and impulse of the music: the melody. In some ways, French musicians differed from the Italians in that they could design melodies that did not conform to a strict harmonic and rhythmic set of compositional rules. Even after Italian musical styles were incorporated into

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<sup>120</sup> David Tunley, "Couperin and French Lyricism," *The Musical Times* 124, no. 1687 (1983): 543.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*: 544.

French music at the end of the seventeenth century, the innate French love of smooth melodic contours and delicate phrasing or '*la douceur française*' remained an essentially integral part of their music.<sup>122</sup>

Melody in music is the tuneful equivalent of the line in drawing and painting. The sensuous harmonies and textures in the paintings of Watteau are disciplined by the linear control the artist achieves in the drawing studies that are the foundations for his paintings. Wilfrid Mellers aligns the music of Francois Couperin (1668-1733) with his contemporary, Antoine Watteau; he sees many similarities in each man's blending of French and Italian musical and visual styles:

Couperin's many musical portraits of women, especially young girls, display something like Watteau's fusion of physical beauty with metaphysical grace. In this respect Watteau's drawings of musicians' hands are revealing, for they are fluidly sensuous yet also tensilely precise.<sup>123</sup>

*Two Seated Women, One Playing a Guitar*, a red crayon drawing of the artist (fig. 74) is an early example of the artist's spare and sinuous use of line.<sup>124</sup> The woman to the right is barely discernible. Her head is a lightly drawn oval but, due to the decisive, short horizontal marks at its lower level and the curve of her brow, it is evident that she looks downward. While her arms are not indicated, it is the angle of her posture that the artist uses to depict her leaning position. The blank paper reveals the fall of light on her skirt, its folds indicated by a few purposeful marks. Darker lines that fuse and take on weight convey the shadows that fall to the right side of the drawing. The woman on the left who holds the guitar appears as a sparsely drawn specter. The bend of her knees is apparent through the strong

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.: 545.

<sup>123</sup> Mellers, "If Music Be the Food of Love.," 69.

<sup>124</sup> Private collection, Switzerland.

diagonal marks that delineate the fall of her skirt in the shadows. But it is her right arm and its bend at the elbow that receive the attention and resolute firm strokes of Watteau the draftsman who melodically indicates the fall of light, the fold of fabric on her sleeve and her hand position. The dark lines of her right fingers echo the expressive fingering of her left hand. Through his choice of simple linear strokes and spare, selective articulation, he focuses our attention, not on the guitar, but the playing of it.

French vocal music accompanied by the guitar united words and music in an established courtly style of graceful expression, which contrasted with Italian *bel canto* arias of the same period. Jean Léonor Le Gallois de Grimarest (1659-1713), the noted biographer of Molière, wrote a small volume on manners and music dedicated, in a courtly introduction, to the Duchesse du Maine (1676-1753). In it, he devoted a chapter to the art of singing:

*La musique vocale est une espèce de langue, dont les hommes sont convenus, pour se communiquer avec plus de plaisir leurs pensées, & leurs sentimens. Ainsi celui qui compose de cette sorte de musique, doit se considerer comme un traducteur, qui en observant les regles de son art, exprime ces memes pensées, & ces memes sentimens.*<sup>125</sup>

Vocal music is a unique form of language in which humanity meets to share the pleasures of their thoughts and feelings. As such, composers of this kind of music should be viewed as translators who, in close observation of the rules of their art, express the very same sentiments. In other words, music must truthfully replicate the emotional ideas it intends to convey. Watteau depicts two opposing thoughts and feelings in his two pictures of the act of singing. In his previously referenced drawing, *Drawing of three singers* (fig. 36) singing is an art. In their unstudied, artful manner of singing in concert, the three

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<sup>125</sup> Grimarest, *Traité Du Récitatif Dans La Lecture, Dans L'action Publique, Dans La Déclamation, Et Dans Le Chant*. 120.

performers convey the sentiments of the music by remaining attentive to the composition of the composer. While they perform, interpret and translate the musical emotions intended by the writer, their embodiment is careful and restrained; their postures and attitudes coalesce to convey a shared musical experience. The open-mouthed anguish expressed by Mezzetin, however, contains a different meaning (fig. 52). His music is personal; it comes from within. Gazing toward the sky, he does not direct his musical lament toward an external audience. His tormented posture replicates his deeply felt, spiritual discord. Both images are translations: one of the composer's intent, the other of the singer's emotions. In each picture, Watteau artfully conveys conflicting musical sentiments and ideas required in each different contextual approach.

Watteau's interest in stringed music as an accompaniment to the voice is apparent in his sensitive sketch of a musician (fig. 74) depicting his friend, Nicolas Vleugels, holding the *theorbo* or archlute.<sup>126</sup> The economic handling of red and black chalk lines conveys a light source at the upper left. Again, heavier marks indicate the shadows of his sleeve and the fabric folds at the elbow and cuffs. The light of the blank paper describes his forehead and the front plane of his turban while subtle, dark lines specify the back of his head, ear and side of his face in shadow. The artist reserves his most definitive and precise lines for the angles of his left thumb and index finger as they hold the neck of the *theorbo* in preparation to play the accompaniment. Bold marks delineate the six tuning pegs and their relation to the long neck of the instrument. Again, Watteau's discerning use of line takes on the same structural character as a melodic vocal line: it directs the eye while visually phrasing the object of his study.

Ideas of sensitive musical and artistic lines lay within the theoretical concept of the

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<sup>126</sup> Santa Barbara Museum of Art.

sister arts – the idea that painting as well as music stemmed from that same poetic impulse and that the terms ‘painting’ and ‘poetry’ were interchangeable. Horace (65-8 BCE), the classical Roman poet, wrote of the power of painters and poets and their influence on society.<sup>127</sup> Cicero’s *De oratore* and Quintilian’s *De institutione oratoria* further linked poetry with music. Alignments formed among all three arts: poetry, music and painting. This was because, in the final analysis, all three practitioners – the poet, the musician and the painter – were engaged in the same act of describing. Later, in the early eighteenth century abbé de Bos would insist that painting must move the beholder. During this period, the multivalent sensibilities in music, painting and poetry intersected and recombined to borrow the qualities and effects of each, thereby enriching the expressive language of all the arts.<sup>128</sup> Watteau’s *oeuvre* is a pictorial paradigm of his period’s interest in employing the sensibilities of all of the arts and combining them to communicate something new. Charles Du Fresnoy (1611-1665), in his *De Arte graphica*, declared that poetry is mute painting and painting is speaking poetry.<sup>129</sup> The passions, traditionally studied by painting theorists such as Charles Le Brun, were emerging as subjects in such musical treatises as Marin Mersenne’s *Harmonie universelle* of 1636 and in Athanasius Kircher’s (1602-1680) *Musurgia universalis* (1650).<sup>130</sup> There was a universal interest in the study of the passions and their expressive potential in all the arts; music and its use of thematic material was another artistic component located in the power of emotional *sensibilité*. Cicero and Quintilian aided music theorists in devising tropes and figures related to metaphor. Gerald

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<sup>127</sup> LeCoat, "Comparative Aspects of the Theory of Expression in the Baroque Age." LeCoat cites: Horace, *Epistolae ad Pisones*, ed. A. Rostagni (Turin, 1930), 5.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*: 211. LeCoat cites: Henri Focillon, *La Vie des formes* (Paris, 1939), 22.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*: 209.

<sup>130</sup> Athanasius Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis* / Athanasius Kircher: Mit Einem Vorwort Personen-, Orts- Und Sachregister Von Ulf Schharlau, 2. Nachdruck ed. (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1999).

LeCoat asserts:

Here the link between music and poetry is clearly defined. But so is the link between music and painting, because in the last analysis, the composer, like the poet, becomes a painter of the passions, the emphasis being on descriptiveness. The modern expression 'tone painting' (in German '*Tonmalerei*') is a particularly appropriate designation of this aspect.<sup>131</sup>

Painting the passions, describing them in color is akin to composing the emotions in music. Timbre, texture, pitch, harmony and melody are the tools of the musician just as a varied palette, sensitive line and changing consistency of medium are the implements of the artist.

Intellectuals such as Claude Perrault (1613-1688), physician, anatomist, architect and translator of Vitruvius, believed that the arts could play a role in personal as well as social growth. Cultures that embraced music, poetry, dance and painting were more culturally advanced. Yet again, theorists referred to the traditions of ancient Greece, a period when music was taken seriously by its ruling classes. Perrault wrote that music of the ancients possessed a simplicity, clarity and distinction, which gave it a power and sweetness.<sup>132</sup> Melody and poetry were the main instruments of the distant past for expression of religious, moral and political principles. Despite the lack of scientific methods to explain emotional feelings in music, it did not mean that they did not exist, or that they could not be communicated. It was precisely because music communicates so powerfully that it was used as a metaphor for, and expression of, a deeply shared *sensibilité* in poetry and painting.

By placing the study of music within classical, historical contexts, seventeenth-century critics gave authority and weight to the physiological and philosophical aspects of melody and harmony. Jean Laurent Lecerf de La Viéville, in his treatise on music, wrote,

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<sup>131</sup> LeCoat, "Comparative Aspects of the Theory of Expression in the Baroque Age," 211-13.

<sup>132</sup> Perrault, *Du Bruit Et De La Musique Des Anciens* 321.



« *En Grec la Musique étoit le fondement de toutes les sciences, on commençoit par là l'éducation des enfans.* »<sup>133</sup> The ancient Greeks recognized music as a foundation for all the sciences and, as such, they viewed it as a critical starting point in the education of young children. Naming musical knowledge as an imperative for living well, he venerates it as a noble ideal, identifying Homer and Virgil as the exemplary poet/musicians.<sup>134</sup> Contemporary critics thus lent credence and political *gravitas* to their own views by calling on the ancients. Music merged with reason and measurable rational principles while its theories reflected the lucid order of all truth, even the cosmic universe. But its equally important, albeit elusive, meaning was that of delighting the senses. The beauty of music was sensory enchantment – yet, it functioned along with a rational understanding of melodic forms to blend mind and body into a unified whole.

In Watteau's *L'Amour paisible* of c. 1718 (fig. 75) three couples occupy a peaceful spot in a bucolic landscape of gentle hills in an affectionate, unified whole. The frontal look of the guitarist lets the viewer in on the theme of deep love initially felt and ultimately consummated. His visual chords underline ideas of harmony and tranquility; pastoral seduction has given way to the promise of comfortable companionship and fidelity.<sup>135</sup> The saturated colors of their clothing, illuminated by the afternoon sun, glow against the deep green of the landscape. One couple, at left, looks back at the others as they move to depart. Just below them, a man leans in to embrace his companion whom we see from the back, the black ribbon of her necklace set off against her pale neck. At the center foreground, the guitarist looks out at the viewer as the dog beside him dozes peacefully. He and the sleeping dog convey the painting's sensory message of contentment and satisfaction.

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<sup>133</sup> Viéville, *Comparaison De La Musique Italienne Et De La Musique Française* 261.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* 64.

<sup>135</sup> Charlottenburg, Berlin.

Behind them a reclining man gestures to a woman whose bright white shoulders, bodice and forehead catch the light. The simplicity of the composition is enhanced by the curvilinear balance and movement shared by the arrangement of the couples and the rolling, verdant hills. The viewer senses the visual, lyrical and social harmony contained within the painting.

### **Musical Absence and Sympathetic Loss**

Watteau's works can often be melodic without any direct visual reference to music. While often nostalgic at times and gay at others, works devoid of actual instruments use dance movements, as in the gavotte-like progression of the figures in the *Pélerinage à Cythère* (fig. 76) capturing the tone of an opera-ballet. The lines of movement echo the minuet, an amorous dance in which members of an ensemble perform traditionally in a specific pattern.<sup>136</sup> Watteau attains a modernism based on freedom from the rules of classicism and traditional heroic themes, along with a celebration of the line of the human body and its capacity for melody-like movement. Here, he calls on dances performed within the theater of the opera-ballets while introducing a new kind of spatial play. Like the sensibilities of music, it is dependent upon an interaction between couples and small social groups drawing apart, then coming together to offer and receive shared gestures.<sup>137</sup> In *Pélerinage*, Watteau conveys a series of measured movements that imply musical accompaniment even in silence.

However, there are at least three instances in Watteau's works where the absence of music invokes an impression of inertia and stasis. In *La boudeuse*, c. 1717-18 (fig. 77) a woman appears disinterested in her companion and his attempt at conversation. Her back is to him, her expression distant. She sits erect and emotionless as her right hand clutches her

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<sup>136</sup> Cohen, *Art, Dance and the Body in French Culture of the Ancien Régime* 226-41, Cowart, "Watteau's 'Pilgrimage to Cythera' and the Subversive Utopia of the Opera-Ballet," 461-79.

<sup>137</sup> Cowart, "Watteau's 'Pilgrimage to Cythera' and the Subversive Utopia of the Opera-Ballet," 464.

black dress. The foliage around the figures is sparse and regulated; it neither bends with the breeze nor bows in sympathy. While the feather in his hat curves toward her, her black hair ornament at the upper right of her profile, replicates the curve away from, not toward, the man. In short, there is no movement or sensual transmission here. The lack of music in the scene is a thematic, tonal void, an absence felt by the stillness and indifference of the woman and her surroundings. *Le faux-pas* of c. 1718 (fig. 78) depicts isolated lovers in a scene of a failed attempt, an amorous gesture repelled. The passion visible in the man's face will not be met; there will be no consummate act of love. Her hands, ivory white and delicately feminine, aid her in the discouragement of the eager lover as her left arm supports her backward lean while the right repels her aggressor. His hand encircles her waist and the pull of the fabric of her dress makes evident the opposition and struggle of the two figures. The lustful, downward gaze of the man coupled with the color on his cheeks contrasts vividly with her pale bare neck, vulnerable and exposed by her upswept hair. To the right lies his red cloak, cast aside in haste. The gauzy foliage does not directly situate the couple in an identifiable setting. Their bodies are the simple focus of the image making them appear alone and isolated. Nothing indicates that the man will be victorious, nor suggests that the woman is playing the coquette. Watteau here mixes movement with awkwardness, modesty with confusion, in a scene of secluded solitude. The man's efforts are gauche and unwelcome, perhaps even more so, as there is no social, musical lubricant in the form of a tuneful guitar or airy flute to smooth the path of his intentions.

Watteau plays out the theme again in his two paintings, *L'amoureux timide* (fig. 79) and *La déclaration attendue* (fig. 80) both of c. 1716, in which the former painting portrays a hesitant suitor who lacks the words (and the music) to make a successful proposal. Seated on the ground, he leans forward awkwardly toying absently with a bunch of flowers. The young woman sits on a bench above him, expectant in the bright sunlight. As she gazes down to her left at the suitor, she looks puzzled as she clutches her folded fan. She cannot

see his face that is hidden, in discomfiture, below the shelter of the wide brim of his hat. He uneasily crosses his legs as he finds himself at a loss for words. Above him, a fountain flows as if urging him onward to action. But it is not enough to relieve his faltering shyness. He is caught in the hesitancy of the moment and has no musical accompaniment to aid his cause.

The same lover is able to embark on his amorous quest somewhat more fruitfully in *La déclaration attendue* due to a melodic air provided by a flute player whose notes may facilitate and accompany a positive response from the young lady. While his sitting position and downward glance are similar to *amoureux timide*, he is part of a cohesive group composed of the object of his affection as well as two children, another woman and a flute player in the back who is the apex to the compositional pyramid. The delicate notes of the flute are there to facilitate the amorous advancement. The bouquet he holds is less picked apart than the earlier bunch; it is more composed and complete. The wide décolletage of the young lady indicates her willingness as she leans into her suitor. The smiles of the children lighten the scene and the sheltering trees and shadows conspire with the musician in aiding the young man towards a successful suit.

### **Chapter Three: French and Italian Sensibilities in the Art of Watteau**

In this section I propose that the art of Watteau is an inventive synthesis of both, seemingly disparate, sides of the debate between restraint and emotion, reason and passion. Music's relations to the body, and its power over it are a meaningful part of the discourse. Watteau's portrayals of Pierrot and his painterly blendings of the nuances of both Italian and French styles contribute to these ideas. The cultural and social circles in which the artist moved, as well as the temperament of the period, are important factors as well.

As noted, the conflict between reason and passion, between line and color, was not new to the cultural debate in France. These ideas correspond to contemporary perceptions of music, the measured simplicity of the French style set against the flamboyant, colorful music of the Italians. Politesse, grace and courtly restraint formed the essence of French musical styles. However, conflicting sensibilities, those drawn from Italian sources, were emerging to influence and alter the traditions of the established cultural norms of the French. To the alarm of French authorities, the Italian style of music and theater, viewed as a palpable demonstration of unchecked emotions and ideas, was gaining acceptance in France.<sup>1</sup> Theories regarding the intensity of emotion raised by Italian music, and the nerve endings it stimulated, mirrored the anxiety of the French authorities who took on the self-appointed role of protecting their culture from threats to the established hierarchal structures of society. The complex ornamentation and virtuoso performances of Italian singers and musicians were inflammatory and excessive; they appeared to flaunt their technical training and impressive abilities – thereby contradicting the aims of courtly, restrained French

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<sup>1</sup> For an in-depth discussion of contemporary views of Italian vs. French music, consult: Georgia Cowart, *The Origins of Modern Musical Criticism: French and Italian Music, 1600-1750* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981).

politesse. As a result, the strong emotions contained in Italian music were seen as perilously out of control. To be a cultured French gentleman, one needed to eschew these extreme tendencies – conducting oneself, instead, with grace while speaking politely and expressing these same tempered sensibilities in music.<sup>2</sup> Thus, if any Italian musical style were to be tolerated by French critics, it would need to incorporate forms of moderation and measured *honnêteté* into its performance.

### **Music and the Body**

The cause of French distrust of Italian musical sensibilities was their direct relation to the physical body in its performance and perception. Lecerf de la Viéville expressed this apprehension in his *Comparaison de la musique françoise et italienne* (1704–5), which methodically applied seventeenth-century French standards to musical criticism.<sup>3</sup> Some of his views include censure of the Italian language as ill-suited for musical expression: « ...cette pauvre Langue Italienne: de la manière dont il en parle, non seulement le François seroit vingt fois plus proper à être chanté, mais l’Italien n’y seroit point propre du tout. »<sup>4</sup> He claims that the paucity of the Italian language and the way it is actually spoken renders it twenty times less appropriate for singing than French. He adds that Italian does not lend itself to the art of singing. And, Italian musicians play their instruments too furiously: « Italiens poussent trop loin cette envie de tirer du son de leurs instrumens. Mon esprit, mon coeur, mes oreilles me disent tout à la fois qu’ils en tirent un

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<sup>2</sup> Penelope Gouk, "Music's Pathological and Therapeutic Effects on the Body Politic: Doctor John Gregory's Views," in *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the History of Art, Music and Medicine*, ed. Penelope and Hills Gouk, Helen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 192.

<sup>3</sup> Fader, "The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 3.

<sup>4</sup> Viéville, *Comparaison De La Musique Italienne Et De La Musique Française* 67.

*aigu & violent à l'excès.* »<sup>5</sup> Italians draw violent, sharp, highly-pitched sounds from their instruments and they sustain their notes to an extremely boring length, « *une dureté assomante.* »<sup>6</sup> To add to this, he blames the inferiority of the technique of Italian singers on the fact that they have poor pronunciation because they sing through (presumably emotionally wrought) clenched teeth, « *...en chantant ne pronocent rien, parce qu'ils serrent les dents.* »<sup>7</sup> This particularly amusing picture appears to claim that the Italian singer can emit sound even with his jaw rigid and his teeth clamped together.

As is evident in these commentaries, attitudes toward music became especially heated in their connection to the physical body and its visible and performative method of producing sound other than speech. As noted previously, the body, when put into direct contact with a musical instrument, served the sole purpose of touching and moving another physical body and, by implication, its mind and soul. Music's influence on the body posed a moral question, while in reality it dealt with unease regarding class, gender and national identity insofar as these might be interpreted as qualities of the body.<sup>8</sup> An important theme underlined in contemporary discourse was that artistic activity and its connection to the body mirrored the tastes and values of a given society. French temperance was encouraged to curtail the tendency of citizens to become wayward and uncontrolled in their creativity; repetition, practice and imitation of the 'appropriate' was an effort to keep it forever in view. This theme, as illustrated above, played a central role in seventeenth-century writings on the controversy regarding Italian music in general; the often-vitriolic arguments betray a fear of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 336.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 172.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 74.

<sup>8</sup> Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* 65.

the social threat to the status quo of taste that paralleled the intellectual one.<sup>9</sup>

Watteau's *Fête venetienne*, c. 1717 (fig. 19) mixes both French courtly grace with Italianate *sprezzatura*, or grace with a touch of insouciance. Two motionless dancers, linked by their straight, expectant stances, take position before the music begins.<sup>10</sup> At first glance, they are engaged in a demure leisure pastime in a bucolic setting. Fourteen subsidiary figures, dressed variously in theater costumes or stylish dress, engage in various attitudes of graceful social expression. The scene is one of self-possessed elegance, the very essence of French manners. Yet, the artist punctuates this refinement with erotic wit. The *musette* player, far off to the right, looks across the scene at the figures for whom he plays. His instrument, a form of the bagpipe and an allusion to male desire as well as peasant life, provides the tableau with a strident air of palpable passion.<sup>11</sup> The mildly harsh timbre of the lone instrument traverses and transcends space, like nerve endings that seek response. The subtle, discordant overtone hints that the male dancer at far left is a sexual mismatch for his partner. She is young, pale and luminous; he, in the shadows, his dark profile set against a light sky, is an older, portly gentleman comically dressed in a turban and oriental dress.<sup>12</sup> His costume is excessive for the occasion. If there is romance in the making, it appears mildly absurd. The smiling horned goat on the large stone urn above center and the voluptuous reclining statue of Ariadne, mythical mate to Dionysus, at right, reinforce the layer of implicit eroticism. The blue-caped figure in the background at right is the detached *lorgneur*, an observer who, looking back at the podgy, extravagantly garbed

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<sup>9</sup> Fader, "The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 5.

<sup>10</sup> National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.

<sup>11</sup> Winternitz, "Bagpipes and Hurdy-Gurdies in Their Social Setting," 56-83.

<sup>12</sup> Parmantier, "The Friends of Watteau." The gentleman is Nicolas Vleughels (1668-1737), fellow Flemish artist and friend of Watteau.



gentleman, knowingly indicates the presence of the nude statue. The *faux pas* being committed at left by the man viewed just between the two main dance figures is a direct visual reference to the carnal lust that may occupy the old dancer's licentious mind. In this painting, Watteau plays overtly with a secondary register of erotic commentary beneath the polite scene. In alluding to, yet deflecting, any direct interpretation, Watteau achieves a synthesis of Italian, Dionysian comedic desire pictured within the constraints of French, Apollonian temperance.

Despite efforts of those in power to articulate and promote the rational, courtly intent of French music, the influence of the Dionysian, emotional Italian style, on French musical life around the turn of the eighteenth century gained in strength and acceptance. The French interest in Italian music eventually contributed to the introduction of the Italian forms of the sonata and the cantata into French musical compositions. The itinerancy of Italian artists and musicians during this period allowed Italian subcultures to function and subsequently flourish in northern European societies. Traveling and professional Italian performers had been traditional players of wind instruments, considered somewhat inferior in status to the 'Apollonian' gentle strings heard in France. However, by the sixteenth century, pipes, reminiscent of the plainsong of a desired and distant bucolic life, had become more prevalent in upper divisions of society, the soft, melodious sounds of flutes and recorders being the first to achieve such acceptance. It would be a considerable time before louder and larger wind instruments were judged suitable for social situations.

Eventually, in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France, an aristocratic longing for the beneficent pastoral experience caused the development of the *musette*, a relative of the bagpipe, but with smaller and less cumbersome components. The *musette* replaced the blowpipe of the bagpipe (visually unflattering and vaguely repugnant when placed directly in the mouth) with bellows. The instrument had success among the aristocrats attracted to country pleasures due to a greater ease in performance, both in fingering and production of

air.<sup>13</sup> To borrow a quote from Simon Miller, “[French] attempts to foster an anti-absolutist sensibility and to discover the beauty of a humble life of rustic [pleasure] had reason to favor the pipe and flute.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Watteau and the Tempo of His Times**

During the period in which Antoine Watteau lived and worked, aristocratic amateurs took up musical pursuits while versions of Italian-style comedies became favorite leisure pastimes, both in the city and the parks. Paris *foires* and *commedia dell’arte* customs combined to loosen and liberate outdoor social practice. The communal festive events were even more compelling and entertaining because they conflicted with the official view of accepted entertainment.<sup>15</sup> As the earlier French criticisms of Italian music and theater grew outdated, *mondain* attitudes expanded and grew more inclusive. Watteau, like his contemporary, Couperin, was one of the first prominent artists to incorporate Italian themes in his *oeuvre* and convey the changing sensibilities they embodied. He preferred the improvisational, actor-generated performances in the *commedia dell’arte* tradition and repeatedly showed *commedia* players at a moment when their status as humans privileged the characters they play. Just as improvisation was a key element in the *Commedia dell’arte*, so his musical scenes contain this same quality of impulsiveness and informality.<sup>16</sup> What emerged was a middle position, a combination of French and Italian styles, the *goût réunis*, a preference for more spontaneous emotion and sentiment within an appropriate ‘French’ framework.

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<sup>13</sup> Gétreau, "Watteau and Music," 539.

<sup>14</sup> Miller, "Instruments of Desire: Musical Morphology in the Early Work of Picasso," 445.

<sup>15</sup> Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* 53.

<sup>16</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *The World of Harlequin: A Critical Study of the Commedia Dell'arte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) 24-34.

With the changing times and a new restless artistic spirit, painting and music sought malleability and movement in the expression of each art. In the seventeenth century, artists had demonstrated a growing fascination with the play of light and shade rather than formally delineated contours. The architectonic lines of the Renaissance took on fluidity and liveliness.<sup>17</sup> As music moved into the realm of social articulation, a collection of dance forms known as the suite evolved stressing poetic patterns of spirited steps and activities. The social dance was a ceremonial affair, confining improvisation to transitional gestures, forming an ideal harmony of refined action with musical expression. Watteau's dance scenes, from the rustic *La danse champêtre* (fig. 34), where the young child distracts the female dancer to the refined *Les plaisirs du bal* (fig. 35) in which playful dogs mingle with the guests, are expressions of these new ideas of the dance. They are visual blendings of ritual with invention, formality with impulse, French with Italian.

In the era of Watteau, this element of rapid change and motion acted as a lyrical nuance throughout all the arts from architecture to music; the medieval concept of the eternal had given way to an enthusiasm for the transitory.<sup>18</sup> Curvilinear contours and the movement and refraction of light were visual expressions of passage and progress. Musically, concertos and varied solo lines, juxtaposed with group polyphony, suggested contrasting tonal positions that traversed distance. Spatial and palpable expressions of the flow of time formed the spirit of the age, and the very motions of music, which could move through time free from the limitations of space, were useful in conveying this mood. "Music [was] time that [drew] attention to itself...music [was] time; time [was] life."<sup>19</sup> Watteau's *L'amour*

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<sup>17</sup> LeCoat, "Comparative Aspects of the Theory of Expression in the Baroque Age," 124.

<sup>18</sup> William Fleming, "The Element of Motion in Baroque Art and Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 5, no. 2 (1946): 121-28.

<sup>19</sup> Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* 195.

*paisible* (fig. 75) is an expression of the passage of time seen in the various stages of love from desire to fulfillment, played out in an animated landscape and accompanied by the gentle yet fleeting notes of the guitar.

Music, like the other arts of the period, was the product of the dynamic image of the world, flowering as an emancipated and independent art, freed from the confines of church and court, moving to drawing rooms, concert halls and outdoor festivals.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, Watteau embraces the moving spirit of the times brought to the visual arts by the inclusion of musical themes in his work. As a draftsman, especially in his drawings of musicians and their instruments, he demonstrates that “the human body never remains in one position for any length of time.”<sup>21</sup> His *Studies of Heads and Hands Holding a Flute* (fig. 27) is a close observation of a musician in constant motion, using the angle of his head and the positions of his hands, indeed his entire body, to give his instrument the emotional timbre and depth required by the music and its composer. Just as music moves within the boundaries of space, so too the musician moves expressively with his instrument in order for the notes to spread outward to stir the listener. We know that Watteau was born at a time when musical instruments were evolving and becoming more capable of flexible and meaningful expression. New mechanical processes made improvements of instruments such as lutes and viols possible, contributing to a trend toward pure, instrumental articulation. A. P. de Mirimonde (1897-1985), the French musicologist, communicates the excitement Watteau likely felt at the new expressive possibilities of music:

*Il s'agit d'un art expressif, descriptif spirituel...de plus, c'est le temps que d'anciens instruments disparaissent, où de nouveaux s'imposent, où d'autres se transforment. Que de sujets d'études pour un jeune peintre*

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<sup>20</sup> Fleming, "The Element of Motion in Baroque Art and Music," 121-28.

<sup>21</sup> Pierre Francastel, *Histoire De La Peinture Française*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1971) 135.

*épris de musique!*<sup>22</sup>

Music was a uniquely expressive and descriptive art that was witnessing an evolution of new instruments and the modernizing of old technical designs; it was an exciting and newly expressive time for a young painter interested in music. Accordingly, in his paintings, Watteau furnishes detailed depictions of the structures of musical instruments along with the fingering and postures held by the players while also documenting various modifications to instruments caused by progress in manufacture and the evolution of musical styles.<sup>23</sup> These studies of a musician playing the relatively new transverse flute detail the precise angle held by his neck and shoulders, his furrowed brow of concentration, the careful application of the mouth to the lip plate and, finally, the sensitive fingering required for the instrument.<sup>24</sup>

While little is known of any childhood musical education young Jean-Antoine may have had, scholars recognize that Watteau was exposed to Italian as well as French music in his connections with the theater due to his possible initial employment painting for the Paris Opera and well as his close association with the artist Claude Gillot who painted many Italian theatrical scenes.<sup>25</sup> Watteau is known to have made the acquaintance of Jean-Féry Rebel (1666-1747), a violinist, harpsichordist, conductor, and composer, who was chosen *Maitre de Musique* in 1716. At the time of their friendship, Rebel was an important musical figure in Paris. His compositions in the new form of the sonata were among the first written in France. An excellent *claveciniste* and violinist: « ...il est doué d'une grand

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<sup>22</sup> Mirimonde, "Les Sujets Musicaux Chez Antoine Watteau," 251.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. "Il se montre curieux du doigté qu'il note avec soin. La dépendance et l'extension des doigts, qualités indispensables."

<sup>24</sup> Private collection, Paris.

<sup>25</sup> Grasselli et al., *Watteau, 1684-1721* 19-20.

*facilité d'invention thématique...ses goûts sont caractéristiques de son époque... il a une prédilection pour la musique descriptive.* »<sup>26</sup> Like Watteau, Rebel was interested in the emotive, descriptive possibilities of music; accordingly, he strove to create new approaches and themes in his compositions. And, like his friend, Watteau, his tastes were characteristic of the changing times. Watteau's musical acquaintances such as Jean-Féry Rebel enabled him to use these same descriptive ideas, new to French music, for his own artistic use.<sup>27</sup> His paintings of music are evocative expressions of mixed emotions, contested modes and changing ideals. He gives his musical images visual rationality while at the same time painting a deep emotional belief in the sensual pleasures portrayed in the new expressive music which blends French and Italian styles.

After his arrival in Paris and subsequent rise to artistic prominence, Watteau was a frequent guest at the aforementioned hôtel of Crozat who also counted Philippe, Duc d'Orleans and future regent as a close friend and cultural advisor. It was Crozat who acted on the regent's behalf in a journey to Rome in 1714-1715, to purchase an art collection. The duke, a discerning art lover and connoisseur, owner of the Luxembourg Palace and its paintings by Rubens, would have a great influence over painters of Watteau's generation.<sup>28</sup> The Crozat residence on the rue Richelieu in Paris was where Crozat assembled his own magnificent art collection. He had retired from finance in 1705 to devote his life and wealth to the arts as a prominent supporter and an ardent collector. The abbé du Bos (1670-1742), in his section on Italian painting in his *Reflexions Critiques* mentions Crozat as the

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<sup>26</sup> Mirimonde, "Les Sujets Musicaux Chez Antoine Watteau," 255.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.: 256. "Le musicien rêvait de compositions qui auraient été des tableaux sonores et le peintre était sensible aux sortilèges de la musique. La confrontation de deux arts est toujours féconde quand elle est faite par deux hommes de cette qualité...ses propos ont dû apporter bien des idées nouvelles à Watteau."

<sup>28</sup> Marianne Roland Michel, "Watteau and His Generation," *The Burlington Magazine* 110, no. 780 (1968): i-vii.

possessor of engravings and drawings as well as a scholar on the Italian art historian, Giorgio Vasari.<sup>29</sup> Crozat was not a mere patron; he was, rather, a curious and educated connoisseur engaged in preserving diverse exemplars of historical art movements as well as supporting contemporary painters and musicians.<sup>30</sup> In addition to the visual arts, he was deeply interested in music, his taste echoing that of noble Parisians in Italian music, especially opera. Crozat was a driving force in an effort to mount Italian opera productions in Paris, as records of his correspondence confirm.<sup>31</sup> Lowell Lindgren furnishes an account of an Italian diva who, in August 1716, sang for two of the most prominent admirers of Italian music, the Duc d'Orleans and Pierre Crozat.<sup>32</sup>

The aforementioned drawing by Watteau of three singers (fig. 36) may be a visual

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<sup>100</sup> Dubos, *Réflexions Critiques Sur La Poésie Et Sur La Peinture* 358.

<sup>30</sup> Margret Stuffmann, "Les Tableaux De La Collection De Pierre Crozat. Historique Et Destinée D'un Ensemble Célèbre Établis En Partant D'un Inventaire Après Décès Inédit (1740)," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* LXXII, no. Sixth Series (1968): 8. "Il peut sembler curieux que Watteau, familier des réceptions de Crozat, ne figure pas parmi les maîtres modernes, amis du collectionner, comme *La Fosse* ou *la Rosalba*, surtout si l'on sait que, selon la tradition la *Conversation* et la *Perspective* représentent son parc, et que les artistes qui travaillent pour Crozat, aussi bien que ses confères, ont un au moins de ses tableaux. Mais il faut savoir qu'aussitôt après la mort de Watteau, et dès 1721, Jean de Julienne a racheté toutes les oeuvres possibles, afin de les faire graver, et c'est déjà Julienne qui alors, possède certainement les oeuvres autrefois collectionnées par Crozat. L'inventaire, d'ailleurs, ne décrit pas les tableaux de décoration, et ne cite pas, par conséquent, les tableaux de Watteau de la salle à manger, les fameuses *Saisons* Crozat." 11-12: "La notion 'd'amateur' a apparu dans la littérature d'art en France au XVIIIe siècle et ce terme a été défini de différente manière. On a l'impression qu'une collection n'est pas alors seulement le reflet de goûts personnels et le fruit du hasard, mais qu'elle a pu aussi être constituée en suivant un programme établi en fonction de tendances théoriques déterminées... [Crozat a] une attirance marquée pour l'histoire et aussi une grande réserve à l'égard des artistes qui ont été leurs contemporains. Pierre Crozat ne doit donc pas être considéré un mécène (patron) au sens classique du terme, mais comme n collectionneur désireux de conserver chez lui des exemples des différentes tendances de l'Art, insistant toutefois sur celles don't il appréciait personnellement la valeur. "

<sup>31</sup> Lowell Lindgren, "Parisian Patronage of Performers from the Royal Academy of Musick," *Music & Letters* 58, no. 1 (1977): 4-28.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. Lindgren cites: Marquis de Dangeau, *Journal*, ed. E. Soulié and L. Dussieux, with the additions of the Duc de Saint Simon, ed. F. de Conches, xvi (Paris, 1859), 428. "M. le duc d'Orléans alla l'après-dînée à un concert chez le chevalier Crozat, où il entendit une Italienne qui a une très-belle voix et qui chante très bien; elle s'appelle Diane [Vico], et revient d'Angleterre, où elle a été en grande réputation. Il demeura deux heures à cette musique."

record of one of the many musical gatherings that occurred at the hôtel salon of Crozat.<sup>33</sup> Florence Gétreau observes, "The atmosphere there...suggested to the artist that the [musical] body never remains in one position for any length of time...that the essence of music resides in mobility."<sup>34</sup> This drawing is paradigmatic of the atmosphere and musical mobility that prevailed at the Crozat hôtel. Watteau expresses sustained, nuanced movement of the musicians' heads as they appear to progress sequentially through a single musical passage. As an intense observer of the fugitive rhythms of musical performers, the artist ultimately portrays the intake of breath, the comprehension in the eyes of the readers of the music and the open mouths, which allow the vibrating vocal cords to outwardly convey their musical interpretation of the song.

A well-documented Italian relationship fostered by Crozat was one with Rosalba Carriera (1675-1757), the Venetian pastellist who visited Paris and resided in the Crozat hôtel during the years of 1720-1. There, Rosalba made valuable social and business connections and, as her journal indicates, was kept very busy with portrait commissions; she was eventually awarded acceptance into the French Academy. In Paris, she became acquainted with Antoine Watteau. Her correspondence includes a letter from Nicolas Vleugels expressing Watteau's admiration for her.<sup>35</sup> Later, she would meet Watteau and execute a portrait of him in 1721, commissioned by Crozat, now in Museo Civico, Treviso,

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<sup>33</sup> Vittorio Malamani, *Rosalba Carriera* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano D'Arti Grafiche - Editore, 1910) 115-17. *Settembre* Li 30: "Veduto per causa del concerto dato da M.r Crozat il Regente, Law et altri." *Novembre* 22: "Diede un sontuoso pranzo M.r Crozat, e poi un concerto nel quale suonava l'arciliuto l'internuncio."

<sup>34</sup> Gétreau, "Watteau and Music," 527.

<sup>35</sup> Rosalba Carriera, *Journal De Rosalba Carriera Pendant Son Séjour À Paris En 1720 Et 1721*, trans. Alfred Sensier (Paris: J. Techener, 1865) 144. "Ilya beaucoup de connoisseurs qui professent le plus grand estime pour votre personne et votre talent... Un excellent homme, M. Watteau, duquel vous avez sans doute entendu parler, desire ardemment vous connoître."



(fig. 82). Watteau, in turn, did a drawing, thought to be of Rosalba, at her toilette (fig. 83).<sup>36</sup> Rosalba was uniquely suited to be included in the Crozat circle. In addition to her esteem as an artist, she was known as gifted in music as well. Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694-1774), the print dealer and collector, wrote that Rosalba was « *célèbre dans la parole, dans le chant, dans la musique et spécialement très excellente en l'art de peindre.* »<sup>37</sup> Not only was she charming in conversation and a talented painter, but she was gifted musically as well. As Italian music attracted French admirers, particularly after the death of Louis XIV, Italian artists and musicians began to build close associations with the new French *mondain* patrons and advocates, such as the French Regent and his good friend, Crozat. In the era of the Grand Tour and the subsequent enthusiasm among France's elite for Italian music and art, professional contacts and collaborative ventures flowed freely among patrons, collectors, itinerant performers and artists. Just as the northern Europeans had looked to the Renaissance Italians for their artistic brilliance, so they now regarded Italian opera as the modern forefront of the musical arts.

As noted, when these new musical forms became popular, their success threatened the cultural hegemony enjoyed by the traditions of the *ancien régime* and embodied in their established musical modes. This put at risk the so-called French classical style, especially the agility of its rhythm, which had been the natural outcome of the close union of French melody to poetry.<sup>38</sup> It was poetry's direct alliance with the persuasive elements of rhetoric and fervent conviction that led Marin Mersenne (1588-1648), French monk, mathematician and philosopher to express this opinion, in *L'Harmonie universelle*, published in Paris in

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<sup>36</sup> Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

<sup>37</sup> Carriera, *Journal De Rosalba Carriera Pendant Son Séjour À Paris En 1720 Et 1721* 166.

<sup>38</sup> Tunley, "The Union of Words and Music in Seventeenth-Century French Song - the Long and the Short of It," 291-92.

1636: "...the musical orator must know the art of stimulating the listener in order to obtain whatever reaction he desires."<sup>39</sup> Thus, the French conservative elite were well acquainted with the influential and compelling aspects of music that could serve political needs. Mersenne also wrote of the opposing sensibilities of both Italian and French musical styles, contrasting the "strange violence" of Italian music with the "perpetual gentleness" of French music:

Concerning the Italians, they observe many things in their songs that do not occur in ours because they represent the passions and affections of the soul and the mind as much as they can—for example, anger, fury, spite, rage, faintness of heart, and many other passions— and with such a strange violence that one practically judges them to be touched by the same affections that they represent in singing. Our Frenchmen content themselves instead with flattering the ear, and they use a perpetual gentleness [*douceur*] in their songs which impedes their force.<sup>40</sup>

In this text, he endows Italian music with an Otherness, a foreign quality that appears almost primitive and unfamiliar to a civil society. He also describes Italian musicians as somewhat limited in ability and concerned mostly with negative or harmful passions. By painting Italian music in a negative light, cultural arbiters hoped to limit the attraction of Italian music to French listeners.

The French critics' distrust of the fascination with the new music was based on a belief in the dangers of arousal and excitement. It predominantly focused on sexual passion, which could not be restrained in the musical arts. Their efforts, however, were overcome by the sensual appeal of Italian music. Susan McClary cites Michel Foucault in his observation of this historical phenomenon:

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<sup>39</sup> LeCoat, "Comparative Aspects of the Theory of Expression in the Baroque Age," 213. Author cites: Marin Mersenne, *L'Harmonie universelle*, facsimile ed. Paris, 1963, II. 365.

<sup>40</sup> Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie Universelle, Contenant La Théorie Et La Pratique De La Musique*, Reprint: Paris, Editions du CNRS, 1965 ed. (Paris: Ballard, 1636) 2:356.

The obsession always to talk – or sing – about sex also [had] the effect of continually stirring libidinal interests... Gender and sexuality become central concerns...in the seventeenth century, and the new public arts all develop[ed] techniques for...manipulating desire, for ‘hooking’ the spectator.<sup>41</sup>

Because love was the common theme in music and drama, its emotional magic could be drawn upon and performed to a large, growing public. The spectator/participant was vulnerable to these melodic manipulations; methods of containment were needed to rein in rampant desire. However, the causes of and methods for this self-discipline depended on the varying tastes of the critic, and the susceptibility of each viewer and listener. As a consequence, within the politics of representation, the public spectacles of *foire*, theater and opera were sites for a constant and fervent power struggle. The narrative, oratorical function of the Italian operatic form in particular was a threat to any political powers whose underlying aim was to preserve their own privileged positions. McClary reminds us that:

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, music was typically discussed in terms of affect and rhetoric...teachers instructed students on how to produce passionate responses in listeners through rhetorical manipulation.<sup>42</sup>

Behind the humanist regard for rhetorical persuasion lay an acknowledgement of the power of music to drive the passions and, as a result, to direct human thought and action. Thus, there existed a growing need in France to understand and come to terms with the driving emotional force of the Italians reflected in their music and theater.

### **The Seductive Sensibilities of Italian Music**

From what sources did the seemingly opposite sensibilities of French and Italian music derive? Italian music’s appeal to the senses can be traced back to the seductive

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<sup>41</sup> Susan McClary, "Constructions of Gender in Monteverdi's Dramatic Music," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1, no. 3 (1989): 204. Author quotes Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (New York, 1980), 12.

<sup>42</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) 20.

sympathies of its church music. The Hermetic works discussed in chapter one were commented on and/or absorbed into Christian contexts when music as an expression of feeling emerged in Christian thought. The Greek phrase, '*Kyrie eleison*' (Lord, have mercy) was incorporated into the Latin Mass with '*Christe eleison*' (Christ, have mercy). The imagined ideal of a forgiving and feeling, sensitive God became a desired reality, achievable either through acts of kindness or contemplative reflection. Compassion thus expanded and evolved into religious expression, engaging people in prayer and praise, actions with exalted goals.<sup>43</sup> Just as the visual embodiments of the Passion in church mosaics glowed with the moving light, just as frescoes took on human dimensions in apses and domes, and just as illuminated manuscripts whose jeweled pigments inspired and instructed, so the collaboration of music and liturgy lent seductive, emotional power to the performance of the mass. The experience of music brought religious communities together to worship through a shared emotional event, an expressive group drama. Worship, through music, became an elaborately played-out, collective seduction achieved through a direct appeal to the auditory senses.

While obviously not a religious painting per se, Watteau's painting *La Perspective* (fig. 1) is a pictorial paradigm of the seductive communal force of shared musical sensibilities.<sup>44</sup> Tall trees line a nave-like corridor, which recedes toward a distant columned arch, an altar illuminated by a clearing. Here, the artist creates an outdoor cathedral, a sanctuary for contemplative, sensitive reflection. Music reverberates outward from the guitar strings in the left foreground; its vibrations leave traces on each member and dissolve throughout the seemingly sacred enclosure. While persons move, relate and disperse within

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<sup>43</sup> HaCoen, "The Music of Sympathy in the Arts of the Baroque; or, the Use of Difference to Overcome Indifference," 611.

<sup>44</sup> Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

the dark green, foliate pillars, light from the wooded clerestory above illuminates some figures while trees and shadows obscure others. Yet, each figure, seen or unseen, is touched by the shared sympathy of the music, held sacred by and contained within its sublime and tranquil atmosphere. The implications of the painting are perpetual; they last because, no longer anchored in the precise visual signifiers of a narrative, they are experienced mysteriously – much like religious sensibilities – as deeply nuanced spiritual sensations, often carried by the vibrations of melody. Watteau's *La Perspective* becomes, in the words of Leppert, a “sonoric landscape [which is] both heard and seen.”<sup>45</sup> The music in the painting is connected not only to the visible body as the recipient/listener, but also to the figure at lower left, the maker, the agent of sound. Human physical knowledge connects with the enfolding spiritual experience of shared music within a wooded grove. Here, the meaning of the painting is not restricted solely to the production of sound and the physical act of hearing; it is written in the intricate and splendid connection between outer and inward sensation that mediates the whole essence of spirituality. While the experience is indeed physical, it also delineates a spiritual passage that is not restricted solely to religion. In this painting, Watteau mediates between the ear and the eye; his figures and the landscape in which they are enclosed interact and respond to the vibrancies of light and sound. The picture causes an external reaction to each element in the composition while, at the same time, creating an internal, sight- and sound-driven mystery. Music, like the path through the trees in the painting, is a means to an end, a presence, a sensual progression traced through a wooded parkland.

The Italian tradition of using echoes and distancing provided another source for motile sensual seductiveness within the varied structural and liturgical meanings of religion. Divided choirs, or *cori sezzati*, imparted additional musical resonance by using spatial

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<sup>45</sup> Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* 18.

separation as a method of reciprocal identity-as-sympathy. Vocal and instrumental bodies performed two or even three antiphonal musical parts while in different locations in the cathedral, each responding, as an echo, to the others' utterances. This engendered new principles of musical composition, relating to distance and exchange, tempo and volume, and an ordering of multiple phrases and values derived from the occurrences of echoing.<sup>46</sup> Spaces collapsed, each note beginning or responding, joining in homophonic movement. Unadorned yet powerful, it became one of the dominant grains in instrumental and vocal music, invoking a responsive sympathetic aura, which encompassed a wide spectrum of emotions.<sup>47</sup> These were defined mainly in terms of melody, harmony, rhythm and timbre. Musical sympathy was thereby enriched as it assumed physical vitality and spatial directness "overcoming fictional, historical and other barriers that separated sympathizers from sympathized."<sup>48</sup> When a second voice or instrument was moved to vibration by a first, or joined it in unison, the effect was to add depth of timbre and spatial dimension to the single voice. The resonance produced in a sympathetic environment uplifted and sustained performers and listeners alike. Purity of devotion and dedication to purpose were virtues directly related to the seductive qualities that distinguished musical timbre, organized and adapted for the resonant and reverberating echoes of shared communication.<sup>49</sup>

In *Récreation italienne* (fig. 38) Watteau reifies and at the same time collapses the space between call and response, closing yet activating the gap between separate

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<sup>46</sup> HaCoen, "The Music of Sympathy in the Arts of the Baroque; or, the Use of Difference to Overcome Indifference," 629.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Maconie, *The Concept of Music* 171.

sympathies.<sup>50</sup> At left, a guitarist plays for his sweetheart while two seated couples, one facing front, the other seen from the back, sit on either side of the central pair. At the left of the painting, another portrayal of a 'living statue', that of the Dionysian nude, Ariadne, previously seen in the *Fête venetienne*, reclines on a dolphin, a familiar symbol of amorous desire.<sup>51</sup> Here, the aligning of music with sympathy opens up the possibility for communication across differences and distances. The conscious auditory experience of musical expression and reception is present in manifestations of sympathy seen in each figure. Each couple from center to left is brought closer together by the musical vibrations. Set apart, the man leaning on the stone balustrade at far right seemingly turns his head away. Yet, the lean of his body and the angle of his folded arm, belie his seemingly disinterested and detached demeanor. Despite his remoteness, he is summoned, drawn in, made envious perhaps, by the love play carried by the distant musical timbres across the way as the echoes of the music, the sympathetic vibrations, reach him. The auditory Other, the echo, is absorbed by the human Other, the male outsider in the scene. The central group, placed against a background curtain of trees joins in concert with the lively fountain while the solitary figure at the opposite end of the work is immutable, like the stone pedestal against which he rests. The polar opposition of the two ends of the painting forces the viewer's eye to traverse the sensory breach and to put into motion the auditory and visual echoes contained within the mediating space.<sup>52</sup>

Just as the sensibilities of Italian music served the needs of organized religion, by enhancing the emotional drama of worship, so, too, it eventually operated as immersion and

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<sup>50</sup> Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of ancient ideas regarding the symbolism of the dolphin, see: John Creaser, "Dolphins in Lycidas," *The Review of English Studies/New Series* 36, no. 142 (1985): 235-43.

<sup>52</sup> Rosenberg, "The Paintings," 343.

emotional stimulation in secular dramas as well. Italian theatrical composers realized the emotional potential of music and once again sought to recreate the powerful effects of ancient, especially Greek, music. The classic ideal of expressing the affect or emotional character of words brought on the development of monody, a flexible solo song with chordal accompaniment, and the birth of opera around 1600.<sup>53</sup> Music became the vocabulary for expressing emotion and could be employed to cloud distinctions between the real and the ideal, earthly and spiritual, existence and artistic expression.<sup>54</sup> Opera was a principal site where portrayal of emotions in music occurred. This conversion, in opera, from emblem to embodiment, from the symbolic to the literal, required a new musical language, which has been described as the “single most important development in the history of Western music.”<sup>55</sup> Music became, in effect, the very emotion it was used to express. Music was the auditory cry of the feeling soul. As such, Italian opera came to be synonymous with expressive emotion and passionate drama:

The achievements of the *stile rappresentativo* made possible most of the musical forms with which we still live today: not only the dramatic genres of opera, oratorio and cantata, but also instrumental music, which is dependent on the tonality and semiotic codes born on the 17th-century [Italian] stage.<sup>56</sup>

Eventually, a parallel vocabulary developed in Italy by which dramatic characters and actions could be delineated in music. The systems for emotional and rhetorical inflection were not, in fact, achieved naturally from a universal source: they were deliberately formulated in Italy during this period for the purposes of theatrical musical effect, particularly in the case of the

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<sup>53</sup> Penelope Gouk, "Towards Histories of Emotions," in *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music and Medicine*, ed. Penelope Gouk and Helen Hills (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 26.

<sup>54</sup> HaCoen, "The Music of Sympathy in the Arts of the Baroque; or, the Use of Difference to Overcome Indifference," 611.

<sup>55</sup> Gouk, "Towards Histories of Emotions," 26.

<sup>56</sup> McClary, "Constructions of Gender in Monteverdi's Dramatic Music," 203.



Italian opera composer, Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643), who wrote, among many pieces, the dramatic opera, *Orfeo*, focusing on the ancient and heroic Greek musician. His operas made theatrical use of the monody, the single, emotive and sensitive melodic vocal line supported by instrumental accompaniment.

### **The Absolute Power of French Music**

As music and rhetoric historically served the emotional and dramatic needs of church and theater, it also aided hegemonic social classes especially in France in maintaining their power and the modes of self-definition on which it depended.

Musicologist Richard Leppert writes:

Music was an acknowledged means of establishing caste: it was a nonverbal, emotive vehicle for establishing and preserving a level of prestige sufficient to authorize and therefore help stabilize position.<sup>57</sup>

Musical tastes proclaimed status; their emotive qualities were subtle yet definitive references to class. The reign of Louis XIV had created traditions in music, theater and pageantry to ennoble and immortalize the monarchy. The centralizing perspective and musical displays at Versailles existed in order to give legible harmony to absolute rule.<sup>58</sup> As an affirmation of the importance of music in the maintenance of political power, Leppert again states:

The concatenation of pleasure and politics is evident in the history of [music]...which contains an anxiety about meaning as well as about preservation. The only purpose in preserving – making replicable – sounds [was] that they mean[t] something; and their meaning help[ed] mediate the social and cultural order in which they [were] born.<sup>59</sup>

This makes us aware of the historical importance of music as a social signifier; it has long

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<sup>57</sup> Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* 43.

<sup>58</sup> For an in-depth examination of the creation of the image of the Sun King, see: Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King*, trans. J. Houle (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

<sup>59</sup> Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* 11.

held meanings that illuminate and perpetuate religious, cultural and political ideas. This was well understood and put to good use by the *ancien régime*.

To impart clarity to the glorious myth of Louis XIV, to rationalize his magnificence as a symbol of power, the king took on a role that was the very embodiment of order, reason and principal glory. This was the same archetype that had historically existed in the musical debate of classical myth: Apollo, god of light, god of reason and order, the Sun God. Louis appeared onstage in at least nine *ballets de cour* playing the role of Apollo and the rising sun for which the king, as the star performer, wore a brilliant headpiece (fig. 83).<sup>60</sup> Apollo as the sun god was associated with the illumination that made vision and beauty possible. The connection with reason and beauty was reinforced by the idea that the god ruled over both. Beauty was rational truth and could be identified through means of rational order. Too, the radiance of the sun could in itself confer order even on the disorderly. As such, the king's nobility, as performed in the patterned steps of the courtly rituals in the structured and ornate gardens and fountains of Versailles, was an aesthetic object; his displays stood for the social pursuits of the elite and the presentation of the king as the center and illuminator of the universe. The force of collective, rational Apollonian movement in music fused the ideals of measured artifice and expressive control. Artful style in music joined the courtly manners of society with the king's physical body, his deportment and his own personal expression of French ideals.<sup>61</sup>

Ironically, the image of the king as Apollo had such persistent resonance that it caused his enemies and dissenters to publish underground parodies of the heroic image. One is the antithesis of Apollo: 'Louis as satyr', *Louis and Madame de Montespan at a*

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<sup>60</sup> Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) 45.

<sup>61</sup> For a thorough discussion of dance performance in the Court of Louis XIV, see: Cohen, *Art, Dance and the Body in French Culture of the Ancien Régime*.

*Feast* c. 1670, now in a Zurich collection, by a Swiss artist, Joseph Werner (fig. 84).<sup>62</sup>

Here, the image of Louis and his mistress in a scene of Dionysian debauchery is a direct assault on his much-publicized civic image as the personification of Apollonian ideals. The opposition of Apollonian and Dionysian sensibilities, order and chaos, reason and passion is the well-understood and universal language for satire. Here, the chosen identity of the absolute monarch as the sun god of beauty and reason is challenged and inverted by this antithetical image of the man-beast companion of Dionysus.

King Louis XIV's love for grand spectacle caused an escalation in the hiring of musicians as paid entertainers. To some, this led to a decline in musical standards which was increasingly defined by *mondain* attitudes toward amateur music making. This culture had its own specific rules that opposed those fostered by the king at the royal court. Rather than emphasizing pageantry and impressive theatrical displays centering on the talents of professional singers, French critics continued to insist on the superiority of the musical self-effacement of *les honnêtes gens*. With the authority of the court in decline, the essence of taste relied on the elusive feature of refinement required to identify and apply the *je-ne-sais-quoi* of noble *agréments* or manners. Taste that lacked sophistication and finesse risked the danger of becoming tainted or spoiled. The nuances and distinctions of *le bon goût* were difficult to pin down; they depended on the individual – sometimes dissimilar – sensibilities of French critics. But, on one issue, they were in agreement: Italian music was dangerously uncontrollable.<sup>63</sup> It was ostentatious, artificial and flaunted superfluous techniques. These ideas were instrumental in forming the views of French critics toward Italian music. While French music followed the requirements of the *honnête homme* to adapt his knowledge and

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<sup>62</sup> Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* 145.

<sup>63</sup> Fader, "The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 42.

talents to the thoughtful needs of good society, the perceived overuse of figures or ornamentation (*agréments*) by Italian musicians and singers ruined any possible effectiveness by drawing attention to artistic contrivance. In contrast, the French understanding of taste required an appearance of simplicity, innate ability and natural ease.<sup>64</sup>

### **French Musical Taste**

Matters of music and its discernment were significant defining factors as early as the first decades of the 17th-century in writings concerning the construction of the *honnête homme*, the cultivated, courtly gentleman. The multivalent qualities and modes of expression derived from music became a source of political, aesthetic and ethical debate in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France. The original French concept of good taste, *le bon goût*, originated from classic rhetorical principles of nobility, etiquette and politesse. Taste was an inner, critical, intuitive independence that joined with external conformity and manners. The French national style, the *tragédie lyrique* developed by Jean-Baptiste de Lully (1632-1687), composer to the court of Louis XIV, was characterized by declamatory recitatives, systematic and restrained in form; equal balance was given to mental, visual and musical effects. French music appealed to *le bon sens* (reason) and carried an expressive simplicity similar to the beauty of ancient music. As Nicolas Ragot de Grandval (1676-1753) wrote in his essay, the characteristically French music of Lully elevated and fed the soul; it was sentiment purified by reason:

*Le bon Goût est le Sentiment naturel purifié par les Regles...mais, que fault-il pour acquerir ce profound discernement? Avoir de l'Oreille & çavois raisonnablement la Musique.*<sup>65</sup>

According to this French critic, the measured and controlled music of composers like Lully

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.: 3.

<sup>65</sup> Nicolas Ragot de Grandval, *Essai Sur Le Bon Goust En Musique* (Paris: Prault, 1732) 7.

was the only true form of tasteful music and it was, therefore, worthy of great and profound admiration.

Since acquaintance with music was an advantageous quality for the seventeenth-century courtly French gentleman, its forms were important influences on his character and ability to function socially and thereby successfully.<sup>66</sup> Just as Cicero's orators carefully chose the suitable rhetoric and measured ornament to move and persuade, so, too, the same precepts required French composers and *honnête* musicians to conform their artistic expressions to the moderated emotions of proper society. Excess of emotion or undue embellishment negated the intended effect by creating an impression of outlandish pretense. Thus taste was defined as the masking of any effort or laborious learning in order to seem naturally gifted and talented musically. "This idea of tastefulness was dominant in courtly manners of making music...[and made use of a] manner of singing [termed] '*politesse du chant*.'" <sup>67</sup> As Antoine Gombault, chevalier de Méré (1610–84), writing on the *honnête homme* stated:

Those who have found nothing more appealing than virtue have not felt these so very piquant graces which appear in your person and in your smallest movements. In them is a secret magic that would baffle the highest wisdom.<sup>68</sup>

The 'secret magic' or the *je ne sais quoi* to which Méré refers seems utterly unattainable by anyone but the gods themselves. *Comédiens françois* of c. 1720 (fig. 85) is Watteau's pictorial satire on these very 'piquant graces' and 'small movements' so necessary to *le*

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<sup>66</sup> Fader, "The Honnête Homme as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 7.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.: 24.

<sup>68</sup> Chevalier de Méré, *Lettres* (Paris: 1689) 350.

*bon goût*.<sup>69</sup> While several theories have been proposed as to the play being performed and the characters presented in this painting, the general intent appears to be a parody of theatrical French style of declamatory drama. If, indeed, an ‘excess of emotion’ is to be avoided in tasteful dramas, the rule does not apply here. The soubrette at the far left weeps (seemingly copiously) into her large, lacy handkerchief while a young demoiselle gestures dramatically toward her right with her head thrown back in distress. The subject of alarm appears to be the crumpled letter on the ground at left. The grand gentleman to whom she appeals poses at center, right arm pointing to the letter, left hand on hip. His richly embroidered and voluminously skirted jacket, lace-edged silk stockings and plumed hat “evoke another time.”<sup>70</sup> A dark figure to the right, seemingly male, turns his back to us. At the right edge of the picture, another male mounts steps from the rear, presumably to see what the commotion is all about. The arched framework is ornate and reveals, in the distance at the right, the statue of a dolphin with a putto, age-old symbols of love and its inconstancy. The grand gestures and the flamboyant expressions of the actors are meant to serve the written dialogue. So much for the ‘piquant graces’ and ‘secret magic’ of Méré – everything is overtly and excessively displayed here. As such, the actors themselves have no merit other than to mechanically serve the text. French drama was traditionally tied to the script, with dramatic gestures as signals or mere reiterations of the spoken word. This is supported by a contemporary tract on acting, entitled “The Comedian”, which states:

In the theatre, before breaking the silence, one should prepare one’s speech by some gesture, and the beginning of this gesture must always precede the speech by a longer or a shorter time, according to the circumstances; the gesture on stage must always precede the word.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

<sup>70</sup> Rosenberg, "The Paintings," 438.

<sup>71</sup> Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancient Régime*. Author cites: Remond de Sainte Albine, *Le Comedien* (Paris, 1747), 185 and J. L. de Cahusac, in the Encyclopedia article on *Geste*.

Here, speech and action do not integrate naturally; it is the oration that is of prime importance. As such, the actor's movements here proclaim the arrival of an expected dramatic development in the form of a speech concluded with gestural display. Watteau's depiction of the *Comédiens français* suggests the French sublimation of the individual artist and is in direct contrast to the distinction Watteau confers on his Italian actors. By employing the very qualities to be avoided by the French *honnête homme* (excess of emotion and undue embellishment) in musical and social comportment, within the framework of a French drama, Watteau succeeds in his satire of pretension in the guise of good taste.

### **The Politics of French and Italian Sensibilities**

In his comparison of French and Italian musical styles, French music critic Lecerf de Viéville (1674-1707) offered politesse as an essential issue in the French argument against Italian music in his rancorous case against Italian styles. He revealed a distrust and fear of social disruption in the guise of a perceived non-French, non-intellectual *mauvais goût*. He wrote that artistic criticism mandated that musical performance be measured against the discrimination and standards of "good society":<sup>72</sup>

Imagine a clever old coquette covered in rouge and white powder, and overloaded with bows, which are applied with absolutely all the care and skill possible. Hiding the wrinkles in her face and the defects of her figure by make-up that is equally magnificent as it is complete; smiling and grimacing in the finest and most studied manner; always with brilliance and liveliness, never justice or prudence...and without heart, soul or sincerity... Voilà: Italian Music. Now imagine, on the other hand, a young woman of noble but modest bearing, of grand but slender figure without excess; neat, always dressed with a galant propriety, but preferring to be informal rather than overdressed, and magnificent only on certain days. . . With lovely natural coloring, far removed from all that is false or imitation; a bow or two from

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<sup>72</sup> Fader, "The Honnête Homme as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 5.

time to time, or perhaps an occasional bit of rouge to cover some tiny flaw; smiling and gracious as appropriate, but never the coquette or crazily playful...speaking well without flattering herself that she is a great speaker and without wanting to speak all the time... This is a lady that you should easily recognize; she is French Music.<sup>73</sup>

The critic presents the two musical styles, Italian and French, as two ladies; one is a shameless, heavily painted tart dressed ostentatiously while the other is a virtuous and graceful young woman of natural modesty and good taste. These vivid and polarizing images of women are nationalistic exemplars of pretense and ostentation set against propriety and aesthetic sincerity; as such they are meant to appeal directly to the self-proclaimed national sensibilities of educated and courtly Frenchmen.

What were the causes of this deeply rooted mistrust of the French authorities for Italian music? As we have seen, from as far back as the ancient Greeks, emotional display was traditionally tied to social class; the ability to control one's feelings (and even to hide them) was linked to superior rank. The values associated with *sensibilité* encouraged emotional engagement that ultimately performed a leveling function. Yet, common belief held that lower groups in society, inferior races, and women were less able to restrain themselves and their emotions. Passion and its management was thereby profoundly steeped in class, gender, national identity and social order.<sup>74</sup> The Frenchman, Nicolas Racot de Grandval, mentioned previously, wrote, in his essay on good taste in music, "Regarding musical matters [there are]...two sorts of peoples...the lowest commoners and a more gentlemanly, upright sort."<sup>75</sup> This is a palpable link of social class with musical taste and illustrates the principles a society employed to regulate its music. Because it was seen to

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<sup>73</sup> Viéville, *Comparaison De La Musique Italienne Et De La Musique Française* I: 147.

<sup>74</sup> Penelope Gouk and Helen Hills, *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music and Medicine* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) 22.

<sup>75</sup> Gétreau, "Watteau and Music," 529. Author cites "*Essai sur le bon gout en musique*" (Paris, 1732), 52.



mirror the principles present in other dimensions of their lives, music reflected cultural values generally.<sup>76</sup> The dissolution of any given society therefore, was reflected in its musical expression.

Maurice Magendie, French critic and historian, has documented the disparate tastes of the French and Italians and put them into historical perspective:

*Le burlesque est une réaction contre la préciosité et le bel usage. Imité de l'Italie, favorisé par ce mouvement d'indépendance, que se dessine après la mort de Richelieu, et se manifeste surtout pendant la Fronde, il est, dans le domaine de l'esprit, ce qu'étaient, dans la politique et dans les moeurs, cette protestation contre la règle, de besoin d'agitation, de désordre, cette pétulance brouillonne et irrespectueuse de l'autorité.<sup>77</sup>*

Low forms of culture were a rebellion against mannered pretension. Seen as Italian in influence, these tastes engaged a spirit of independence that, after the death of Richelieu, and during the subsequent rebellion of the Fronde<sup>78</sup>, prevailed in a political climate that sought to break – or at least rewrite – the rules. It was a need for confrontation and disorder that flew in the face of authority. The French principles of politesse, achievable only by a select elite, eventually served as national principles in direct opposition to the Italian style of music whose perceived overuse of technically difficult musical themes such as elaborate, acrobatic ornamentation, was deemed offensive and excessively showy and artificial.<sup>79</sup>

But this did not seem to deter avid French enthusiasts of Italian music. Appealing to the growing popularity of Italian music in France, Sebastien Brossard (1655-1730)

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<sup>76</sup> Higgins, "Apollo, Music, and Cross-Culturality," 633.

<sup>77</sup> M. Magendie, *La Politesse Mondaine Et Les Théories De L'honnêteté, En France, Au Xviie Siècle, De 1600 À 1660*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1926) II, 34.

<sup>78</sup> A (1648-1653) rebellion of the parliament and nobles in an effort to limit the power of the king.

<sup>79</sup> Fader, "The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 3.

published the *Dictionnaire de musique en langue française* in 1701 to aid in the interpretation of Italian music.<sup>80</sup> This sparked a heated debate concerning the admirable traits of French versus Italian music; Lecerf de La Viéville, mentioned above, warned personages of ‘quality’ not to be ‘seduced’ by the exotic charms of Italian cantatas and sonatas. Contemporary French writings continued to reveal a deeply embedded French antipathy for the imported style, which was criticized as affected and false. French comparisons between their own musical style and that of Italy echo throughout musical criticism from the beginning of the seventeenth century, continuing well into the eighteenth. French music critics described their native style as pure, genuine and noble, while Italian music was fiery and pretentious.<sup>81</sup> The *Encyclopédie*, in its definition of taste, links it with pleasurable sentiments:

*S'il a plus de rapport à un certain plaisir délicat des gens du monde, il se nomme goût...la définition la plus générale du goût, sans considérer s'il est bon ou mauvais, juste ou non, est ce qui nous attache à une chose par le sentiment...les sources du beau, du bon, de l'agréable, &c. sont donc dans nous-mêmes; & en chercher les raisons, c'est chercher les causes des plaisirs de notre ame... Il ne suffit pas pour le goût, de voir, de connoître la beauté d'un ouvrage; il faut la sentir, en être touché.<sup>82</sup>*

If there is a subtle pleasure shared by the sophisticated of the world, it is taste. It attaches itself to our sentiment, that part of our interior soul. Taste is not only a matter of recognizing beauty, it is a matter of being touched by it. Later, still under the heading of *goût*, the authors link the pleasures in music to sensibility in this way: « *De la sensibilité. Presque toujours les choses nous plaisent & déplaisent à différens égards: par exemple les*

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<sup>80</sup> Lowell Lindgren, "Parisian Patronage of Performers from the Royal Academy of Musick (1719-28)," *Music & Letters* 58, no. 1 (1977): 4. He cites: Elisabeth Lebeau, "*La Bibliothèque musicale des éditeurs Ballard à Paris à la fin du XVIIe siècle, xxi-xxii* (1954), 4.

<sup>81</sup> Fader, "The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 3.

<sup>82</sup> d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie De Diderot Et D'alembert* *Goût*: 7:763.

*virtuosi d'Italie nous doivent faire peu de plaisir.* »<sup>83</sup> Here, the *Encyclopédie* defines the very nature of pleasure itself. In declaring definitively what displeases, it chooses Italian music as its most commonly understood and recognizable symbol. Italian depravity and excess appear to be stereotypes generally accepted by the French national view.

The French ideal of balanced moderation was an important aspect of *honnêteté* and aristocratic self-definition. “Too little knowledge was uncivilized, too much knowledge (or at least the flaunting of it) was affected.”<sup>84</sup> Yet, there was no exact measure for the achievement of a universally perceived ideal balance. What was the accepted number of musical ornaments? How should they be interpreted and performed? How could any accurate assessment of good taste be achieved, much less agreed upon?<sup>85</sup> Good taste derived from the sensibilities expressed through and appreciated by, the body. It was, in the words of Anne Vincent-Buffault “an *art de vivre* which one should know how to follow while avoiding dangerous excesses and overly direct influences on the human ‘machine.’”<sup>86</sup> Yet the boundaries were often vague and dependent upon the varying tastes of critics and practitioners. It would take an artist like Watteau to visually synthesize a delicate balance between these opposing forces.

### **Watteau’s Dionysian Insight and Apollonian Expression**

The art of Watteau recalls the opinions of art critic Roger De Piles (1635-1709) who likened painting to music in its need to combine both elements – line and color – to

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid. *Goût*: 7:765.

<sup>84</sup> Fader, "The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 11.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.: 42.

<sup>86</sup> Anne Vincent-Buffault, *The History of Tears: Sensibility and Sentimentality in France*, trans. Teresa Bridgeman (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) 53.

achieve overall harmony. In music, the line is the melodic contour, the pleasing progression from note to note. Color is contained in the timbre of the instruments and their blending together. Similarly, Watteau informs his art with knowledge gained from the precision of his drawing studies combined with his brushwork and palette. Using the *bel effets* of both French and Italian styles of expression, i.e. those that both delight and excite the senses, his visual and musical harmonies contribute to the total composition, the *tout-ensemble*.<sup>87</sup> The Goncourt brothers would later write:

How felicitously this Italian manner, with its brilliancy and bizarerrie, is matched with the French manner of the infant eighteenth century! And of the alliance, of the fusion of these two modes, what a ravishing child was born, the mode of Watteau!<sup>88</sup>

They recognized in Watteau his ability to invent an entirely new world, a fusion of Italian impudence and French decorum.

As a keen observer of the conflicting musical forces that shaped his time, Watteau uses varying musical signifiers to express the divergence of these changing tastes while blending disparate elements of public society. His references take on alternate meanings when juxtaposed against new, often unexpected elements. Startling combinations create innovative and fresh realities simply by their adjacent positions and artful affiliations. In her essay on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artistic enactments of sympathy, or empathetic involvement, Ruth HaCohen points out that the use of sympathetic musical elements that contrasted and played against one another was a method of forging a new-found actuality:

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<sup>87</sup> For a complete discussion of the theories of Roger De Piles, consult: Thomas Puttfarcken, *Roger De Piles' Theory of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>88</sup> Goncourt, *French Eighteenth-Century Painters: Watteau, Boucher, Chardin, La Tour, Greuze, Fragonard* 4.

The primary thesis is that sympathy thrived where mimetic illusion failed. In the figurative terms of the period, this amounted to the substitution of Echo, the compassionate nymph, for Narcissus, the self-centered deity.<sup>89</sup>

Sympathetic projection caused sensory chain reactions, forming and reforming distinct new realities. The merging of music and sympathy allowed musicians to communicate across distances and distances. Watteau's art operates in much the same way. In other words, replication is not sufficient; relationships and the interactions between separate elements are what gives each separate faction a newly re-discovered identity. Watteau's mixtures and juxtapositions impart nuance while they invent and reformulate ideas. In the artist's turn from the hierarchical structure of earlier academic painting, and, hence, musical performance, to the egalitarian orientation of more informal group dynamics, he discovers and develops new territories for expression. Like the audible sensations of music, his art "pave[s] the way for the release of social and mental powers from local commitments and fixed reflections."<sup>90</sup> While his paintings identify with anti-absolutist forms of pleasure and public entertainment, he manages to imbue his images with French decorum, a solo line of politesse, if you will, as he simultaneously supplies them with a theatrical, Italian-like sensual accompaniment, Nietzsche's 'Dionysian dithyramb'. His paintings invoke Nietzschean ideas of Greek drama as an integration of reason and aesthetic feeling.<sup>91</sup> In the words of Judith Norman:

...like the romantics, Nietzsche envisions a form of philosophy which becomes conscious artistry, creative rather than descriptive, and oriented to

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<sup>89</sup> HaCoen, "The Music of Sympathy in the Arts of the Baroque; or, the Use of Difference to Overcome Indifference," 608.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.: 645.

<sup>91</sup> Dennis Sweet, "The Birth of 'the Birth of Tragedy'," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60, no. 2 (1999): 352.

aesthetic rather than epistemological criteria.<sup>92</sup>

Discovering new interpretations comes with giving old ideas of good and evil new significance through seeing the value of reason enhanced by creativity based on emotion.<sup>93</sup>

Nietzsche “challeng[ed] classicism with the presence of Dionysus”<sup>94</sup> in this way:

Apollo stands before me as the transfigured genius of the individualizing principle, through which release is only to be truly attained through illusion. However, under the mystical joyous cries of Dionysus, the spell of individuation is shattered and the way lies open to the maternal source of being, to the innermost core of things.<sup>95</sup>

The scenes that Watteau paints have that same mystical joy; they cast a spell that opens myriad possible interpretations and insights. Watteau portrays his cultural epoch as the “Apollonian embodiment of Dionysiac insights and powers where rational and irrational elements coexist.”<sup>96</sup> In other words, there is no objectivity, only subjectivity and it is this very appeal to emotional response that enriches the visual experience. In the context of Watteau paintings like *Fête vénitienne*, the viewer responds to the incongruence of the surroundings, the classic stone urn set against the sensual reclining nude statue, the music of the bagpipe droning in the sedately lush foliage, the older, overweight gentleman dancing

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<sup>92</sup> Judith Norman, "Nietzsche and Early Romanticism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63, no. 3 (2002): 504.

<sup>93</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy," (Malaspina University College, Nanaimo, BC, 1871), 6. "[The] union between the Apollonian and the Dionysian? Its tremendous expansion, extend[s] to all peoples and constantly increase[s] with new births, testifies to us how strong that artistic double drive of nature is."

<sup>94</sup> Adrian Del Caro, "Dionysian Classicism, or Nietzsche's Appropriation of an Aesthetic Norm," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50, no. 4 (1989): 601.

<sup>95</sup> Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy," 16. "Apollo steht vor mir, als der verklärende Genius des principii individuationis, durch den allein die Erlösung im Scheine wahrhaft zu erlangen ist: während unter dem mystischen Jubelruf des Dionysus der Bann der Individuation zersprengt wird und der Weg zu den Müttern des Sein's, zu dem innersten Kern der Dinge offen liegt."

<sup>96</sup> Kronegger, *The Life Significance of French Baroque Poetry* 44.

with the pale young girl. To borrow the words of Judith Norman,

We can now understand the basic philosophical context of romantic irony. It is a way in which a text indicates its illusory, provisional, limited character while gesturing towards an unreachable, higher ground.<sup>97</sup>

Watteau's gentle satire imparts a hazy eloquence, a new latency, to the fleeting moment while punctuating the pastoral scene with unique visual wit.

Tuned into these conflicting yet somehow compatible ideas, the artist again achieves a distinctive pictorial synthesis of French vs. Italian expression, thereby offering a harmonious resolution to the cultural discord in *Comédiens italiens* of c. 1719-20 (fig. 86).<sup>98</sup> The artist's use of theatrical characters as subjects presents us with a visual play between Italian farce and French refinement.<sup>99</sup> The theater is, for Watteau, an alterant between the essence and the real, the simulated and the human. The scene here is the end of a performance; Pierrot stands in a graceful pose at the center of an axial configuration in which all gestures synchronize toward him. The pale skin of the tall, slightly imperious woman to the right reflects the light of his white costume.<sup>100</sup> A progression of steps in the foreground guides the eye upward to the main figure; the garland of flowers attractively draped on the steps points the way. The courtly gestures and poses of the players are discreetly decorous while they unite in composition to present the subject of the scene. The glance of the fool at lower left turns to the center while his angled left leg, parallel with the

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<sup>97</sup> Norman, "Nietzsche and Early Romanticism," 511.

<sup>98</sup> National Gallery of Art, Washington.

<sup>99</sup> For descriptions and characterizations of the traditional roles and their players in the Italian comedy, see: Pierre-Louis Ducharte, *La Commedia Dell'arte* (Paris: Editions d'Art et Industrie, 1955), Daniel Heartz, "Watteau's Italian Comedians," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22, no. 2 (1988-89): 156-81, Cesare Molinari, *La Commedia Dell'arte* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1985).

<sup>100</sup> She is a principal female figure called Flaminia who was Mme. Riccoboni, a famous actress and author in Italy. Heartz, "Watteau's Italian Comedians," 174-72.

tilt of his mock scepter or bauble, guides all eyes to the focal point: Pierrot in his luminous costume. He receives importance by the hierarchical architectural setting and is exhibited to the audience by a fellow player, not as part of a group display, but as the sole cause for acclaim.<sup>101</sup> Attending figures lean toward the center; the guitarist at left bends in and directs his guitar toward center stage. Light catches a fellow player to the right, a Brighella or variant of Mezzetin, dressed in gold satin and a gray cape, whose gesture indicates Pierrot as the focus of acclaim. The strong red of the fool's costume matches the crimson of the draped curtain, a similar backdrop employed by Watteau's teacher, Gillot. The vivid hues accentuate the brilliant whiteness of the central figure's costume. At the left, Mezzetin theatrically lifts the hem of his cape and artfully leans toward the pale young Silvia character.<sup>102</sup> In the self-conscious act reminiscent of an *honnête homme*, Mezzetin displays his amatory artistry for all to see, inclining longingly toward the object of his affections, while adding to the harmonious, graceful grouping of the image.<sup>103</sup> A related picture, *Les Habits sont Italiens*, a 1719 engraving of which is presented here (fig. 87) again recreates the moment where theatrical performers appear for applause.<sup>104</sup> The acceptance of praise causes the actors to present themselves graciously. The engraving included this verse:

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<sup>101</sup> Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature, and Talk in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* 144-7.

<sup>102</sup> In real life, Giovanna Benozzi (Silvia) and Mme. Riccoboni (Flaminia) were first cousins; they often played onstage rivals. Hertz, "Watteau's Italian Comedians," 166-68.

<sup>103</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 138. The amatory message that the *honnête homme* addressed to his lady was not private or secretive communication, but rather a means for displaying his artistry to all the members of his circle.

<sup>104</sup> Hertz, "Watteau's Italian Comedians," fig. 8. The painting itself is reproduced in the catalogue "*Le Theatre a Paris (XVIIe-XVIIIe Siecles)*" for an exhibition at the Musee Carnavalet in Paris from March to May, 1929, as a frontispiece.



The clothes are Italian,  
The airs are French, and I wager  
That in these true comedians  
Lies some amiable trick;  
And that Italians and French  
Laughing at human folly,  
Are making fun at once  
Of both France and Italy.<sup>105</sup>

The verse embodies Watteau's nuanced combination of playful theatrics, as denoted in their costumes, framed in French refinement, or 'airs'. By depicting these diverse sensibilities as visual amalgam, the artist succeeds in satirizing both cultures and self-identities. The actors themselves, not their characters, are the source of contemplation. Out of character, they stand and relate in a genuinely shared setting. Emphasis is not on the roles they play but on their innate, proudly demonstrated humanity. In *Comédiens italiens*, the presence of children playing, at the far left, attracted by the fool and his bells, alludes to the close familial ties and the genuine warmth of the personal lives of the actors. There is integrity in each player's bearing: no longer performing, each is an expressive body in and of itself.<sup>106</sup> Clothed in the solemnity of their true identities and varied artistic gifts, the Italian comedians themselves bear the natural refinement of *honnête gens* as they artfully pose with grace and good humor. They no longer occupy the lowly artisan's sphere of the paid professional performer: they are raised to a higher level and now stand alongside the gifted amateur, the *honnête homme*, if you will. Their natural abilities are their own, not part of a fictive spectacle. Watteau's combinatory use of the theater and the *airs de tête* of his players imply an intangible aura that evokes an inspired yet evasive mood, much like musical

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.: 173.

<sup>106</sup> Sarah R. Cohen, "Body as 'Character' in Early Eighteenth-Century French Art and Performance," *The Art Bulletin* 78, no. 3 (1996): 454-66.

qualities associated with the elusive timbres of both Italian and French music.

Watteau's decorative training under Claude III Audran (1658-1734) provided him with the *arabesque* sensibility in which to place his irreverent mixtures of high and low. As Thomas Crow tells us, in the French cult of *honnêteté*, "the body was no longer thought of as the mirror of the soul, but became rather a malleable surface which, when employed properly, worked to block the transmission of direct...meaning."<sup>107</sup> The real idea behind *honnêteté* was to maintain undetected artifice and natural grace while seeing through the pretense of others: "Flawless grace and [a] pleasing manner...required a perfect but completely invisible self-control."<sup>108</sup> Desires and intentions were expressed through an elaborate set of codes understood only by the most discriminate. It was a principle that depended on the ultimate in sensibility: the ability to use one's natural internal senses and manipulate them toward a social end. "The *honnête homme* must develop and organize his natural qualities...so that he can fit into an elite society."<sup>109</sup> It involved a constant awareness borne from natural abilities combined with constant vigilance and equanimity: « *Si l'on parle à eux, ils sont attentifs, sans jamais interrompre; et lors qu'il est temps de répondre, ils le font avec ordre et jugement.* »<sup>110</sup> One must be an attentive listener and never be hasty to respond or interrupt. When the time is appropriate, careful thought and good judgment should direct any reply. In addition, it is necessary to systematize creativity well in order to present thoughts clearly. This requires a conscious, prudent management of

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<sup>107</sup> Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* 68.

<sup>108</sup> Fader, "The Honnête Homme as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 5.

<sup>109</sup> Buford Norman, "The *Agréments* - Méré, Morality, and Music," *The French Review* 56, no. 4 (1983): 555.

<sup>110</sup> Nicolas Faret, *L'honnête Homme Ou L'art De Plaire a La Court*, ed. Maurice Magendie, Nouvelle Édition établie par Maurice Magendie, 1932 ed. (Madrid, Paris, Buenos-Aires: Agrupación de Amigos del Libro de Arte, 1636) 78-9.

inventive ideas. Thus, Watteau places his seemingly informal actors and musicians in a decorative, arabesque playground: artlessness is contained, organized and manipulated within each ornamental, artful frame.

### **Music and the Theater**

Theatrical styles in France were evolving on their own, even before the influence of Italian comedy and drama. Earlier cultural innovations had developed that included such forms as the *opéra-ballet* and the *opéra-comique*. The *opéra-ballet* was a mixed genre containing elements both from opera and the ballet; it included a separate dramatic action for each act as well as entertaining diversions made up of songs and dances.<sup>111</sup> Georgia Cowart points out that the *opéra-ballets* often set up:

...a discourse of subversion successfully engaging a discourse of absolutism found in the entertainments of Louis XIV's early court... and many were satirical attacks on eponymous court ballets.<sup>112</sup>

Hence, theatrical defiance or rebellion, however veiled, existed even before the Italian comedians were expelled in 1697. The *opéra-comique* was a mixture of burlesque and sentimentality and had its precedents in *opéra-ballets* as well as the street fairs of the Italians. It was a musical play with spoken dialogue, which included tonal music and traditional tonic and dominant cadences with most of the vocal pieces structured in traditional patterns such as aria and duet.<sup>113</sup> Instead of showcasing the grandeur of a king, these theatrical and musical amusements appealed to an audience that held ideals of social equality and artistic freedom. New forms of theater began to be identified with a “public

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<sup>111</sup> James R. Anthony, "The French Opera-Ballet in the Early 18th Century: Problems of Definition and Classification," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 18, no. 2 (1965): 201.

<sup>112</sup> Cowart, "Watteau's 'Pilgrimage to Cythera' and the Subversive Utopia of the Opera-Ballet," 461.

<sup>113</sup> Maurice Cauchie, "The High Lights of French Opéra-Comique," *The Musical Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1939): 306.

utopia of *fête* counterpoised against the backdrop of the courtly *fête* of Louis XIV.”<sup>114</sup>

Theatrical spontaneity applies to the outdoor musicians in the *fêtes* of Watteau who embodied impulsive, unprompted musical ease of improvisation. *Récréation galante* (fig. 5) illustrates Watteau’s turn from the ordered structure of earlier academic French painting to more relaxed, casual groupings.<sup>115</sup> Similar to the musical and theatrical styles imported from the Italians, he treats his leisured group democratically; while many participants occupy the informal scene, none dominate or take center stage. In these configurations, he uses the portable musical instrument from the Italian theater, the guitar, in an unceremonious, improvisatory spirit.<sup>116</sup> Watteau’s musician tunes his instrument while he glances below to his right at the young woman who holds a book of music. They share an exchange of casual spontaneity and musical discovery tinged with an air of intimacy. Their music is part of a social transaction and amusement rather than a finished performance.<sup>117</sup> At the far left of the work, an elaborately dressed man extends a graceful leg and looks out directly at the viewer, perhaps as an invitation to join in the impromptu concert. Just behind him, a couple turns toward each other while children play nearby. A triangular composition of figures forms the center of the painting and a woman in bright white is the luminant focus – yet, her action is not pivotal; she is a mere observer to the pleasant gathering. She watches a couple directly to her left while another duo, highlighted by a break of light through the trees, retreats behind her toward a sculpted fountain. Another couple, at right forefront, joins hands and turns perhaps to leave the scene. The promised melodic interlude comes to the

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<sup>114</sup> Cowart, "Watteau's 'Pilgrimage to Cythera' and the Subversive Utopia of the Opera-Ballet," 466.

<sup>115</sup> Staatliche Museen Preussischer, Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

<sup>116</sup> Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* 66.

<sup>117</sup> Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature, and Talk in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* 151.

viewer in the form of the guitarist left of center who leans toward the woman holding the music; they are engaged in a proposal of some sort, sharing a musical moment, party to a conversation that cannot be overheard. The artist's choice of an impromptu setting and relaxed, casual groupings is a direct reference to the improvisatory spirit that informs the sensibilities of Italian comedy.

In addition to the intense expression of the passions in Italian opera, the contest between French and Italian tastes in music had another origin in the opposition between tragedy and comedy, or theater that raised the intellect versus that of the coarse traveling entertainers who migrated north from Italy. The 'high' theaters were the *Comédie Française* and the French *Opéra* and the perceived threat to them was the Italian ability to laugh at themselves and authority. Despite the fact that Louis XIV had officially banned the Italian players from Paris from 1697 to 1716, they continued to flourish underground in Paris fairs such as the *Foire Saint-Germain* and the *Foire Saint-Laurent*.<sup>118</sup> The subversive spirit of the Italian players was another factor in the perception of the French authority of Italian music. The view that Italian theater was excessive and out of control blended easily with the opinion of the French authorities that Italian music was undisciplined. It was less refined, viewed as marginal, and could not be regulated. It was a venue for social criticism and, in the public fairs and street theaters, it was a location for disparate classes to mix and share amusing *divertissements*.<sup>119</sup> Even worse, its reliance on improvisation and ribald humor was liberating and exhilarating. As the threatened French establishment saw it, the rule of reason in both the individual and the state depended on the suppression of the undisciplined (Dionysian) character of music so prevalent in Italian modes of expression.

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<sup>118</sup> Richard Rand, *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). Mark Ledbury "Intimate Dramas: Genre Painting and New Theater in Eighteenth-Century France", 49-67.

<sup>119</sup> Plax, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth-Century France*.

Norman Bryson writes:

One can see why the Italian theater is so central to Watteau's work. Unlike the French drama, it does not accord pride of place to the script. Its characters are fixed...but the situations are...fluid and unpredictable, with much stress on improvisation.<sup>120</sup>

The popularity of the *commedia dell'arte* and the *parades* was largely due to the fact that scenarios were merely outlines; the actual dialogue was improvised by the actors.<sup>121</sup>

Performances needed little preparation and were left to the wit and ingenuity of the performers.<sup>122</sup>

The improvisatory tendency of Italian theater players, aided in dramatic flow by their music, succeeded despite and because of the restrictions placed on them. So, too, did instrumental Italian music at fairs and public balls during Carnival season. Following the decline of the spectacles and entertainments of Versailles, nobility had moved to the city where fashion became urbane; while some of the rules of court survived, musical entertainment was "removed from its pedestal" becoming "secularized in pleasure, comfort, and good taste."<sup>123</sup> Too, the formal boundaries in society had become more flexible as the center of intellectual activity moved from court to salon and was exposed to new, international artistic ideas. For the elite, there was Italian chamber music in the salons where musicians gave concerts for private audiences. Nobles at court and the *Nuits de*

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<sup>120</sup> Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancient Régime* 78.

<sup>121</sup> Plax, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth-Century France* 125. "Parades were the short, unpolished pieces performed *en treteaux* (literally, 'on sawhorses,' because a stage was created by placing lumber across sawhorses) in front of the theaters to attract customers. They were artless and rude, combining street entertainments, such as tightrope walking and acrobatics, with bits of theater."

<sup>122</sup> Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature, and Talk in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* 92.

<sup>123</sup> François Moureau, "Watteau in His Time," in *Watteau: 1684-1721*, ed. Margaret Morgan Graselli and Pierre Rosenberg (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1984), 475.

*Sceaux*, the salons of the Duchesse de Maine (1676-1753), favored the Italian style, as did the Regent himself, an enlightened musician. The salon of Mme. de Prie (1698-1727) and her sixty patrons presided during the Regency over evenings of Italian music.<sup>124</sup> An audience was forming that attended not only the Opéra, but musical assemblies of all kinds, from amateur musicales to private recitals to public concerts organized by professional musicians. As in the former century, it was an obligatory luxury in good society to offer a regularly fixed evening of music to one's friends.<sup>125</sup> But, in this new modern age, the choice of music was frequently written or performed by Italians.

### **Privileging Pierrot: Artlessness as Art**

Because music and theater are inextricably linked in the art of Watteau, his paintings of Pierrot make a special case for the artist as a painter of sensibility alongside – as well as outside of – his musical images. As such, the metaphors of music and its movements are useful when applied to the non-musical references in his works. Marian Hobson reminds us that illusion, like music, is a reference outward, that, while the object is made present, the other, distant object – or the viewer – must also be apparent. This paradigm operates in music as well – between instrument and listener, vibration and sympathetic receptor. Involvement and awareness between illusion and semblance of reality forces a relay or an oscillation between the spectator and the act of creation just as a musical note, upon its creation, reverberates in the air as it is carried to its recipient/listener. Hobson describes this oscillation as a flickering *papillotage* (derived from the movements of a butterfly) or rapid movements of the eye.<sup>126</sup> Just as one is able to find pictorial signs of the vibrant

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<sup>124</sup> Theodore Baker J.-G. Prod'homme, "A French Maecenas of the Time of Louis XV: M. De La Poupliniere," *The Musical Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (1924): 512.

<sup>125</sup> Gétreau, "Watteau and Music," 530.

<sup>126</sup> Marian Hobson, *The Object of Art: The Theory of Illusion in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

sensibilities in Watteau's musical images, so, too, one can detect visual signifiers of movement, or tonal vibrancy, in his pliant depictions of Pierrot. The character is at once a public clown and a human soul. He is offstage, still in makeup but devoid of any artful, theatrical pretense.

As such, musical tonalities exist in the artist's use of painterly give and take in his varied portrayals of the white costume of Pierrot. In the following paintings, Watteau notably alters and transposes the timbres and hues of the fabric to related keys. He progresses from delicate splashes of thick white paint that illuminate bright folds of fabric to a transparent build-up of glazes to achieve the jewel-like glow of satin. If we were to apply Hobson's theory of *papillotage* here, perhaps the correct term for Watteau's painterly depictions of the suit of Pierrot would be *tissage*, a gentle weaving of glowing rhythms and moving light.

Similar to the *Comédiens italiens* discussed earlier, Watteau's *L'amour au théâtre italien* (fig. 37) depicts actors not professionally engaged in their craft; they are off-stage, at night.<sup>127</sup> Far from a bright, candlelit evening stage presentation, his actors are in the open air lit only by a bright torch and lantern, which push everything except the main figures back into the shadows. The darkness, like the auditory atmosphere, is evocative and enigmatic. Watteau mixes theatrics with lucid reality. Painting the comedians in a brightly lit, close-up composition, he imparts a kind of compelling and mysterious veneration to his figures. Yet, despite their illuminated display, they are not set apart from the viewer who is compositionally on equal terms with the players. The picture is large in scale and the figures occupy a large portion of the picture plane. Their only sources of illumination are a moon appearing from behind a cloud, a small lantern, which reveals figures in the left

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<sup>127</sup> Staatliche Museen Preussischer, Kulturbesitz, Berlin.



background and a bright torch, near-center, held by Mezzetin. Light is the ostensible metaphor, not only of the emergence of Italian comedians and their return to legitimacy in France, but also for the transcendent movements and attainments of music. Unlike the vibrant costume of Pierrot in *Comédiens italiens*, in *L'Amour au théâtre italien*, Pierrot and his white suit are not given special luminance. Instead, he absorbs the warm glow in equal measure with his companions. Only the occasional white, ruffled collar appears in bright, thickly painted flourishes. Group harmony, conveyed by light and music, predominates. Not immediately palpable or physically tangible, the rays of flickering torchlight visually reify and coalesce with the vibrations of music that emanate from his guitar. Both light and sound form the cores of radiating sensation that ripple gently outward and touch each member of the group. Watteau's paint transcends its material base becoming a spiritual, transparent and glowing signifier of communal sensibilities and feelings defined by timbre, light and warmth. Deep tenebrism encloses the group within its walls and provides a dark backdrop on which to situate the cold light of the moon and the intense glow of the torch. The artist invents corresponding transparencies of light and sound that interlace with awareness and performance. The meanings and actions contained within the painting are elusive and, at the same time, persuasive. Both the light and the music are experienced enigmatically as sentiment, or sensibility as affection and ambiance; they are nuanced sensations, carried by the vibrating strings and the flickering flames. Music and light, in their abilities to envelop, surround and touch the participants in the scene; the suit of Pierrot visually responds to and absorbs the vibrations of music and light.

Unlike *L'Amour au théâtre italien*, Pierrot's white suit does not absorb the shadows around him in *Pierrot content* (fig. 40). His incandescent costume is the single bright beacon, the central visual theme, of the composition. He is the apex of a compositional triangle, a visual dividing point between the light on the left of the painting and the darkness at the right. Pierrot sits in the open air on a bench beneath a dark tree at center surrounded

by four figures from the Italian comedy.<sup>128</sup> He looks outward, his expression unreadable, with knees apart. At the same time, he appears pushed inward, compressed, by the surrounding figures. The figures at left are Mezzetin, his striped costume and hat lit from behind as he looks to his left toward the lady who sits between him and Pierrot. Fashionably dressed in a gown of red/orange and gold satin, she strums somewhat distractedly on a guitar; while her expression is dreamy and unfocused, she inclines her head toward Pierrot. The reflecting gold satin of her skirt is a visual prelude to the bright gleam of Pierrot's white costume. At the right of the scene two figures are seated in shadow. At the edge, a young man sits on the ground, his arm resting on the lap of a female companion who sits on the bench next to Pierrot. The figures in the darkness appear to be mere witnesses to the scene; they are subsidiary, only dimly catching reflection from the pool of light. The luminous satin costume of Pierrot takes center stage; its whiteness dominates. Against the darkness of the surrounding woods, the artist paints the suit in passages of thick white impasto tempered with layered glazing to convey the radiance of the fabric as it takes on neighboring golds and warm grays. The moving, radiant light of the white costume highlights the absolute stillness of Pierrot. Painted glazes allude to something 'beneath' the white; the illustrative reverberation felt/seen in his satin garment is a visual vibrato. Just as the ear responds to the aural pulsations of music, the eye of the viewer is a receptor of movements of light,

*La sérénade italienne* (fig. 4) portrays Pierrot in the foreground appealing to Columbine in an effort to bring her out of her reticence with the notes of his guitar.<sup>129</sup> Watteau's marks are varied, multidirectional strokes of light paint that alternate between impasto and glaze to portray the body beneath the white costume of Pierrot. Variations in

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<sup>128</sup> Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza, Lugano.

<sup>129</sup> Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

intensity provide tonal glints and shimmers as the light moves over the fabric surface reflecting the intensity and effort of Pierrot as he gestures and tries to brighten her mood. In the uniquely simple *La partie quarrée* (fig. 39) Pierrot is off center at right, his back to us and facing Mezzetin at far left and two luxuriously dressed ladies in the center.<sup>130</sup> Their gazes focus on Pierrot, perhaps in the hope that he will play his guitar, which remains silently draped over his shoulder facing outward toward the viewer. Again, the characters are offstage and out of doors in an informally social context. Mezzetin at left and Pierrot at right frame the group of four. Pierrot's cocked hat completes the curve of the drapery of his pant leg below while his angled guitar continues the arc as it angles inward toward the center.

The monumental format of Watteau's *Pierrot (Gilles)* of c. 1718-19 (fig. 88), due to its original purpose as a signboard, is unusual.<sup>131</sup> A life-sized Pierrot dominates the composition as he stands motionless at the center. Distinctly set apart on a rise from four actors below him, he looks out directly at the viewer. The other actors occupy a wooded setting framed by dark trees and illuminated by a blue sky. At Pierrot's feet, the glassy eye of a donkey ridden by the doctor stares mournfully out at us as the ribbons that decorate him appear to mock his plaintive gaze. The doctor, a stock figure in the Italian theater who is often the pedant or fool, looks outward from the shadows toward us with a knowing smile.<sup>132</sup> The darkness from which he emerges sets off the whiteness of Pierrot's suit. At the lower right of the painting, three figures, a fool with crested cap, a young woman, and a valet dressed in bright red look toward the center behind and below, presumably at the donkey in an effort to pull him along.

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<sup>130</sup> Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

<sup>131</sup> Musée du Louvre, Paris.

<sup>132</sup> François Moureau, "Theater Costumes in the Work of Watteau," in *Watteau 1684-1721*, ed. Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1984), 513.

In *Partie quarrée*, again it is Pierrot's gleaming white costume that compels the viewer. Placed against the dark wood of the guitar, the vividly rendered fabric reflects the cast shadow of the instrument and radiates as a visual foil for the tonal warmth of its rich brown. Pierrot's white suit is an emitter, a source of light, just as the guitar is a potential source of vibrant sound. In *Quarée*, the artist achieves a luminous liquidity to the costume by layering clear glazes that achieve the varied tonal saturations perceived in the color white. Pierrot himself is immobile and his voluminously sleeved jacket and loosely draped trousers become glowing signifiers of the performing body at rest.

The frontal pose of *Pierrot (Gilles)* reveals guileless facial features with a full, rounded mouth above a shadowed youthful jaw. The capacious sleeves of his costume cause his arms to hang awkwardly at his sides; his hands are almost vestigial. A skullcap beneath his straw hat repeats the circle of his ruffled collar. His cropped satin trousers show his ankles and white satin slippers tied with red bows, hinting, somehow, at a naked boyish vulnerability. Light reflects from his costume illuminating the skin tones of his hands, torso and head. Although he resides in the world, he is apart from it, cut off and alone in his thoughts. His stance, in its frontality, is poignant in its awkwardness.

It is the artist's use of white paint and his alternating passages of thick impasto and delicate transparent layers of pigment which compels the viewer to prolong her/his gaze. Involvement and awareness coexist within the experience as light passes over the carefully described costume. A thick application of warm, cream colored pigment delineates the edges of his ruffled collar while subtle and repeated layering indicates the gauze-like nature of the fabric. Here, his white suit is as carefully modeled as a Dutch still life. Light and the pale surface interact, participating in a visual give and take. Like a musical instrument, his costume emanates a resonance from within, tempered and informed by transitional passages of adjacent warm and cool hues. A slow, musical temporality alleviates the stillness of the monumental figure. The movement of light echoes and replicates the movement of music;

but here, unlike the shimmering fabric of the elegant gowns in Watteau's *fêtes*, the tempo is less *allegretto* and more *andante*. The burnished transitions of radiance underscore the artless tranquility and the understated eloquence of Pierrot.

## Chapter Four:

### *L'Art de Toucher: Watteau, Couperin and the Honnête Homme*

This chapter proposes that the musical style and treatment of melodic line by François Couperin, the artist's contemporary, echo the visual cadences of Watteau that combine Italian and French sensibilities. The history of the courtier/musician provides connections between musical expression and French ideas of *honnêteté* and offers insight into the artist's own participation in artistic, music and social circles.

Like the art of Antoine Watteau, the keyboard music of his contemporary, François Couperin, le Grand (1668-1733) is a vibrant element of the complex patterns of Parisian musical and cultural life.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, scholars from both fields of art and music have made passing references to similarities in the stylistic nuances of Watteau and Couperin. In the words of art historian Harry Wehle, “.Watteau set[s] [his] charming creatures in motion with the sprightly decorum of a minuet by Couperin composed in a minor key.”<sup>2</sup> The composer Claude Debussy (1862-1918) became infatuated with Watteau when, as a guest in the villa of Count Primoli in Rome, he encountered the largest private collection of the works of the painter.<sup>3</sup> Wilfred Mellers writes that Debussy linked the styles of Watteau and Couperin together in the dedication of his piano *Études* of 1915 to the composer with this quote: « [Couperin est] le plus poète de nos clavecinistes, dont la tender mélancholie

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<sup>1</sup> Thurston Dart, "On Couperin's Harpsichord Music," *Musical Times* 110, no. 1516 (1969): 594.

<sup>2</sup> Wehle, "Le Mezzetin by Antoine Watteau," 14.

<sup>3</sup> James R. Briscoe, "Debussy 'D'après' Debussy: The Further Resonance of Two Early 'Mélodies'," *19th-Century Music* 5, no. 2 (1981): 146. "Primoli invited Debussy to work in his villa at Fiumicino near Rome, amidst a large collection of paintings by Watteau. At the time Debussy was engrossed in Diane au bois, which, with its delicate atmosphere, recalls Watteau's fête galante scenes. He was struggling toward a new aesthetic mode that would compare with Watteau's in expressive understatement; his exposure to the eighteenth-century painter surely made a decisive impression."

*semble l'adorable echo venu du fond mystérieux des paysages où s'attristent les personages de Watteau.* »<sup>4</sup> He compares Couperin to a poet whose tender sympathies resemble the echoes that emanate from the depths of the enigmatic countrysides that touch the hearts of Watteau's figures. In her article on French music, Jane Clark concludes:

When Jean-Louis Vaudoyer wrote of Watteau that he was 'the only painter since the 16<sup>th</sup> century who created a world of poetry by making use solely of subjects provided by scenes that passed before his eyes', he could have been writing about Couperin. Any titles that appear to relate to classical or historical events are found on closer examination to be topical.<sup>5</sup>

This is a reference to the contemporary cultural expressions unique in the works of both artist and composer. The aims of both Watteau and Couperin were to articulate the sensibilities relevant to their own time.

François Couperin, principal harpsichordist at Versailles and a highly esteemed teacher of music, wrote music of the French classical school, and was one of the most important musical figures in France between Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) and Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764).<sup>6</sup> While there is no known written documentation confirming that Watteau and Couperin ever actually met, the timing of Couperin's dates at court and his interest in forming a relationship with the Regent suggest that both men moved in the same circles.<sup>7</sup> They have a common association with the Hôtel de Nointel in

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<sup>4</sup> Mellers, "If Music Be the Food of Love.," 70.

<sup>5</sup> Jane Clark, "Les Folies Françaises," *Early Music* 8, no. 2 (1980): 163-4. Author cites: Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, *Watteau* (Geneva, 1942), 1.

<sup>6</sup> David Fuller: "François Couperin (ii) [le grand]", *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 5 October 2007), <http://www.grovemusic.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu>.

<sup>7</sup> Ralph Kirkpatrick, "On Re-Reading Couperin's 'L'art De Toucher Le Clavecin'," *Early Music* 4, no. 1 (1976): 8. "The dates of Couperin's publications suggest a certain amount of political manoeuvring. L'Art de Toucher is dedicated in 1716 'Au Roi', namely to the young Louis XV, who at that time was only seven years old. Louis XIV had died on 1 September 1715, and the Kingdom of France was under the regency of Philippe d'Orleans from 1715 to 1722."

Paris where Watteau painted decorations related to themes of wine; Couperin composed a *tendresse bacchique* 'La Nointéle' for the Seigneur de Nointel based on similar ideas.<sup>8</sup> Documents show another possible link indicating that Watteau painted musical motifs on the lids of at least three harpsichords.<sup>9</sup> This would indicate that the artist was acquainted with the harpsichord and its workings and must have known of the music written for it by its most notable composer. Furthermore, the subject of mythical, pastoral settings occupied their works: Watteau's *Pelinerage à Cythère* (fig. 76) and Couperin's harpsichord piece *Le Carillon de Cithère* both employ the island of Cythera as a theme.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, theatrical subjects attracted both the composer and artist. Couperin's secular vocal music refers to celebrated actors and singers of the *Comédie Française* and the opera, as well as popular members of theatrical families. These pieces include harlequins, entertainers and amusements that refer to the theaters of the *foires*.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Clark, "*Les Folies Françaises*," 165.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Pilipczuk and Neal K. Moran, "The 'Grand Concert Dans Un Jardin' by Bernard Picart and the Performing Musical Arts at the French Court around 1700," *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 30, no. 2 (1980): 135. Watteau painted musical motifs on the lids of harpsichords. He conceived a monkey-like musician which was later engraved by Anne Claude Philippe. The engraving is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. "According to the *Annoces, Affiches et Avis divers* of November 11th, 1756, p. 165 and of February 28th, 1757, p. 132, Watteau also supplied paintings for two other keyboard instruments, i.e. the case of a cembalo by "Hans" Ruckers (the elder) and lid of anonymous piano."

<sup>10</sup> The theme of the island of Cythera where Venus was worshipped and from which, according to one tradition, no lady returned without a lover or a husband appears in French seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature, art and even music as in Watteau's painting and François Couperin's *Le Carillon de Cithère* in the 14e Order from his third book of harpsichord pieces published in 1722. Beryl Kenyon de Pascual, "Keyboard and Drum Iconography: Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Fans and Brocades," *The Galpin Society Journal* 52 (1999): 61.

<sup>11</sup> Clark, "*Les Folies Françaises*," 167. The theatres at the ancient fairs of St. Germain and St. Laurent [were] forbidden by the monopoly of the Comedie Francaise to enact regular plays [but] they managed, under cover of rope-dancing and pantomime, to carry on their popular entertainments. An indication that Couperin frequented these is found in "*Le Tic-Toc-choc ou Les Maillotins*" (18e ordre); the Maillot family were all spectacular rope-dancers at the fairs. There was a Spinette in both the original Italian comedy and at the fairs so she is without doubt "*L'Epineuse*" (26e ordre). "*La Pantomime*", the following piece, also



Like Watteau, whose subjects were often costumed Italian theater figures with musical instruments, Couperin was interested in introducing Italian sensibilities into French musical styles.<sup>12</sup> He even admitted, in one case, to writing a piece under the pretext of being an Italian composer. In a preface to his collection of sonatas, *Les nations*, he wrote:

Knowing the keen appetite of the French for foreign novelties above all else, and being unsure of myself, I did myself a very good turn through a little 'technical' deceit. I pretended that a relation of mine [his cousin Marc-Roger Normand], in very truth in the service of the King of Sardinia, had sent me a sonata by a new Italian composer. I rearranged the letters of my name to form an Italian one, which I used instead. The sonata was devoured with eagerness, and I need not trouble to defend myself. However, I was encouraged. I composed others, and my italianized name brought me, in disguise, considerable applause.<sup>13</sup>

By posing and writing as an Italian, Couperin not only appealed to the modern tastes of his French audience, but he also enjoyed the creative game of incorporating Italian styles into his compositions. In his final piece, Couperin replicated the tones of braying comic instruments and, according to Jane Clark it was "very much in the *gouts-réunis* style." She asserts, "It is an appealing thought that Couperin's last piece is his own private joke about the union of the French and Italian styles, an issue that preoccupied the minds of many Frenchmen for over a century."<sup>14</sup>

Musicians and artists such as Couperin and Watteau received theoretical support for a *gouts-réunis* from art critic Roger de Piles who, in placing the Moderns over the Ancients, recommended that '*un peintre doit persuader les yeux comme un homme eloquent doit*

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must refer to the fair theatres.

<sup>12</sup> Mellers, "The Clavecin Works of François Couperin," 235.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Higginbottom: "François Couperin le Grand", Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed [2/24/08]), <http://www.grovemusic.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu> M. Pincherle: "François Couperin et la conciliation des 'goûts' français et italien", Chigiana, new ser., v (1968), 69–80.

<sup>14</sup> Clark, "*Les Folies Françaises*," 169.

*toucher le coeur*'.<sup>15</sup> Painting and music were persuasive mediums, possessing the same emotive qualities as rhetoric. Accordingly, Wilfred Mellers has written at length of the stylistic connections of Couperin and Watteau. What follows is a direct quotation from Mellers; it is not paraphrased because his exact words, specific to musical sensibilities, are essential ingredients to this argument:

[In the] pieces [by Couperin] concerned directly with the *Commedia dell'Arte*...throughout this medley of the comic and tragic, the ridiculous and the sublime, [he] veers and tacks between C major and minor, ending with the '*Desordre et dérouté de toute la troupe, causés par les ivrognes, les singes, et les ours*'...Throughout, the precision of Couperin's line-drawing, frequently in only two parts, one for each hand, parallels Watteau's meticulous draftsmanship... *Les Satires*, harmonically startling and even percussively violent, '*dans le gout burlesque*'...use guitar-style dissonances of major and minor ninths with sharply witty vivacity... [The pieces] balance between bumpkin simplicity and sophisticated sensitivity in a manner that almost justifies comparison with Watteau... Both Watteau and Couperin... seem to be transmuting personal distress into the world of the *Commedia*, precisely because the theatre can idealize the crudities and indignities of everyday life into 'something rich and strange'. It is the tenderness of the feeling – the sympathy...with the outcast – that is so remarkable in Watteau's pictorial, and in Couperin's musical representation of the Fool. In other pieces, *Les Vergers Fleuris*, for instance...[he] creates an effect of summer heat and haze...by way of suspensions that resolve only on to other suspensions, over a bagpipe drone, or musette...Here, sensuous harmony and texture are disciplines by symmetrical structure in a way that parallels Watteau's linear control over the hues of Nature, [creating] compromises between lucent form and sensuous timbre.<sup>16</sup>

That 'something rich and strange' is the fusion of gentility with subtle farce played out in major and minor modes of music in Couperin and painted into images of noble *gens* who mix socially with comedic figures in the images of Watteau. Furthermore, clowns and buffoons receive sympathetic portrayal from both the composer, in pieces such as *Satires* and *Le Tic-Toc-choc*, and the painter in many of his works, *Mezzetin* and *Pierrot (Gilles)* among them. Watteau's paintings often glow with atmospheric auras in such disparate

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<sup>15</sup> Mellers, "If Music Be the Food of Love.," 70.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*: 69.

examples as his fanciful *Les plaisirs du bal* and tenebrous *Le perspective*; Couperin's use of various instruments convey a similar languorous pastoral mood in such pieces as *Les Langueurs tendres* where, according to Mellers, "symmetrical harmonic periods are not more than implicit beneath the continuous unmetrical flow of the ornamented lyricism."<sup>17</sup> In other words, the underlying harmony plays the part of a luscious landscape that contains the playful action of the leisured figures. Mellers and Clark also write that Couperin's many musical portraits of young women display a synthesis of physical beauty with the abstract notions of grace or *l'air* in such pieces as *Les Papillons (2e ordre)* and *La Bandoline (5e ordre)*.<sup>18</sup> These musical images recall the figures of Watteau in such paintings as *Les plaisirs du bal* and *Fête venitienne*. Couperin's *bavolets-flotants (9e ordre)* are the ribbons and trains that float from the backs of Watteau's women. They are, to borrow the words of Wilfrid Mellers in describing Couperin's music, "chains of resonant suspensions."<sup>19</sup>

### *L'Art de Toucher*

The close observer can find analogies in François Couperin's music for Watteau's own artistic hand in paintings such as *The Music Lesson* (fig. 72), *Mezzetin* (fig. 52), and *Iris (La Danse)* (fig. 2). In Couperin's *L'art de toucher le clavecin*, regarded as the seminal instruction book of its time, the composer directs his readers on the best ways to play the harpsichord 'affectueusement'.<sup>20</sup> At the time, composers for the relatively new keyboard, or *clavecin*, wrote in a similar manner as for the lute in their chordal passages and

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<sup>17</sup> Mellers, "The Clavecin Works of François Couperin," 236.

<sup>18</sup> Clark, "*Les Folies Françaises*," 165.

<sup>19</sup> Mellers, "The Clavecin Works of François Couperin," 239.

<sup>20</sup> François Couperin, *L'art De Toucher Le Clavecin*, ed. Margery Halford, trans. Margery Halford (Port Washington, NY: Alfred Publishing, 1974).

string effects<sup>21</sup>. Watteau's *oeuvres* present images visually in tune with Couperin's musical principles in terms of line, composition and brushwork. The artist appropriates the same sensibilities as the teacher/musician and integrates them into his own painterly language. In discussing *appoggiatura* technique in the *L'art*, Couperin writes that the performer must connect the main notes smoothly, to "always play delicately [and] preserve and perfect legato in all that you play"<sup>22</sup> The main notes must connect smoothly through a skillful use of *appoggiaturas*; Couperin operates similarly to Watteau who employs a brush dipped in pure, pigmented medium to effect a fluid flow of paint.<sup>23</sup> His painting hand receives its inspiration from the act of gestural drawing and his brush strokes are slurs and suspensions that maintain an active agility, combining smooth legato with sketch-like spontaneity. Watteau endows his scenes with a liberated graphic eloquence that serves his own visual melody. Wilfred Mellers writes a description of Couperin's style, which directly calls to mind the *beau faire* of Watteau:

The ornamentation [in Couperin's music], inherited from the *air de cour*, smoothes all angles off the line, gives it a caressing flexibility which suggests some kinship with ordered plasticity... The ornamentation is a part of the melodic contour, a means of achieving nuance and gradation.<sup>24</sup>

That same *air de cour* stems from the *politesse du chant* and the graceful phrasing so important to the unification of music with poetry in French music. Ornaments, the

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<sup>21</sup> Mellers, "The Clavecin Works of François Couperin," 234-5. Composers for clavecin often wrote in a more or less identical manner for the lute as for the keyboard instrument. To them indeed the clavecin was a kind of mechanized lute, and spread chord formations, plucked string effects, overlapping canonic entries, were all element of lute technique which survived, or were modified, in the technique of the keyboard instrument.

<sup>22</sup> Couperin, *L'art De Toucher Le Clavecin* 16.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Kennedy, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 23. *Appoggiatura*: from 'appoggiare' to learn. Leaning note. A suspension that resolves into the main note. A grace note or species of ornament of which the exact interpretation has differed in various periods.

<sup>24</sup> Wilfred Mellers, *François Couperin and the French Classical Tradition* (New York: Dover, 1968) 211.

*agréments*, instead of standing out on their own, are incorporated seamlessly into the musical line. Accordingly, there is a sinuous rhythm in Watteau's fluent paint in his *Music Lesson*. In the matching angles of the neck of the *theorbo* and the porcelain neck of the seated woman, the artist uses fluent, linear gestures to unite the two figures. Watteau makes use of sinuous intonations that curve forward, ending in the upswept hair of the young woman. His brush gains thickness as it accumulates paint to add substance to the marks that depict the falling folds of fabric; lines take on weight as they bend with the force of the pressure of the musician's hands. The glow of the rosy cheeks of the children, applied through thin glazes of rose and ochre, is a reflection of light received from the vibrant warmth of the wooden instrument. The weight of the lady's hand languidly anchors the delicate pages of the music book, lightly painted with subtle passages of white pigment. Fluid strokes of thick gold and rose madder follow the fall of the musician's satin tunic under his arms and around his waist. In this way, Watteau's linear language mimics the musical phrasings, suspensions and resolutions so vital to the composer Couperin.

The melodic contours in such paintings as *Mezzetin* flow with the fabric of his rose cape and the weighted dark lines that portray shadows contained in his angled neck and leaning posture. Sensual lines with no sharp angles indicate the spreading branches of delicate trees. The stripes of his costume meet the light, follow the contours of his body and disappear in the creases of the silk fabric. In *Iris (La Danse)*, Watteau's caressing flexibility of paint describes the line that traces the graceful arch of the young girl's figure, the *contre jour* or the edge of her black sleeve against the bright sky. The angle of her head coupled with the tiny, gloved hand present her as a childish blending of awareness and innocence.

Watteau's compositional approaches and contextual strategies also relate directly to Couperin's rule regarding pauses in phrasing:

To indicate an end of the melody or harmonic phrase and to make it clear that it is necessary to separate the end of the melody a little before passing on to what follows. In general, this is nearly imperceptible, but when one does not observe this little silence, persons of taste and feeling will feel that something is lacking in the execution; in a word, it is the difference between those who read everything straight through and those who pause at periods and commas. These silences must make themselves felt without altering the beat.<sup>25</sup>

The hidden yet felt separations in Couperin's musical phrases aid the listener in perceiving the melodic mood of each separate musical gesture. Without these slight breaks or imperceptible rests, the person of taste will sense that the performance fails to express the sentiment of the piece. Watteau achieves this same intake of visual breath as he inserts brief areas of respite and contemplation into his images. In *L'Amour paisible* (fig. 75), Watteau's remote, purple hills and scumbled golden clouds predict a glowing sunset while causing the viewer to pause and take in the landscape that supports the figures in the foreground. Similar to Couperin's imperceptible pauses, visual passages in the painting between near and far, closeness and distance, elicit minute stillnesses that make themselves known without altering the timbre of the scene. Each couple occupies its own self-contained specific moment of desire separated by a visual lacuna from the others. In *Le prélude au concert* (fig. 3) the 'little silence' is the indication of something different that will soon come in the form of a group performance. The visual, contemplative gap that Watteau places at the center between the musician and his companions separates silence from the incipient melody in his painting *The Music Lesson*. In *Iris (La Danse)*, the spaces between the note and the girl, between the woods and the open field, contain the imperceptible melodic pause between signal and response.

Ultimately, execution or touch – be it Couperin's fingers or Watteau's brush – have much in common in their expressive objectives. Watteau's biographers wrote that “sa

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<sup>25</sup> Couperin, *L'art De Toucher Le Clavecin* 22.

*touche était fine et légère.*”<sup>26</sup> Writers on Couperin cite the composer’s use of inflecting adverbs in his compositions that describe the style of play in such terms as ‘*affectueusement*’, ‘*très légèrement*’ and ‘*voluptueusement*’.<sup>27</sup> This same lightness of touch and subtlety in playing the keyboard was in Couperin’s list of goals in his *L’Art de toucher*. He wrote, “Sweetness of touch depends on...holding the fingers as closely as possible to the keys [and] beautiful playing depends...on suppleness and a great freedom of the fingers.”<sup>28</sup> This is also a description of the technique of Watteau whose carefully applied fluid brushstrokes possess an agility that mimics the movement of the artist’s hands. Watteau employs generous, sweeping marks to depict cloudy northern skies; he combines flowing passages with brief strokes of thick paint that depict fabric contours as they reflect light. In *The Music Lesson*, the artist’s sweetness of touch is, like Couperin’s, often dependent on holding the hand and brush close to the canvas surface. The artist achieves delicacy in passages such as her rose satin sleeve and the highlights that describe the curve of her arm. The gauze-like texture of her white silk gown is the result of a combination of carefully layered glazes and thickly applied, shimmering short strokes.

The artist’s vigilant and candid marks appear in his lively impasto that depicts the bright white collar and cuffs of his *Mezzetin*. To render the reflection of light on the muscled legs of *Mezzetin*, Watteau builds up transparent passages of medium gray ‘*très légèrement*’. ‘*Voluptueusement*’, he models his warm ochres and light grays up to a shimmering white. Smooth, porcelain-like glazing illuminates the ivory skin of *Iris*. She is as fresh as a day after rain. Her gown is a series of greens and soft oranges that meet in a small waist and flow into a long, full skirt. The artist’s touch portrays the intricate

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<sup>26</sup> Caylus, *Vies D'artistes Du Xviii Siècle. Discours Sur La Peinture Et La Sculpture* 15.

<sup>27</sup> Dart, "On Couperin's Harpsichord Music," 593.

<sup>28</sup> Couperin, *L'art De Toucher Le Clavecin* 31.

embroidery of her dress with a small, loaded round brush that delights in tracing the designs with varied pressure as they meet the light. These methods of melodic line, imperceptible pausing and lambency of touch have much in common with the effortless facility required of the musician Couperin and the painter Watteau, two artists of the same period who share expressive sensibilities.

The musical style of Couperin had much in common with *honnête* principles. Despite the fact that he wrote music for the Sun King, Couperin was inclined to diminish and underplay the “pomp and circumstance” of the royal court.<sup>29</sup> In other words, as an *honnête homme*, he avoided affectation and pretense. In his *L'art de toucher le clavecin*, Couperin instructs the reader to « former son jeu sur le bon goût d'aujourd'hui ». <sup>30</sup> He encourages his students to base their method of play on the dictates of modern good taste. While Couperin was concerned with incorporating Italian styles into musical performance, he acknowledged, “the proper length for an *appoggiatura* has an inherent flexibility based on context and governed by the performer’s good taste.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, French *bon goût* was the overriding sensibility in matters of affective musical expression, even when using Italianate *sprezzatura*. Thurston Dart writes that in Couperin’s music it is difficult to judge the length of notes because they depended on the individual player’s understanding of the music.<sup>32</sup> In Couperin’s time, the *honnête homme*, as the paradigm of *le bon goût*, applied his taste directly to judiciously tempered melodic articulation.<sup>33</sup> Couperin insisted

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<sup>29</sup> Mellers, "If Music Be the Food of Love.," 68.

<sup>30</sup> Couperin, *L'art De Toucher Le Clavecin* 70.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>32</sup> Dart, "On Couperin's Harpsichord Music," 594. It is very difficult to give general rules on the equality or inequality of notes, for it depends on the gout of the pieces.

<sup>33</sup> Fader, "The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 39.



that the composer was the final arbiter of good taste whose objectives should be respected and sensitively met: “Good taste [consists of] expressing with strength and delicacy, the intention of the composer.”<sup>34</sup> Mellers sees Couperin’s *honnête* restraint as a desire for a world that is just beyond reach, an elusively decorous fantasy like the scenes painted by the Watteau. Emotion and reason can coexist after all – and, in the music of Couperin and the art of Watteau it is not a question of reason vs. emotion or line vs. color being superseded, but rather of each concept being united and renewed in the light of an early modern world. In their descriptions of the performative shapes of social connectness, Couperin and Watteau lend musical and visual texture to the notions of *honnêteté*.

### ***Honnêteté and Music***

A further quality Caylus ascribed to Watteau was that his artistic interests extended to music as well as painting. He writes that Watteau himself possessed a heightened sensibility for judging music: « *Il avait de la finesse et même de la délicatesse pour juger de la musique et tous les ouvrages d’esprit.* »<sup>35</sup> The artist possessed flair and delicacy in measuring and understanding music and all works that affect the spirit. Thus, knowledge of music and use of its sympathetic shadings in his art place him within the company of the enlightened and musically conversant elite as prescribed by Castiglione and Faret.<sup>36</sup> Not only was Watteau intimately acquainted with music and its various instruments, but he also counted musicians as close friends. Along with this, he comported himself with sufficient grace and poise to operate within the elevated *mondain* groups of an educated society conversant in all the arts. The manner of the artist and what he strove to achieve are in

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<sup>34</sup> Couperin, *L’art De Toucher Le Clavecin* 23.

<sup>35</sup> Caylus, *Vies D’artistes Du Xviii Siècle. Discours Sur La Peinture Et La Sculpture* 12.

<sup>36</sup> Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier: The Singleton Translation. An Authoritative Text Criticism* 57. Music is not only an ornament but a necessity to the courtier.

keeping with the eighteenth-century enlightened social and artistic requirements of an *honnête homme*.

Describing music as an important element for the gentleman, Nicolas Faret, (1600-1646), a statesman, man of letters and member of the French Academy, wrote that the *honnête homme* « ait appris la sphere superieure et inferieure; et rendu son oreille capable de juger de la delicatesse des tons de musique. »<sup>37</sup> He must be able to discern between the elevated and the base and be able to distinguish between the nuanced delicate tones of music. Elegance was, to Faret, a sense of suppleness or flexibility, much like the musical lines of François Couperin. It was characterized by a pliable and yielding generosity and a talent for adjustment and modification as different needs presented themselves.<sup>38</sup> This was important as well to the tone of voice used in expressing one's ideas and conversing with others. One must guard against having a rude or harsh tone of voice; it should not be too weak or too loud. It should be clean, clear and distinct – the sort that can penetrate the soul directly without any resistance, much like a simple melody.<sup>39</sup> Not only did musical discernment enable Watteau to harmonically inflect his works, it also placed him on an

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<sup>37</sup> Faret, *L'honneste Homme Ou L'art De Plaire a La Court* 26.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 133-4. "*L'une des plus importantes et des plus universelles maxims que l'on doit suivre en ce commerce, est de moderer ses passions, et celles sur tout qui s'eschauffent le plus ordinairement dans la conversation, comme la colere, l'emulation, l'intemperance au discours, la vanité à tascher de paroistre par dessus les autres : Et en suit de celles-cy, l'indiscretion, l'opiniastreté, l'aigreur, le despit, l'impatience, la precipitation, et mille autres defauts, qui comme de sales ruisseaux coulent de ces vilaines sources... De La Souplesse et Moderation D'Esprit: Un esprit modéré, et qui ne se laisse point emporter legerement, en tous les desseins qu'il aura, soit pour affaires, soit pour plaire, sçaura prendre son temps, presser et differer à propos, se ployer et s'accomoder aux occasions, en sorte que rien de ce qui le choquera ne le puisse blesser. S'il veut, et si la generosité n'y est point offensée, il sçaura feindre, il sçaura desquiser; et lors qu'un expedient viendra à luy manquer, il se trouvera tousjours d'un esprit assez tranquille et assez ouvert, pour en inventer mille autres, capables de terminer ce qu'il poursuit.*"

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 185. "*Du Ton De La Voix: Mais afin de vaincre deux sens tout à la fois, et d'assiéger également les esprits par les yeux et par les oreilles, il faut prendre garde fort exactement que le ton de la voix n'ayt rien ny de rude, ny d'aigre, ny de trop éclatant, ny de trop foible: Au contraire, qu'il soit doux, clair, distinct, plein et net, en sorte qu'il penetre facilement jusques dans l'âme sans trouver aucune resistance à l'entrée.*"

equal artistic and social footing with *les honnête gens*.

Historically, Castiglione had added the sensations of music to his discourse on the courtier:

Plato and Aristotle wish[ed] a man who is well constituted to be a musician; and with innumerable reasons they show that music's power over us is very great; and ... that music must of necessity be learned from childhood, not so much for the sake of that outward melody which is heard, but because of the power it has to induce a good new habit of mind and an inclination to virtue, rendering the soul more capable of happiness, just as corporal exercise makes the body more robust; that not only is music not harmful to the pursuits of peace and of war, but greatly to their advantage... Do not wish to deprive our Courtier of music, which not only makes gentle the soul of man, but often tames wild beasts; and he who does not take pleasure in it can be sure that his spirit lacks harmony among its parts.<sup>40</sup>

Music is powerful not only for its pleasant melodies, but also because it causes virtuous habits and instructs the human soul. It engenders its own harmony both in the human body and the spirit while it enhances balance and strength in times of peace and in war. The influence of Castiglione's Book of the Courtier advanced the status of music in the life of the educated classes throughout Europe.<sup>41</sup> Castiglione continued:

Gentlemen, you must know that I am not satisfied with our Courtier unless he be also a musician, and unless, besides understanding and being able to read music, he can play various instruments. For, if we rightly consider, no rest from toil and no medicine for ailing spirits can be found more decorous or praiseworthy in time of leisure than this; and especially in courts where, besides the release from vexations which music gives to all, many things are done to please the ladies, whose tender and delicate spirits are readily penetrated with harmony and filled with sweetness. Hence, it is no wonder that in both ancient and modern times they have always been particularly fond of musicians, finding music a most welcome food for the spirit... [I remind you] how greatly music was always celebrated by the ancients and held to be a sacred thing; and how it was the opinion of very wise philosophers that the world is made up of music, that the heavens in their motion make harmony, and that even the human soul was formed on the same principle, and is therefore awakened and has its virtues brought to life,

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<sup>40</sup> Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier: The Singleton Translation. An Authoritative Text Criticism* 56.

<sup>41</sup> Haar, *The Courtier as Musician: Castiglione's View of the Science and Art of Music* 176.

as it were, through music.<sup>42</sup>

Music provides the most pleasurable release from tension and troubles; it gives sweet release to all and appeals to the tender sensibilities of ladies. Most importantly, the great philosophers knew, in their ancient wisdom, that music was a source of bodily accordance and spiritual virtue. Here, Castiglione endows music with a power over life and human emotion, a power he must have felt as an amateur musician himself.<sup>43</sup> He stresses the emotive powers of music and its physical and spiritual ties to health and harmony. The author gives audible form to the nuanced, ineffable qualities of balance and beauty while lending them elusive and mysterious tonal shadings in musical form. Castiglione's courtier must be adept in reading music and flexible enough to be able to play more than one musical instrument. So, too, does Watteau follow Castiglione's canon that musical knowledge should extend to a variety of instruments. Watteau's numerous drawing studies of oboes, guitars, flutes and violins, as examined in chapter one, bear this out.

Eventually, in the seventeenth century, musical cadence took on a distinctly nationalistic tone when it was associated with the values of French *honnêteté*. The French saw their style of music as poetic, measured and refined. As such, it was based on *politesse* and a gracefully controlled performance, seminal *honnête* attributes. French music of high quality did not overuse embellishments or *agréments* just as the *honnête homme* avoided patent affectation at all costs. As music historians have observed, this notion became more prominent as the ornamental Italian musical styles gradually spread to France.<sup>44</sup> Just as

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<sup>42</sup> Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier: The Singleton Translation. An Authoritative Text Criticism* 55.

<sup>43</sup> Haar, *The Courtier as Musician: Castiglione's View of the Science and Art of Music* 173. "The appearance of the cultivated amateur on the musical scene in the early cinquecento is an important landmark in the history of music, and Castiglione seems to have been its first chronicler."

<sup>44</sup> Norman, "The *Agréments* - Méré, Morality, and Music," 557.

Faret's *L'Honneste homme* adapted Castiglione's ideas to a French courtly context, French music also reconciled Italian principles and courtly aesthetics with its own ideas of musical refinement. Applied to the amateur musician in salon drawing rooms, these standards avoided any outward show of effort while maintaining an easy and a relaxed composure. A manner of singing, termed '*politesse du chant*' seamlessly fit together musical skill and *bienséance*. It combined both French and Italian styles of careful pronunciation and the use of ornament only to support the text. Anything too complex would draw undue attention to the performer and away from the melodic meaning of a piece; this was especially significant in connection with amateur music making.

The first and most important requirement of musical performance was to avoid any affectation.<sup>45</sup> Castiglione wrote that women especially should display a certain timidity in musical presentations, avoiding, even more than men, any bravado associated with professionals.<sup>46</sup> Good music, therefore, was pure enough to allow a natural and precise performance by noble amateurs without associating them with the activities of hired professional entertainers. Selecting the right time to perform was also critical. Coupled with this was a modest air and deference; the singer or musician only performed when asked and only then in congenial company. Performing too readily, without urging, was transparently self-serving and made the courtier appear to be a performer paid by the hour.<sup>47</sup> Again, Castiglione:

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<sup>45</sup> Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier: The Singleton Translation. An Authoritative Text Criticism* 72.

<sup>46</sup> Haar, *The Courtier as Musician: Castiglione's View of the Science and Art of Music* 177.

<sup>47</sup> Fader, "The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and *Politesse* in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 24-5. "The acclaimed singer and teacher, Pierre de Nyert (1597-1682) was first and foremost an honnête homme who combined...delicate taste and a *politesse du chant* which he refined through emulation of mondain models at court. During the middle years of the 17th century, Nyert was highly influential and widely acclaimed as the ideal of the honnête homme... and frequently cited as a model for others to imitate."

As to the time for engaging in music, I think that must be whenever one finds himself in a familiar and cherished company where there are no pressing concerns; it is especially appropriate where ladies are present, because their aspect touches the souls of the listeners with sweetness, makes them more receptive of the suavity of the music, and arouses the spirits of the musicians as well.<sup>48</sup>

One should only play for friends in settings and situations that are tranquil and pleasant. The presence of ladies will add a sweet sensibility to the occasion that enhances sensitive perception of the music and raises the mood of the performers. Too, one must pay attention to the time of day and suit one's playing accordingly. Important as well is the age of the musician; he should only play amorous songs if he is youthful himself.<sup>49</sup> The young guitarist in *La Perspective* conforms to these canons as he plays in the glow of late afternoon. Like all of Watteau's guitarists, the musician in *Leçon d'Amour* (fig. 51) is also of a suitable age to engage in matters of love.

The French musical values expressed in the art of Watteau display aspects of *honnêteté* that require technique or effort to be concealed behind an effortless, pleasing and melodic aura.<sup>50</sup> Watteau's musicians do not impose themselves and they only play in the

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<sup>48</sup> Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier: The Singleton Translation. An Authoritative Text Criticism* 77.

<sup>49</sup> Haar, *The Courtier as Musician: Castiglione's View of the Science and Art of Music* 170-6. "The discreet courtier will choose the right time to perform, at the bidding of a company of friends and equals and especially in the presence of women. He will attend not only to the time of day but also to his time of life; music making, so often the accompaniment of amorous poetry is suitable only to the young."

<sup>50</sup>Fader, "The Honnête Homme as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 32. Author cites: Charles de Marguetel de Saint Denis de Saint-Evremond, "*Les Opera. Comedie*," from *Oeuvres en prose*, ed. Rene Ternois (Paris: Didier, 1966), 3:145-6: "The Italians have a false, or at least outrageous expression, because they do not accurately understand the nature or degree of the passions. They break out laughing instead of singing when they express some joyful sentiment; if they want to sigh, one hears sobs that are violently formed in the throat rather than sighs that escape secretly from the passion of an amorous heart; from a painful reflection they make the strongest exclamations; tears of absence are funeral lamentations; the sad becomes the gloomy in their mouths; they cry out instead of complaining in sadness, and sometimes they express the languor of the passion as a weakness of nature. Perhaps there is some change today in their manner of singing, and they have profited by experience of our propriety of polite execution, just as we have taken advantage of theirs for the beauties of a greater and more daring composition."

congenial company of friends when it is a discreet accompaniment to genial amusements. The playing of the guitarist in *L'amour paisible* (fig. 75) is an understated enhancement to the small gathering. The musician in *Récréation galante* (fig. 5) sits unobtrusively on a low wall and quietly consults the woman next to him who holds a music book. The transverse flute player, barely visible in the shadows of *Assemblée dans un parc*, c.1717 (fig. 89) is a distant echo of the bucolic surroundings.<sup>51</sup> In *La perspective* (fig. 1) the musician appears to respond to the young woman who leans in to listen more closely. The guitar player at lower left in *Les plaisirs du bal* (fig. 35) sits on the ground, instrument on lap, in the act of speaking to a lady. He is available and will play when asked but, unlike the professional musicians at far right who have been hired to accompany the ball, he is there for his own amateur pleasure and to share it with others if requested.

### **Watteau's *Honnête* Inner Circle**

An engraving by N.-H. Tardieu (1674-1749) believed to be after a painting by Watteau is a self-portrait of the artist with the collector, Jean de Jullienne (1786-1766) published by the collector as a frontispiece to a collection of prints after the drawings of Watteau (fig. 90)<sup>52</sup> The print is a pictorial example of how *honnêteté* intersects with music and art during this era in French cultural history. Here, posed in a shady wood, the artist and collector share an artistic moment, Watteau with his brush, canvas and palette, and Jullienne with his *viola da gamba*. Jean de Jullienne, in his position as art dealer, friend and amateur musician, becomes equal to the gifted painter as a *mondain* gentleman educated in the arts. Jullienne's familiarity with music and his role as an amateur viola player is a courtly, *honnête* activity. He is an embodiment of the teachings of Nicolas Faret who wrote:

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<sup>51</sup> The Louvre, Paris.

<sup>52</sup> *Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris.

*Je veux encore, s'il se peut, qu'il sçache joüer du luth et de la guiterre, puis que nos maistres et nos maistresses s'y plaisent, qu'il entende la chasse, et qu'il soit adroit à la danse, à la paulme, à la lutte, à sauter, à nager, à tirer juste, et à tous ces autres passe-temps, qui ne sont pas si simplement honnestes.*<sup>53</sup>

Just as the noble gentleman learns to hunt, fight and fence, so he should learn to play the lute or guitar to please those in his social circle. Concepts of noble demeanor in France had traditionally been based on matters of the hunt, success in battle, bravery and noble birth. Maurice Magendie (1884-1944), historian and chronicler of French manners, notes that in previous centuries the majority of the French nobility received little formal education; they did not engage in any exchange of intricate ideas or complex concepts.<sup>54</sup> Thus, in the changing times of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, elite, noble status required a refashioning in terms of courtly behavior that included knowledge of art and music.

In the engraving, Julienne and Watteau are embodiments of the new noble, the *honnête homme*. In addition to being an educated art collector and connoisseur, Julienne presents himself as a musician, poised and relaxed with his viola. Both men, Julienne and Watteau, play out the notions of writers like Castiglione and Faret on the artistic abilities of courtly *honnête gens* in their mutual sharing of painting and music.<sup>55</sup> Faret, secretary to the king, poet and a writer on the subject of *honnêteté*, linked painting and music inextricably, just as the picture of Watteau and Julienne visually implies: « *La Peinture et la Musique*

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<sup>53</sup> Faret, *L'honneste Homme Ou L'art De Plaire a La Court* 16.

<sup>54</sup> Magendie, *La Politesse Mondaine Et Les Théories De L'honnété, En France, Au Xviiè Siècle, De 1600 À 1660* I, 61. "Pendant longtemps, la masse des nobles demeurera sans instruction; ils peuvent bien parler de la chasse, de la guerre, des chevaux, sujets où dominent des faits que l'on raconte; ils sont peu aptes à la discussion des idées."

<sup>55</sup> Fader, "The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 21.



*luy sont si inseparablement attachées, que l'un passé pour une Poësie muette, et l'autre pour l'ame de la Poësie.* »<sup>56</sup> Their close connection is reaffirmed by his assertion that painting is a silent form of poetry and music is the very soul of poetry.

Together, both men invoke the image of the *honnête homme* in their association with the refined arts of painting and music and in their shared friendship that elevates the status of both men. The secluded wooded setting resembles the intimate interior space of a private salon. The foliage, lush and tapestry-like, parts to reveal female company in the form of a nude statue that demurely turns away from the two men. The presence of the sculpture is a frequent visual trope of the artist; it is also an allusion to the feminine sensibilities so important to the *honnête homme*. While posed at slight angles, Watteau and Jullienne gaze openly at the viewer directly as embodiments of the *honnête homme*. As good friends, they demonstrate the idea of *honnête* amiability achieved by their sharing of pleasurable artistic pursuits. The cover caption below the image reads:

*Assis, au près de toy, sous ces charmans Ombrages,  
Du temps, mon cher Watteau, je crains peu les outrages,  
Trop heureux! si les Traits d'un fidelle Burin,  
En multipliant les Ouvrages,  
Instruisent Unïvers des sinceres hommages  
Que je rends à ton Art divin!*

Julienne, in this dedication to Watteau, alludes to his close friendship with the artist – ‘*assis au près de toy*’ – and the pleasant shaded surroundings ‘*charmans Ombrages*’ as their own private outdoor salon. Their exclusive location is, in Stanton’s words, part of the code of *honnêteté*:

The notion of secret, ritual activities carried on within a secluded space

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<sup>56</sup> Faret, *L'honneste Homme Ou L'art De Plaire a La Court* 68.

underlies not only the spirit of specific seventeenth-century circles, but the corpus of *honnêteté* itself. The numerous treatises framed as conversations imply a specially reserved, self-contained locus endowed with such reality that its shape requires no concrete description.<sup>57</sup>

Private activities in which only the privileged few could participate were integral parts of *honnête* conduct. Yet, 'en multipliant les Ouvrages', Julienne, through his faithful engravings desires to share the genius of Watteau's 'Art divin' with the world. Thus, by praising Watteau as a companion and an artist, his verse is paradigmatic of the codes of *honnêteté* while still retaining the elite status of a privileged friendship.

Patrons, dealers and collectors who were influential in Watteau's professional, social and artistic life included Jean de Julienne who had important family connections and who may have known of Watteau through Claude Audran III (1658-1734).<sup>58</sup> Watteau's close association with the prominent French financier Crozat has been mentioned earlier. Crozat, as a *mondain* connoisseur, was neither an ignorant nobleman nor an excessively educated academic. He balanced informed judgment with a love of the arts and, as such, he was a true *honnête homme*.<sup>59</sup> The painter and important art theorist and contributor to aesthetic theory Roger de Piles (1635-1709) was a frequent guest of Crozat as were many visiting Venetian artists and musicians. Thomas Crow documents that some of Crozat's boarders included the famous academician and student of LeBrun, Charles de la Fosse (1636-1716), who supported Watteau's reception into the Academy, and his niece, the singer Mlle d'Argenon who appears in Watteau's drawing of the three singers. Jean de

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<sup>57</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 83.

<sup>58</sup> A leading decorative painter, and curator at the Luxembourg Palace, Paris with whom Watteau worked as an assistant.

<sup>59</sup> Fader, "The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 40.

Jullienne and Antoine Coypel (1661-1722), First Painter to the duc d'Orléans and the abbé du Bos attended these social evenings as well as the Comte de Caylus who enjoyed the amateur music, which included both French and Italian musical compositions and performers.<sup>60</sup> A leading eighteenth-century connoisseur P. J. Mariette (1694-1774) would write of these gatherings, "I owe what little knowledge I have acquired to the works of the great masters that we examined there and equally to the conversation of the noble persons who made up the company."<sup>61</sup> Mariette summarizes not only the artistic education he received at the Crozat residence but also the exclusive and beneficial social exchanges that occurred.

Crow calls these sessions the 'shadow academy' where a passionate and privileged enterprise sustained the arts by taking on many of the French Academy's official duties.<sup>62</sup> Crozat's shadow Academy acted as an unofficial arbiter between the dictates of the Academy and the influence of Italian sensibilities on French taste. As the new urban aristocracy expanded, it was inspired by the vigorous interest of *mondains* in artistic and musical styles imported from Italy. Amateurs and professionals mixed within his circle blurring the boundaries of artist and connoisseur while profiting from creative and social exposure. Because Venetians were particularly favored there, the colorism and

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<sup>60</sup> Maurice Barthélemy, "Le Comte De Caylus Et La Musique," *Revue belge de Musicologie / Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Muziekwetenschap* 44 (1990): 7. "À Paris, Caylus participe à la vie mondaine de la capitale. Il fréquente l'hôtel des financiers Crozat, rue de Richelieu. Il commence à graver leur collection de dessins qui est considérable. Il y rencontre des artistes que les Crozat hébergent, don't Watteau et La Fosse, mais surtout, il participe à l'élaboration des concerts dits des Mélophilètes dont l'entrée est gratuite et que attirent l'élite des mélomanes. Le Régent lui-même les fréquente régulièrement. D'après l'inventaire de la bibliothèque musicale des Crozat qui vient d'être découvert, on s'aperçoit que les concerts des Mélophilètes exploitaient le répertoire le plus récent de la musique française, et, surtout, de l'italienne."

<sup>61</sup> Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* 40. Author cites: P. J. Mariette, *Description sommaire des dessins des grands maitres d'Italie, des Pays-Bas et de France au cabinet de feu M. Crozat*, Paris, 1741, ix.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

expressiveness advanced by academicians such as LeBrun were encouraged. So, too, Watteau, in addition to making valuable contacts with the elite *honnête homme* of his era, perfected his painterly ideals of delicate and vibrant *sensibilité*.<sup>63</sup> Upon his death, Watteau left several drawings to Crozat “for all the kind assistance he had given him.”<sup>64</sup>

The shadow Academy was a new *chamber bleue*, the term coming from the intimate social gatherings at the salon of Madame de Rambouillet (1607-1665) in the early- to mid-seventeenth century, a prototype for the location of the *honnête homme* involved in artful leisure. In contrast with the court, these were elite groups that chose their own members through their artistic merit, wit, education and *honnêteté*. Chevalier de Méré himself was a regular in these private salons, which would eventually evolve into a new exclusive society directed inward toward reclusive and discerning leisure.<sup>65</sup> Méré cites musical talent as an admirable attribute to bring to these gatherings, « *Il sera bon d’observer que plus on a de talent, et de connoissance, plus on trouve d’occasions de se rendre agréable...ainsi la peinture, La Musique, la Poësie.* »<sup>66</sup> In these private gatherings one was able to experience the talent, knowledge and sociability associated with the arts of painting, music and poetry.

Crozat’s shadow Academy was the newest form of private education and pleasure where society’s elite could educate themselves through direct exposure to the sensibilities of distinguished artists and musicians – and Watteau was a willing and notable habitué, as witnessed in his drawing of the singers at a gathering there (fig. 36). He, along with the distinguished guests, understood Castiglione’s dictum on the courtly gentleman:

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 44.

<sup>64</sup> Roland Michel and Watteau, *Watteau: An Artist of the Eighteenth Century* 66.

<sup>65</sup> Plax, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth-Century France* 114.

<sup>66</sup> Chevalier de Méré, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Charles-H. Boudhors, 3 vols. (Paris: Éditions Fernand Roches, 1930) II, 40.

He who associates with the ignorant or the wicked is held to be ignorant or wicked; and, on the contrary, he who associates with the good, the wise, and the discreet is taken to be such himself. For it seems that everything naturally and readily joins with its like.<sup>67</sup>

In other words, you are only as good as the company you keep. Not only will associating with eminent individuals enhance your standing but your own good character also contributes to the esteem of the group you enlist. The ideals of *honnêteté* resided in these small intimate spaces of the Paris salon, also called “*le cabinet, le réduit, la ruelle or l’alcove.*” They were signifiers for private and *mondain* social exchanges in which a small select group could enjoy each other’s company.<sup>68</sup>

Watteau’s works include small social gatherings like those in the hôtels of the elite. They take place, however, not in private interior rooms but out-of-doors in bucolic salons, secluded clearings and arboresque enclosures. Privileged guests enjoy pleasurable musical activities in seclusion much in the spirit of the *ruelles*. They are self-contained, harmonized performances of delight, discretion and decorum. These secluded activities embody the substance and spirit of the codes of *honnêteté* acted within spaces that are amorphous and fluid, much like the shifting foliage that surrounds them. Stanton writes of the amateur music making that took place in these bucolic, out-of-doors salons:

In this ambience, their minds were indeed well disposed to receive inspiration from Apollo...the whole group felt it...our heroes and heroines concentrated on madrigals; never have so many been composed nor so quickly. Hardly had one person finished declaiming a madrigal than her neighbor felt another teeming in his head. In one place, someone recited four verses; in another someone else wrote twelve. Everything was done gaily and without effort.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier: The Singleton Translation. An Authoritative Text Criticism* 91.

<sup>68</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 81.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 82. Author cites: Conrart, Valentin. *La Journée des madrigaux; la Gazette de Tendre (avec la carte de Tendre) et du carnaval de précieuses*. Paris, 1896, 17-18.

Here, she illustrates the Arcadian suggestiveness of the pastoral settings. Inspired by the beauty of nature, the participants liken themselves to gods and heroes as excitement builds over each successive musical revelation. In aristocratic gatherings of the period, the French *chanson*, like its Italian counterpart, the madrigal, was often characterized by a self-conscious wit and cleverness in dealing with amorous subject matters. This is evident in *Récréation galante* (fig. 5) where the figures take a particular joy in the sharing of music in the company of friends along with a sculpted group of playful gods. Here, the guitarist demonstrates a graceful poise that reflects the cultivation of good taste wrapped in cheerful insouciance.<sup>70</sup> These gatherings, painted by Watteau and experienced in a select circle, cohered through the bonds of exclusive friendships founded on the tenets of *honnêteté*.

What little we know of Antoine Watteau comes from biographies by contemporaries such as the antiquarian and art critic Caylus, and comments by contemporaries and friends such as the art dealer Edme-François Gersaint (1694-1750). The elite social world that Watteau grew to inhabit was comprised of nobles, prominent artists, musicians and connoisseurs. A natural alliance between a cultured aristocracy and the arts was inevitable as society moved into the urban milieu of Paris away from the centralized royal court. Like the artistic forerunners he admired and the contemporaries he counted as friends, Watteau recognized the emergence of a new, socially connected interest in painting and music. Inspired by the art of Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)<sup>71</sup> and the theories of de Piles, he moved in elevated circles very distant from his humble past. His Parisian friends and sponsors such as Caylus, Jullienne and the musician Jean-Féry Rebel must have stirred in

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<sup>70</sup> Roger Freitas, "Singing and Playing: The Italian Cantata and the Rage for Wit," *Music & Letters* 82, no. 4 (2001): 542.

<sup>71</sup> Whose art Watteau saw first hand at the Luxembourg Palace.

him an aspiration to become, if only from his artwork alone, an *honnête homme* in meaning and substance.<sup>72</sup> Watteau could well have heeded the advice of his Renaissance predecessor, Castiglione: “The favor or grace desired by the courtier must come as well from ‘*cavaliere e donna*,’ that is, from the other members of the class to which the courtier belongs.”<sup>73</sup> By coming into collective contact with the artistically distinguished and socially prominent, perhaps Watteau, through education and exposure, effectively became one of them.

An early model for the *honnête homme* as a member of an affably elite social group was the essayist of the French Renaissance, Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1533-1592) whose *Essais* were regarded as the ultimate guide for *honnêtes gens*; their author was the paradigmatic master of all that is gallant and gracious.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, it was his writings that set the stage for the seventeenth-century *honnête homme*. His ideas of a privileged society were meant to intensify the beauty of life and to promote graceful personal deportment in gesture and conversation. As such, it was necessary to restrict one’s social contacts to those who practiced this form of graceful nobility.<sup>75</sup> Montaigne wrote:

The men whose company and intimacy I seek are those who are called *honnêtes et habiles hommes*; the idea of these men makes the others distasteful to me. It is, rightly speaking, the rarest of human forms, and a form that is chiefly due to nature.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature, and Talk in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* 170.

<sup>73</sup> Eduardo Saccone, *Grazia, Spezzatura, Affettazione in the Courtier*, ed. Robert W. Hanning and David Rosand, *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) 49.

<sup>74</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 21.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 25.

<sup>76</sup> Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2 vols. (Paris: 1958) III, 802.

Montaigne alludes to a special, private form of friendship based on exclusivity. The natural graces possessed by its members are inborn, rare and cannot be easily acquired. In an insightful reading of Gersaint's biography of Watteau, Julie Plax finds descriptive shadings and biographical conventions that serve to place both the author and his subject, through their close friendship, within the elite members of *honnêteté*. Gersaint himself exploits his role as a friend of Watteau and implies insider knowledge, raising his own standing as an intimate friend of the esteemed painter. He becomes the privileged agent between an aristocratic public and the noble art of painting. The information that Watteau's sign painting for Gersaint was a trifle, just "dashed off in a few mornings work" and that it was merely an exercise to keep his fingers limber, implies the *honnête homme*'s '*je ne sais quoi*', or effortless artistry.<sup>77</sup> The ability to transform, with artful ease, lower forms of popular culture into tasteful expressions was a part of the sign system associated with the cult of *honnêteté*. This biography illustrates the symbiotic relationships among collectors, connoisseurs, dealers and artists that advanced their positions as culturally informed and artistically gifted *honnête hommes*.

Watteau's portrayals of his friends as well as their pictures with his likeness provide a visual record of his nuanced artistic and social interconnections with many of the *honnêtes hommes* of the Crozat circle. Previously noted was the engraving of Watteau with the collector, Jullienne. The *Portrait of Jean de Jullienne* of c. 1722 by François de Troy (1645-1730) depicts his subject holding the self-portrait by Watteau as a measure of his intimate friendship with the artist (fig. 91).<sup>78</sup> A portrait of Jean-Féry Rebel (fig. 92)

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<sup>77</sup> Julie Plax, "Gersaint's Biography of Antoine Watteau: Reading between and Beyond the Lines," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25, no. 4 (1992): 555.

<sup>78</sup> Musée des Beaux Arts, Valenciennes. Presumably Jullienne holds the authentic drawing by Watteau



principal harpsichordist to the king, by Watteau is signed, “*par Watteau, son ami.*” Watteau’s drawing of the three singers at the musical evening mentioned above, implies the social ease the artist must have felt in their presence. Nicolas Vleughels often posed for the artist as did the dealer Pierre Sirois (1665-1726).<sup>79</sup> The desire to include his friends as figures in his paintings, coupled with their willingness to appear in them, are visual testaments to the reciprocal distinction and recognition brought on by the relationships he enjoyed with these *honnête gens*. Contrary to simple business arrangements for mutual advancement, these images are proof of the warm relationships that existed between Watteau and those who collected and sold in his art.

Charles de Saint Denis (1613-1703), Lord of Saint-Evremond, Marshal of France, regarded solid friendship such as these as the perfect balance between passion and reason and it was also the ideal sensibility for the *honnêteté homme*. In exile, he yearned for tender communion with his fellow Frenchmen, which became a centerpiece of his writings, unearthed and published by Leonard Rosmarin. Rosmarin writes:

[For Evremond] friendship denote[d] a perfect harmony of purpose between reason and the heart... In friendship, reason no longer regulate[d] gingerly the flow of sentiment. It no longer eye[d] tenderness suspiciously as a potential enemy. Reason eliminate[d] the threat, which... erotic energy pose[d], and simultaneously bridge[d] the ironic gap it had created to preserve the being in the love relationship, simply by discovering for this energy a new direction in which it [could] be channeled. Instead of allowing the heart’s tender élans to go their unsublimated way, and to spend themselves eventually, reason gather[ed] them up into a force of concentrated intensity, and transform[ed] them into an enduring value.<sup>80</sup>

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himself, not the later version by Boucher done in 1727, five years later.

<sup>79</sup> Stephen Duffy, *The Wallace Collection*, ed. Esme West, trans. Martine Groult (London: Scala Publishers, Ltd., 2006) 140. Sirois and his family are the subjects of Watteau’s painting *In the Guise of Mezzetin*, c. 1716-18.

<sup>80</sup> Leonard A. Rosmarin, "The Unsublimated Libido: Saint-Evremond's Conception of Love," *The French Review* 46, no. 2 (1972): 269.

Friendship, in other words, is the perfect blending of reason and the heart and possesses great sustainability. Unlike passion, it does not dissipate with time; it gathers in depth and remains strong throughout time.

Watteau understood that warm friendship was the essence of *honnêteté* and group intimacy was a frequent subject in his paintings. Bathed in the gentle light of a scumbled sky, his six figures in *L'amour paisible* (fig. 75) form a chromatic chain that slowly unfurls, left to right, in a deliberate coil that replicates the curving hills and protective trees. Each figure's gaze flows in the same rightward direction – briefly arrested by the outward glance of the central musician – and comes to rest on the far woman at right who directs the flow back inward, containing the group with her gaze. The dog in the foreground, curled up in a nap, repeats the circled form of friendship. Here, Watteau gives pictorial form to the spiritual bonds of loving companionship enjoyed in the *bienséance* of nature. His *honnête homme* is, in some ways, an artful human synthesis of graceful, exterior pretense with an internal and honest desire for loyal friendship.<sup>81</sup>

The art of Antoine Watteau explores multivalent contemporary aspects of French *honnêteté*. The alert viewer finds embodiments, contexts and attitudes in his paintings that reflect *honnête* behavior. Moreover, the artist's personal conduct, while difficult to measure, appears to conform to some of these ideas, at least from a historical distance. In the scant biographical writings on Antoine Watteau, there are aspects of his character that appear to describe an *honnête homme*, as prescribed by the Chevalier de Méré, the foremost theorist on *honnêteté*. The era in which Antoine Watteau lived enabled one with talent and ambition to rise above his station and prove his worth through skill, particularly in commerce and in the arts. Yet, those very accomplishments had to be 'discovered' by an appreciative and

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<sup>81</sup> Norman, "The *Agréments* - Méré, Morality, and Music," 562.

educated audience. Artful skill or talent required an air of self-effacement in order to appear genuine. The gifted *honnête homme* had to enter the scene by the side door – unobserved at first, then eventually acknowledged and applauded for his gifts while he exhibited shy demurrals. He could even appear gracefully astonished at his public acclaim. It was also a time of rediscovery and appreciation of the simple pleasures of leisure pursued with grace, elegant manners, delicate sentiments and principles of refinement.<sup>82</sup>

Watteau did not flaunt his talents; they were readily apparent to others and needed no extravagant presentation, which would have been contrary to the codes of *honnêteté*. Modesty and nonchalance were imperative to Castiglione who instructed the courtier to “turn to music as to a pastime...let him appear to esteem but little this accomplishment of his, yet by performing it excellently well, make others esteem it highly.”<sup>83</sup> Music must be a pleasant diversion, not a profession. If one appears unconcerned and nonchalant in performance, the audience will appreciate it even more if it seems part of his very nature.

A drawing after a self-portrait of Watteau (fig. 93) provides some insight into the personal character of the artist as the exemplar of *honnête* modesty. Executed by François Boucher in 1727 it is a rare picture of Watteau and may present him in the manner in which he wished to be seen. It is a half-view self-portrait, which shows an unassuming young man glancing sideways, somewhat reluctantly, at the viewer. His *air de tête* is graceful; he leans slightly to his left in shy deference. His coat and waistcoat are open in an informal, unassuming presentation. There is little evidence of his artistic profession or any visual proclamation of his achievements. Instead, his left hand rests unceremoniously on a table

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<sup>82</sup> Faret, *L'honnête Homme Ou L'art De Plaire a La Court* 15. "Le XVIIe siècle français a été, par excellence, une époque de vie mondaine... On recherchait et on appréciait surtout l'aisance et la bonne grace des manières, la délicatesse des sentiments, la finesse des pensées, la facilité, la justesse et l'élégance des paroles ou du style."

<sup>83</sup> Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier: The Singleton Translation. An Authoritative Text Criticism* 76.

while his right hand, at the bottom edge of the picture, almost as an afterthought, holds a paintbrush. This is a man who painted few self-portraits; humility seems to be an integral part of his character. The Comte de Caylus wrote about Watteau after his death, « *Cette deference d'un homme supérieur est ce que j'ai cru ne devoir pas vous laisser ignorer.* »<sup>84</sup> He could not ignore writing down the great admiration he had for the man. The deep modesty of this artist who had such extraordinary ability made it necessary for Caylus to include it in the *abrège*, or summary, of his life. Watteau's self-effacement appears genuine; it is this very authenticity coupled with his lack of noble birth that makes him an embodiment of the new *honnête homme*:

*Antoine Watteau naquit à Valenciennes en 1684. Il était fils d'un couvreur. La naissance n'est considérable que yeux des philosophes et des artistes que par rapport aux secours qu'elle peut fournir à l'éducation; mais quand elle est de l'espèce de celle-ci, elle donne une preuve convaincante du génie et du con que la nature a fait.*<sup>85</sup>

Antoine Watteau rose to prominence in artistic and social circles in Paris despite his modest upbringing in the northern city of Valenciennes. Caylus states that his low birth is of no consequence in the “eyes of philosophers and artists except in so far as it may facilitate education, but when it is of this humble kind it affords a convincing proof of talent and genius bestowed by Nature.”<sup>86</sup> His talent is innate; his gifts and intentions are artistically genuine.

Consequently, Watteau's paintings are never monumental or historically grand; they are often small, delicately woven tantalizing forays into an imagined world of tempered

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<sup>84</sup> Caylus, *Vies D'artistes Du Xviiiè Siècle. Discours Sur La Peinture Et La Sculpture* 22.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>86</sup> Goncourt, *French Eighteenth-Century Painters: Watteau, Boucher, Chardin, La Tour, Greuze, Fragonard* 12.

delights. In agreement with the cult of *honnêteté*, Watteau's artistic talents exist to please others and not to draw attention to himself. The Chevalier de Méré wrote, "In order to become and be known as an *honnête homme*, the most important factor, in my view, is to discern in all things the best means of captivating others (*plaire*), and to be able to put them into practice."<sup>87</sup> Méré, in linking the idea of giving pleasure to the notion of gaining the fascination of others places the courtier or *honnête homme* in a role of subtle yet inescapable magnetism and power over his company. In Watteau's painting, *Les plaisirs du bal*, a young musician sits inconspicuously to the left on the ground away from the central action. He is artfully nonchalant as he awaits an invitation to play. This is an ideal milieu in which he can move and practice his artful craft; as a potential participant, he exhibits a graceful, informal manner seated off to the side. His modesty and casual grace are reminiscent of the *honnête* values of discretion and decorum. Aristocratic art making as a display of one's talents could only be acceptable if arrived at by indirect, inventive means. Through slight adjustments, the *honnête homme* could fit in anywhere while capturing the admiration of society. Any overt promotion of one's own self or achievements, or search for attention, was considered an affront to propriety.<sup>88</sup> In the words of Méré:

Those who speak, the more they seek attention, the less they receive it. This eagerness and desire to put oneself forward displeases the most indulgent, and if one has charm as a speaker, I see that by neither speaking loudly, nor by telling secrets in a low voice, as though there were some mystery, one is heard as much as one wants.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Méré, *Oeuvres Complètes* I, 55.

<sup>88</sup> Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature, and Talk in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* 157.

<sup>89</sup> Méré, *Oeuvres Complètes* v. III, 119. "Ceux qui parlent, plus ils veulent d'attention, moins en leur en donne: Cet empressement et ce desir de s produire, deplait aux plus indulgens, si l'on a de la grace a parler, je vois que sans prendre le ton si haut, ni sans dire de secret tout bas, comme un mystere, on est ecoute tant qu'on veut."

Self-aggrandizement, then, is an ineffectual method of gaining acclaim; a transparent desire and eagerness to put one's self forward diminishes personal esteem and social standing. Any method of speaking should be tempered with judgment and not be allowed to overwhelm the meaning or intent of the spoken word. Like many of the subjects of his paintings, the modesty and self-effacement of Watteau only enhanced the judgment by critics, connoisseurs and the French Academy who viewed him as a major artistic talent of the period.

Contemporaries viewed Watteau as a man of moderation and innate good taste. According to his associates, Watteau practiced the temperance and restraint required of an *honnête homme* in accordance with the prerequisites enumerated by the Chevalier de Méré in his treatise which stated, "If our passions try to turn us away from the dictates of *honnêteté*, we must restrain them severely."<sup>90</sup> Excess in any form was to be avoided by the *honnête homme*. The Comte de Caylus wrote that Watteau was noted for his self-control and temperance and that the artist himself was "*naturellement sobre... et incapable d'aucun excès*."<sup>91</sup> Moderation was instinctive and inherent to Watteau's disposition; far from indulging in any excess, he was totally incapable of it. Caylus also stated that the artist was a man of good taste: « *Ce galant homme avait donc un goût naturel.* »<sup>92</sup> Watteau was a polite gentleman who had the natural ability of intelligent discernment.

Saint-Evremond also associated good taste directly with the manner of the Romans, which he called « *le bon gout de l'antiquité.* »<sup>93</sup> Taste was a moral principle as well as an

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<sup>90</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 192. Stanton cites Mere, *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 88, vol. III.

<sup>91</sup> Caylus, *Vies D'artistes Du XVIIIe Siècle. Discours Sur La Peinture Et La Sculpture* 21.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 6.

<sup>93</sup> Denys Potts, *Saint-Evremond: A Voice from Exile, Legenda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 17.

aesthetic one. Furthermore, Anne Lefèvre (1654 –1720), better known during her lifetime as Madame Dacier, a French scholar, translated the classics and wrote on issues of ‘grand taste’ in the age of the classic Greek writers. To her, those who suffered from the false principles that spoil spirit and good judgment had no recourse; bad taste and ignorance cause an end to elevated morals and values, those sources of good taste such as politesse and good government.<sup>94</sup> It was the key to political harmony as well as an indicator of artistic refinement. A man of taste was an *honnête homme* who had gained his ability for good judgment from a life well lived, both in the pursuit of elevated pleasures and responsible service to a greater good. Watteau, in his choice of subject and manner of depiction, visually reinforces these ideas of taste as temperate behavior in *La proposition embarrassante*, c. 1716 (fig. 94).<sup>95</sup> Here, a couple prepares to dance while a woman at left plays the guitar and converses with a woman over her right shoulder. A youth reclines leisurely on the ground at left. Yet, the circumstances are enigmatic due to the moderate gestures of both the standing woman and her companion. Nicolas Faret, in writing of good taste, was adamant about the universal maxim of moderation in all things, especially passion, and to avoid such things as anger, vanity, self-importance and intemperance in any social discourse. If the young man in *La proposition* is indeed making an awkward proposal, it is not readily evident in his controlled gesture and restrained posture. She in turn reacts only slightly; his request has not been explicit enough to cause any intense reaction. Perhaps the

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<sup>94</sup> Mme. Dacier, *Causes Corruption Du Goust* (Paris: Rigaud, 1714) 9. "Si l' on souffre que de faux principes leur gastent l' esprit et le jugement, il n' y a plus de ressource; le mauvais goust et l' ignorance acheveront de prendre le dessus, et voilà les lettres entierement perduës; les lettres qui sont la source du bon goust, de la politesse et de tout bon gouvernement: voilà pourquoy Socrate vouloit qu' on s' attachast entierement à la jeunesse et qu' on en prist un soin particulier, pour préparer et pour former de bons sujets à la republique... Quand je lis les livres de des escrivains sacrez qui ont vescu avant le siecle d' Homere, je ne suis point estonnée du grand goust qui regne dans leurs escrits."

<sup>95</sup> The Hermitage, Leningrad.

melody of the guitar modulates her response.

A century later, the Goncourt brothers, upon rediscovering the art of Watteau, would deem him as a “man of innate good taste.”<sup>96</sup> Hence, according to both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics, Watteau’s unique personal and artistic gifts endowed him with *le bon goût*. Domna Stanton describes the alliance of good taste with *honnêteté* as a “conjunction of external conformity with inner, critical independence.”<sup>97</sup> She interprets the Chevalier de Méré in this way:

Whereas he associates inner conformity with the common, unenlightened mind, Méré ultimately ascribes the independence of the *honnête homme* not to some transcendental concept of universal reason, but to a private, intuitive sense of discrimination.<sup>98</sup>

In other words, Méré differentiates between the traditionally accepted, polite external behavior of society with the internal ability to judge wisely and independently. Music became an expressive tool for taste, effortless elegance and graceful artifice – in essence, conferring sophistication and social finesse on the musician and listener. Nowhere is this notion of graceful artifice given more visual and musical play than in Watteau’s *Fête vénitienne*. The portly older man at left is dressed in a costume from the Orient. Yet, he prepares to dance a minuet with a young lady accompanied by, of all things, a bagpipe. Its drone would hardly be appropriate for the measured steps of such a courtly dance. She wears the elegant fashion of the day. The tall trees in the clearing act as heavy drapery would in a private salon. The reclining statue exudes erotic suggestion in the flowing, fountain-like image. Yet, these strange juxtapositions are part of the natural surroundings,

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<sup>96</sup> Goncourt, *French Eighteenth-Century Painters: Watteau, Boucher, Chardin, La Tour, Greuze, Fragonard* 15.

<sup>97</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 73.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. Stanton cites: Méré, *Oeuvres complètes* (see above) v. II, p. 71.



just as the other figures in the group appear at ease in this theater-like, somewhat startling medley of images that create the ambiance. The scene portrays the *honnête homme* in his ability to differentiate himself from the norms of the *ancien régime* and embrace the musical pleasures offered by the theater and public fairs where colorful costumes and comical farce became sources for new entertainment. Here the *honnête homme* comes into direct contact with a new and revitalizing experience without damaging his *mondain* image. As Julie Plax points out, “the cult of *honnêteté* was transformed in the amateur parades into a cult of masquerade.”<sup>99</sup> These exclusive balls and galas tested the boundaries of class enabling each player to assume a new personality or take on a new role without revealing her/his own identity. Playing the ultimate trick or fooling the shrewdest observer was a supreme sign of status. Watteau recognized the visual resonance that could be given to the mixing of classes and their different forms of amusement and he extended visual cadences to melodic ones that captured the eye and ear. Watteau invites his viewer to share the amusement of his pairings: the fatuous old man with the young girl and the bagpipe with the minuet. *Fête vénitienne* is a social concurrence that delights and amuses both visual and musical sensibilities.

### ***Honnêteté and the Artful Self***

For Castiglione, the art of the courtier was *sprezzatura*, or nonchalance, in the art of the courtier. It was a subtle yet studied carelessness, a concealment of effort.<sup>100</sup> Accordingly, the art of Watteau possesses that same mixture of grace and flourish, a *sprezzatura* expressed in the sensitivity of his brush. It is present in the satin folds of the ladies’ gowns in *Le prelude au concert* (fig. 3), the delicate pink earlobe of the young woman in *Leçon de chant* (fig. 70) and the flowers strewn on the stage in *Comédiens*

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<sup>99</sup> Plax, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth-Century France* 126.

<sup>100</sup> Lynn M. Loudon, “Sprezzatura” in Raphael and Castiglione, *Art Journal* 28, no. 1 (1968): 44.

*italiens* (fig. 86). Edmond and Jules de Goncourt recognized this quality in Watteau one hundred-fifty years after he died naming the artist “the great poet of the eighteenth century.”<sup>101</sup> They included this description:

The grace of Watteau is grace itself. It is that indefinable touch that bestows upon women a charm, a coquetry, a beauty that is beyond mere physical beauty. It is that subtle thing that seems to be the smile of a contour, the soul of a form, the spiritual physiognomy of matter.<sup>102</sup>

The Goncourts, in their deliberate mixing of metaphors, convey the sensational crossovers that occur in the art of Watteau. The ineffable nuanced qualities of beauty and grace impart spiritual immersion to his images. Domna Stanton likens this notion of grace to *l'air* and its suggestion of buoyancy and immateriality. The fluid body has no boundaries or limits; it floats effortlessly and is “of flesh made spirit.”<sup>103</sup> And it is these same elusive qualities that intrigue us about both the man and his art. The Goncourts identify our need to know the artist in this way: “Let us look for him in his work: that figure with the eyeglass or that flute-player – it is Watteau. His eye rests negligently upon the entwined lovers, who [sic] he diverts with music.”<sup>104</sup> This quote positions Watteau as an outsider, an observer; yet, he is also a participant, a potential lover, a musician. It also recalls the comments by Thurston Dart on François Couperin who sensed, beneath his music, a courtly convention, a *sprezzatura* and an individual consciousness similar to the art of Watteau.<sup>105</sup> The artist’s

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<sup>101</sup> Goncourt, *French Eighteenth-Century Painters: Watteau, Boucher, Chardin, La Tour, Greuze, Fragonard* 1.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 125.

<sup>104</sup> Goncourt, *French Eighteenth-Century Painters: Watteau, Boucher, Chardin, La Tour, Greuze, Fragonard* 9.

<sup>105</sup> Dart, "On Couperin's Harpsichord Music," 237. "[There is a] combination of manners, a 'social' artificiality with a latently 'personal' emotional quality [that] creates an effect analogous to that of the

brush lingers languorously like the mood of his paintings; he allows the paint to pool and accumulate – then briskly moves on. His presence is detected in the light pressure of his brush and the fluidity of paint. There exists an intimate push-pull dynamic in his scenes. While the small scale of the figures effects a distance, it also draws the viewer in to look closer and listen for the murmur of a melody.

Were Watteau's frequent placements of outside figures in his scenes – be they friends or models – depictions of his own personal sentiments as a detached *lorgneur*? Did Watteau feel the same psychic distance implied in his paintings? In his own mind, was he an observer of these gatherings and not ever a true participant? As the figures glance sideways, away from the action or directly out at us, are they in essence statements of the artist's own self-reflective position? In *Réunion en plein air*, c.1716 (fig. 95) a lone figure poses, elegantly dressed in cloak and be-ribboned shoes at left, distant from the grouping at right.<sup>106</sup> He is an aloof *honnête homme*, a non-participant in the action. He stands apart, alone and considers the beauty of a nude statue also from a distance, appearing unmoved, emotionally disconnected. The gentleman to the far left in *Récréation galante* (fig. 5) is again decorously posed and garbed in silks but he is distinctly apart from the group's social dynamics. He stands at the far edge of the stage-like tableau, gazing out at the viewer. As such, he moves out of the picture plane into the consciousness of the viewer who, like him, is a mere observer. *Les champs élysées*, c. 1717 (fig. 96) presents us with another lone man, this time at the right and viewed from behind.<sup>107</sup> He stands, one hand on hip, dressed in silk with his cape draped over one shoulder and his hat perched jauntily on his head.

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painting of Watteau. Beneath the apparently passive acceptance of the courtly convention there is...a peculiarly intense apprehension of the loneliness of the individual consciousness."

<sup>106</sup> Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.

<sup>107</sup> Wallace Collection, London.

What is his relationship to the other figures in the scene? It seems tenuous at best. Again, he is the elegant *honnête homme* as isolated spectator. The ultimate *honnête homme* as reserved outsider or perceptive observer is present in Watteau's *Récréation italienne* (fig. 38). He stands at a distance, posed gracefully, legs crossed, chin in hand. The subject of his contemplation is unknowable and intriguing. Like the true *honnête homme*, he eludes solid clarification and unequivocal perception. Finally, *Assemblée dans un parc* (fig. 89) presents a lone figure, indistinct and far away. Is it the artist's own reference to himself? It is an intriguing theory, which adds to the aloofness of the artist as an *honnête homme*.<sup>108</sup> The *honnête homme* becomes a figure carefully withdrawn from the mundane, commonplace concerns of ordinary life. Intrinsicly, reticence is moderation of excess; it is discreetly and carefully tamed social involvement.

This is an idea shared by both music and *honnêteté* in the application and judicious use of *agréments*, or ornaments. The *agréments* are what the musician and the *honnête homme* employ to enchant and charm their listeners and companions. Critics argue that music is the art most frequently associated with *honnêteté* because of the commonalities and shared descriptive terms: harmony, beauty and taste. Acknowledging these similarities between pleasingly tempered sound and pleasantly restrained human behavior can contribute to our awareness of seventeenth-century attempts to tease out the implications of “*être and paraître*, motive and action, self and art.”<sup>109</sup> Passed down from writers such as Castiglione, the seigneur de Brantôme (1542-1614)<sup>110</sup>, Nicolas Faret and Méré, personal conduct and observant sensitivity were recurrent subjects of concern for the noble

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<sup>108</sup> Rosenberg, "The Paintings," 385. "In the distance, behind the artificial lake a lone man turns his back on the scene (believed by some to be Watteau himself!)"

<sup>109</sup> Norman, "The *Agréments* - Méré, Morality, and Music," 555.

<sup>110</sup> Brantôme was Pierre de Bourdeille, (1542-1614), a memoirist who chronicled sixteenth-century life at the Valois court.

gentleman.<sup>111</sup> Domna Stanton points out that the idea of the ‘self’ as art encompassed a sign system related to the body through musical properties: grace, gesture, intonation and judicial adornment. Like the beauty of music, these discreet bodily signals served to please and captivate others while at the same time implying a sense of superior worth.<sup>112</sup> The outward gestures and expressions of the courtier were employed to convey *sprezzatura* or visibly legible signs of noble inner qualities that embodied discipline and aplomb.

Watteau gives us visual instruction on achieving the subtle grace of the *honnête homme* in four images that take the artist’s viewers from the first efforts of a country peasant to achieve an air of refinement in dance to a final achievement of the art of *honnêteté*. The first is the young dancer in *Le contrat mariage* (fig. 31). It is a country scene in which a young man in the right foreground initiates a tentative step to the tune of a fiddle. His ill-fitting jacket and plain cap indicate peasant status. Yet, it is the stance he takes in preparation for the music that gives him away. He is off-balance, tilted to his left with his arms spread in an ungainly fashion. His knees are bent, not at a graceful angle but in a position that is slightly askew. His feet are flat on the ground and give no indication that they are about to step out in measure to the music. The next exemplar is the young man in *Le bal champêtre* (fig. 20) who holds castanets and performs a dance with a young woman in a wooded clearing. His dress is more elegant, a light blue satin suit and a decorated straw hat, and the beat of the castanets endows him with a more graceful sense of rhythm. Yet, his legs are still bowed and he seems slightly uncomfortable in his role. With his right foot firmly planted on the ground, his left foot points tentatively but fails to extend

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<sup>111</sup> For a discussion and analysis of the works of Brantôme, see: Pierre de Bourdeille Brantôme, seigneur de, *Les Dame Galantes* (Paris: Garnier, 1917), Madeline Lazard, *Pierre De Bourdeille, Seigneur De Brantôme* (Paris: Fayard, 1995).

<sup>112</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century*.

in a fluid line. A third visual metaphor occurs in the *honnête homme* in *Récréation italienne* (fig. 38). Here, he achieves nonchalance in his casually staged pose with crossed legs, elegant torso and diffident air. Finally, the gentleman in *Récréation galante* (fig. 5) arrives at ‘Apollonian perfection’ as the quintessential model for the *honnête homme*. Relaxed in the company of his female companion, he can confidently escort her up the stairs, moving with ease and seamless bearing. No longer dependent on poses or fixed postures, his courtly gestures and fluid grace convey the physical attributes of *honnêteté*.

Watteau’s *honnête homme* is, in effect, a superior refined being who leads a life of politely studied leisure. And, in the changing times of Watteau’s era, this ideal of elevated status extends to a “conspicuous independence from any need to cultivate royal favor.”<sup>113</sup> The court is no longer the center for the “*politesse d’un nation*.”<sup>114</sup> Artful pretense, in the time of Watteau, ironically understood and recognized the pretense of others. As a diplomatic and judicious form of theater, it was ‘*l’être et le paraître*’, to be and to appear to be.<sup>115</sup> By conducting oneself with careful circumspection, one was protected against the social mischief of others. It could be precarious, however, if not practiced with caution. The true, often capricious, nature of man often made it difficult to achieve *honnété* without exercising self-control and paying careful attention to expression, appearance and conduct.<sup>116</sup> It encompassed a multilayered code of conduct that signaled hidden messages and undeclared desires. The *honnête homme* achieved transformation of every relatable facet of the body into a system of sensitive signs that carried clandestine, elusive meanings;

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<sup>113</sup> Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* 67.

<sup>114</sup> d’Alembert, *Encyclopédie De Diderot Et D’alembert* Cour 4:355.

<sup>115</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 184.

<sup>116</sup> Norman, "The *Agréments* - Méré, Morality, and Music," 555.

body poetry aimed to cause a powerful response from the receiver and reflect the idea that the body-as-art was its own justification.<sup>117</sup> The polished indifference expressed in the *sprezzatura* of the unmoved yet elegant outsider in *Récréation italienne* was an end in itself.

As noted, *sprezzatura* was a special gift that became more estimable as the effort to attain it lessened. The essence of ease was the essence of grace. The only effort made in attaining grace was to hide the difficulty in achieving it. Not only was it an end in itself, it is also a means for leading the life of a courtier and acquiring the educated refinements that attend that life.<sup>118</sup> Nicolas Faret named grace as the prevailing essence of the *honnête homme*:

*Toutes les bonnes parties que nous avons alléguées, sont tres considerables en un Gentil-homme; mais le comble de ces choses consiste en une certaine grace naturelle, quie en tous ses exercices, et jusques à ses moindres actions doit reluire comme un petit rayon de Divinité, qui se voit en tous ceux qui sont nays pour plaire dans le monde.*<sup>119</sup>

In this text, he sees grace as something unforced and natural; it is the cohesive element that binds all the good qualities of *honnêteté*. It is a radiance sent down from above to shine on those who were born to please. Grace or *sprezzatura* adds a dash of delight and piquancy to the smallest bodily signal; it is a refined air or essence of the body while in movement and at rest. The body exhibits a flair that is free of pretense as grace or *l'air* continually

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<sup>117</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 173.

<sup>118</sup> Saccone, *Grazia, Spezzatura, Affettazione in the Courtier* 49. "'Grace' is that extra quality which is added to the more solid 'properties' and 'conditions which can be acquired by precept. Grace, on the other hand, cannot be learnt; it is a gift from heaven...it will vanish if a man takes too much pains to attain it, or if he shows any effort in his actions. Nothing but complete ease can produce it. And the only effort which should be expended in attaining it is an effort to conceal the skill on which it is based. Grace becomes, from an end in itself, the means in turn to another and higher end, to that 'good end' (*bon fine*) that is the education and direction of the [courtier.]"

<sup>119</sup> Faret, *L'honneste Homme Ou L'art De Plaire a La Court* 50.

informs every position, every artful angle. The eye lingers with pleasure and approval on one who is the charming and appealing physical paradigm of grace.<sup>120</sup> The Chevalier de Méré found the true natures of *l'air* and *agrémens* elusive and difficult to adequately describe:

*Le bon air qui me semble tres-difficile est tout-à-fait necessaire aux Agrémens, et c'est mesme une espece d'Agrément que le bon air; car il plaist toûjours. Mais il y a des Agrémens si subtils, qu'encore que le bon air y soit, il est pourtant bien difficile de s'en appercevoir, parce qu'on ne les voit pas eux-mesmes.*<sup>121</sup>

Méré attempts to identify the ineffable qualities of *l'air* acknowledging that they are difficult to perceive and, unlike fleeting and momentary *agrémens*, an agreeable air provides a continuous stream of delight. Castiglione also considered grace and *l'air* interchangeable in this quote from Book of the Courtier:

[The courtier should be] endowed with a certain grace which we call an 'air' which shall make him at first sight pleasing and lovable to all who see him; and let this be an adornment informing and attending all his actions, giving the promise outwardly that such a one is worthy of the company and the favor of every great lord.<sup>122</sup>

In other words, a favorable first impression is vital to social appreciation; a continuing glow of that first sympathetic light must remain, thereby reflecting the inner qualities of the graceful *honnête homme*. Grace is bestowed; it is a gift that moves from the giver who favors to the receiver, the object of favor. While this implies a process – a giving and a

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<sup>120</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 125. Author cites: Magendie, Maurice. *La Politesse mondaine et les theories de l'honnêteté en France de 1600 à 1660*. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970, 710.

<sup>121</sup> Méré, *Oeuvres Complètes* II, 19.

<sup>122</sup> Eduardo Saccone, "Grazie, Sprezzatura, Affettazione in the Courtier," in *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture*, ed. Robert W. Hanning and David Rosand (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 51. Author cites Castiglione, I.14.



taking – it also becomes an end in itself for achieving a higher end. As such, it is a reciprocal gesture between the graceful individual and the similarly gifted members of his group.<sup>123</sup> Watteau's *La perspective* (fig. 1) shows us this process of giving and receiving in a scene of reciprocal endowment. Left to right, a couple exchanges favors in the form of the gesture by the gentleman toward the sylvan beauty of the woods. A young guitar player pleases a young woman with his melody while she, in turn favors him with her attention. Further back, a man looks down at a lady who responds with an upward gaze. In the distance, a couple share the pleasures of a walk through the trees. Mysterious and elusive qualities combine to present the power of the self-as-art embodied in a coded system of covert signals. These airs, tones and gestures become lyrical sensibilities that can undetectably yet thoroughly enchant each beholder or listener.<sup>124</sup> They, in turn, serve Watteau's social groups. Grace enhances the practice of private leisure activities such as conversation and artistic amusements. At the same time, it is a means for social advancement and may have an impact on a noble person's career.<sup>125</sup>

Added to grace is the quality of Italian *sprezzatura*, nonchalance, the casual *je ne sais quoi*, that conveys a cheerful lack of anxiety or concern. Along with being versed in ancient Greek and Latin and smoothly adept in matters of the arts, Castiglione's courtier was agreeably nonchalant. This was especially important in that it made his accomplishments appear effortless and somehow uniquely admirable and innate to his

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 48-9.

<sup>124</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 120.

<sup>125</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, New York, 1983 ed. (Darmstadt: Die höfische Gesellschaft, 1969) 63.

individual persona.<sup>126</sup> Castiglione wrote:

Avoid affectation in every way possible as though it were some very rough and dangerous reef; and...to practice in all things a certain *sprezzatura* [nonchalance], so as to conceal all art and make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it. And I believe much grace comes of this: because everyone knows the difficulty of things that are rare and well done; wherefore facility in such things causes the greatest wonder...therefore we may call that art true art which does not seem to be art; nor must one be more careful of anything than of concealing it, because if it is discovered, this robs a man of all credit and causes him to be held on slight esteem... so you see how art, or any intent effort, if it is disclosed, deprives everything of grace... Nonchalance...often causes [an act] to be judged much greater than it actually is, since it impresses upon the minds of the onlookers the opinion that he who performs well with so much facility must possess greater skills than this, and that, if he were to devote care and effort to what he does, he could do it far better... *Sprezzatura*, then...marks the highest art, the one that 'does not seem to be art.'<sup>127</sup>

Effortlessness – or the appearance of it – is, according to Castiglione, vital to any artistic endeavor. Any visible exertion spoils the achievement. A naturally facile and undemanding demeanor endows a performance with exquisite splendor causing admiration and awe in all who witness it. The *honnête homme* gives pleasure through his effortless wit, good will and social grace that is pliant enough to accommodate and respect the sensibilities of others.

Nicolas Faret called this *affectation de la negligence*:

*Car un chacun sachant la difficulté qui se trouve à bien faire les choses excellentes, on admire ceux à qui elles réussissent facilement : comme au contraire, les plus grandes et les plus rares perdent leur prix, lors que l'on y voit paraître de la contrainte. En effect, la plus noire malice don't l'envie se serve pour ruyner l'estime de ceux aui l'ont bien établie, c'est de dire que toutes leurs actions sont faites avec dessein, et que tous leurs discours sont estudez. Et c'est pourquoy les Orateurs n'ont point d'artifice plus subtil qu'à couvrir celui de leurs harangues, lequel n'est pas sitost reconnu qu'ils perdent tout credit, et n'ont plus d'eloquence qui soit assez forte pour*

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<sup>126</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 18.

<sup>127</sup> Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier: The Singleton Translation. An Authoritative Text Criticism* 32.

*persuader les ames mesmes le plus simples et les plus credules.*<sup>128</sup>

Anyone who understands the difficulties of achieving excellence will especially admire one who appears to achieve it without effort. On the other hand, those who demonstrate exertion or labor diminish the glory of their success. The worst fault one can have is to reveal that all one's actions are by design and that all discourse has been carefully prepared and studied. That is why the great orators, like their musical counterparts, avoided artifice and sermonizing, which would only discredit them. Their eloquence was based on simplicity and truth. Watteau's contemporary, François Couperin, offers this suggestion to harpsichord players to help them appear to achieve musical perfection with minimal effort: « *A l'égard des grimaces du visage on peut s'en coriger soy-meme en mettant un miroir sur le pupitre du clavecin.* »<sup>129</sup> With regard to making facial grimaces, it is possible to correct oneself by placing a mirror on the music rack of the harpsichord. Couperin does not need to enumerate the reason for this suggestion. It is a tacit understanding between him and his students that any show of difficulty will detract from the performance. Added to the requirement of musical agility, then, is the capacity for self-reflection; the artful body must mirror inner, instinctive facility. As the nobility seek to refine their behavior and embellish their own personal grace, they also view themselves reflected against the past pleasures of a simpler world.

In the words of Don Fader, “The doctrine of *honnêteté* place[d] an ethic of repression at the service of an esthetic of seduction.”<sup>130</sup> In other words, any overt appearance of intent was undesirable in achievement of the goal. Indirectness, equivocacy

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<sup>128</sup> Faret, *L'honneste Homme Ou L'art De Plaire a La Court* 51.

<sup>129</sup> Couperin, *L'art De Toucher Le Clavecin* 30.

<sup>130</sup> Fader, "The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 120.

and a judicious use of coded signs were the hallmarks of polite, *honnête* comportment.

Faret restates this in these words:

*Si les propositions que l'on fait devant eux, sont si peu raisonnables, qu'ils ne les doivent pas souffrir, ils en font voir les absurditez avec tant d'adoucissements et de modestie, que l'on se sent plus obligé d'en estre repris, que si l'on avoit l'approbation de quantité d'autres.*<sup>131</sup>

The *honnête homme* must temper his response to others; he must endure irrationality and absurdity by meeting them with reserve and clemency, despite his true feelings. He must affect an air of mellowness and impassivity in order to gain the approval of those who would be offended by his true thoughts. The ambiguity of *honnêteté* operates within the “tension-filled relationship between the more philosophical academic tradition of criticism and concepts derived from the social world of the aristocracy which emphasized noble ‘feeling.’”<sup>132</sup> The notion that the rhetorician required virtuous restraint—a masking of intent through moderation—set the stage for seventeenth-century notions of both politesse and taste. The effective orator, like the artist and courtier, disguised his passion for words in order to clearly reach his audience. This was the ambiguity of repression vs. seduction.<sup>133</sup> The idea of moderation as active repression became, under the rubric of *honnêteté*, a nuanced aesthetic strategy for sensitive enticement.<sup>134</sup> Any sensation deflected or left unsaid became more vivid by virtue of its very refraction or omission.

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<sup>131</sup> Faret, *L'honneste Homme Ou L'art De Plaire a La Court* 78-9.

<sup>132</sup> Fader, "The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music," 4.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. It was "the capacity, hidden behind the surface signs, to penetrate the receiver imperceptibly to the very core is the functional analog of a paradigmatic ability to emit a poetic message which enraptures the beholder."

<sup>134</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 192-3.

Watteau is in essence the painter of *honnêteté* and it is his measured ambiguity, the blending of two disparate elements – social manners vs. inner discernment – that places his works within the shifting scopes of *honnête* manners.<sup>135</sup> As such, he paints the behaviors and values of a society striving for artistic expression and leisure enjoyment and redefines them outside the strict boundaries of the court. These nuances exist in the scenes of Watteau; his use of ambiguity and deflection reify the standards of his time. Qualities of enigma and artful insinuation are his own signifiers of true aristocratic demeanor. James Elkins writes that artists during this time deliberately obscured meaning so as not to be seen or understood in any one-dimensional manner. Instead, they were concerned with layering and combining multiple meanings to create fascination and appeal.<sup>136</sup> The paintings of Watteau operate as palimpsests both literally and figuratively.<sup>137</sup> They are layered with under paintings that reveal – and conceal – process. The ambiguity of Watteau is further served by his use of a common practice of his era: the incorporation of both high and low signifiers that illustrate the self-conscious borrowing of lower cultural practices by the upper classes as a method of visually demonstrating their own superior status. The viewer looks at his scenes and wonders, “Are the figures real actors or costumed *mondains*? Are his peasants genuine or are they nostalgic visions conjured by a playful elite?” The artist’s overt blurring of boundaries, impressions and identities neatly restates the *honnête* values of

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<sup>135</sup> Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* 66. “Watteau’s multiple references also articulate a practice that was already widespread – the self-conscious appropriation of low cultural forms as a sign of elite superiority... [We are] never sure if the theatrically costumed figures are real actors or not, or if the peasants are authentic peasants or masqueraders, but this pointed ambiguity nicely recapitulates the value of dissimulation with the cult of *honnêteté*.”

<sup>136</sup> Elkins, "On Monstrously Ambiguous Paintings," 228. "There is evidence indicating [that] artists may have wanted their works not to be understood in any single manner...instead they appear to have been occupied with orchestrating multiple meanings."

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*: 232.

deflection, discretion and disguise.<sup>138</sup> James Elkins calls this “a narrative of successive concealment” and a “gentle but persistent neutralization of dramatic actions.”<sup>139</sup> In *L’amour au théâtre italien* (fig. 37) the costumed actors gather in the darkness, revealed only by the light of the moon and a torch. The viewer is left to wonder at the occasion, if it is a prelude or a coda, a journey or an arrival. Watteau’s primary meaning is its own aporia; it is an ambiguous essence conveyed by a fluid brush strokes and atmospheric musical timbres. The meaning is felt, not known; it is intuitive, not legible. As a non-verbal sign, it is properly visual and at the same time melodically manifest. The image is a pictorial medley of many elements that, when combined, fuse the practical with the pleasing, and the erotic with the ingenuous. The painting offers no clues to context or narrative. Does the painting portray the characters or the humans behind them? In its reflection of the timbres of connectedness, the only visual answer is to the more fundamental question of “How does it feel?”<sup>140</sup>

Watteau’s figures perform a rite of seduction that is far from primal; their gestures and movements are discreetly acted out gavottes that give form to *honnête* ideals. A deflected gaze, by its very obliqueness, carries an erotic charge; each small gesture is rich in potentiality. Where is the couple to the right going in *Récréation galante*? The gentleman takes her hand and leads her perhaps to the statue of the nymphs and goat or to the darkness of the forest. Watteau’s allusions, placed behind the metaphorically closed doors of the secluded clearing, make use of the very signifiers of the *honnête homme*: modesty, grace, *l’air* and moderation. Sensibility becomes sentiment carried both through the deportment of the players and by the music that embraces and entices them. The guitarist

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<sup>138</sup> Plax, *Watteau and the Cultural Politics of Eighteenth-Century France* 191.

<sup>139</sup> Elkins, "On Monstrously Ambiguous Paintings," 234.

<sup>140</sup> Thomas M. Kavanaugh, "The Libertine Moment," *Yale French Studies* 94 (1998): 87.

at the left center of *Récréation galante* looks down – toward the music book or the white breast of the young woman who holds it? Unequivocal legibility and directness are rare in Watteau’s works. Instead, the directness comes in his music, be it the guitar of *Mezzetin* or the song Pierrot hears in *Pierrot content* (fig. 40).

Watteau’s is a complex field of hidden signs and Gobelins-like surfaces that emit poetry; his painted blendings hide an intimacy that forces the viewer to move in closer – to see, to listen and become enraptured. The virtuosity of Watteau rests in the desire he creates in his viewers to interpret and extend varied meanings, causing an ever-expanding text of discovery and construal. Watteau’s musical images are iterative; notes resonate – die – reverberate again – in the eyes and ears of the participants in his tableaux: his figures and their viewers. The meanings in Watteau, having no direct signifier to identify them; they are felt, heard and experienced as moods and timbres. The signifier and signified come together in the *honnête homme*; he is an artful and poetic bonding of interior and exterior ideals. The accepted order of ideas and signs is reinvented and uplifted to reveal beauty in the prosaic, meaning in the mundane.<sup>141</sup> Yet, there is impenetrable intimacy that begs close examination. Watteau’s contextual strategies confer a gentle splendor on small events and brief encounters. *Pierrot content* is an informal occasion made grand by the light that falls on the figures, their colorful costumes and their polished demeanor. He gives visual and musical inflection to the players as explicitly gallant and splendid. In doing so, he invents and brings to life a sensual world of gratifying depth and enchanting sympathies.<sup>142</sup>

To borrow an evocative concept from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the art of Watteau reveals a new dimension, a new set of experiential standards against which any further

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<sup>141</sup> Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century* 174.

<sup>142</sup> Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* 73.

sensation is measured. It is unreal – yet undeniable. Once made known to us, it cannot be subverted or renounced. Positioned within our own sensibilities, it is here to stay. It suggests a horizon with no limits. It is invisible but present as an essence that inheres in the world and sustains it, thus rendering it knowable, possible. The sensations are the meaning and his scenes are the instruments of an authentic ideality wrapped in artful illusion and melodic timbres.<sup>143</sup> In the words of Don Fader, musical airs “with [their] further connotations of lightness and immateriality, suggest the fluidity of a body that has no contours, of flesh made spirit...effortless, free-floating mastery.”<sup>144</sup> Music becomes an accompaniment to insinuation in Watteau’s *La perspective*. As each suspended note fades and disappears, so too the intention of each figure is masked. The viewer asks: What brought these people here? Where is the center couple going? What is the meaning of the gentleman’s gesture off into the woods at the left? Who is the shadowed companion of the seated woman in the distance?

The musical images of Watteau convey the ambiguous desires of a society for

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<sup>143</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Maurice Merleau-Ponty Basic Writings*, ed. Thomas Baldwin (London: Routledge, 2004) 266. “With the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure, there is initiation, that is, not the positing of a content, but the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed, the establishment of a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated. The idea is this level, this dimension. It is therefore not a de facto invisible, like an object hidden behind another, and not an absolute invisible, which would have nothing to do with the visible. Rather it is the invisible of this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it, and renders it visible, its own and interior possibility, the Being of this being.... At the moment that the musicians reach the ‘little phrase’ [as referred to by Proust as the essence of love to Swann] there is no lacuna in me; what I live is as ‘substantial,’ as ‘explicit,’ as a positive thought could be – even more so... We do not possess the musical or sensible ideas, precisely because they are negativity or absence circumscribed: they possess us... The sonata sings through [the performer]... and these open vortexes in the sonorous world form one sole vortex... There is a strict ideality in experiences that are experiences of the flesh: the moments of the sonata, the fragments of the luminous field, adhere to one another with a cohesion without concept, which is of the same type as the cohesion of the parts of my body, or the cohesion of my body with the world. Is my body a thing, is it an idea? It is neither, being the measurant of the things. We will therefore have to recognize an ideality that is not alien to the flesh, that gives it its axes, its depth, its dimensions.”

<sup>144</sup> Fader, “The *Honnête Homme* as Music Critic: Taste, Rhetoric, and Politesse in the 17th-Century French Reception of Italian Music,” 125.



refinement that also yearns for an imagined pastoral world of rustic simplicity. What is felt is a false memory, if you will, for a time and place that never existed. *Les bergers* (fig. 33) is a gentle but persistent progression of amorous actions that advance charmingly within the context of country pleasure. At the left, distanced somewhat in the trees, a woman turns her back to the action as she sits on a swing. The *beau faire* of Watteau visually describes the graceful insinuation of her indecisiveness; his brush suggests the fluidity of her motion and the movement of light across the satin fabric of her dress. The backs of the two women – one in finery, one in peasant dress – iterate both opposition and complement. The elaborate decorative bow on the back of the swinging female endows the chain of simple flowers that drape over the back of the vest on the peasant woman with a special, comparative poignancy. In the nearer left foreground, as the shepherd leans toward the young maid, Watteau mixes flesh and spirit as he combines physical touch with psychic surrender. Behind them, a couple move closer to observe and hear the bagpiper who prepares to play as visual and musical sensations reverberate and float freely to embrace the figures. While delightfully simple and innocently engaging, it is a layered appeal to the longings of an upper class for the provincial *divertissements* newly available to the *honnête homme*. His brush conveys *sprezzatura* and insinuation; it flows with lightness and immateriality suggesting the fluidity of bodies and sensibilities that have no margins.

*Les bergers* is a medley of flesh and spirit where visual and musical vibrations weave freely through the painted embroidery. It is also a pictorial embodiment of the moods contained in the music of François Couperin in its pairing of graceful French melodies with the *sprezzatura* of the Italian style. Like Couperin's piece, *Bergeries*, which Wilfrid Mellers compares to the "wistful sophistication of Watteau", the painting "combine[s] a spiritual innocence of melody both with a courtly artificiality of form and with a technique of figurative sequences...which produce a voluptuous delicacy which is one

of the most characteristic features of Couperin's [and Watteau's] sensibility."<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Mellers, "The Clavecin Works of François Couperin," 236.

## **Conclusion**

The ways in which varying emotions received resonance in musical expression are vital to our understanding of the art of Antoine Watteau and the nuanced evolution of the culture of sensibility. Sensibility and its close relation to music has a long social history; its emotional and moral content came into being by way of political, social and cultural forces. By comprehending the powerful and fascinating tensions between French courtly styles and Italian expressiveness, Watteau employs those traditions while, at the same time, repealing them and giving them a modern resonance. His knowledge of different musical instruments, the timbres that embody them, and their affective sentiments, invokes visual counterpoints and discords within unique pictorial and harmonic arrangements. In the distinctive visual medleys that inform his crayon and brush, the artist summons both the earthly and spiritual pictorial language of the senses to define the terms for French contemporary life itself. His seemingly suspended, leisure scenes are pastoral frameworks for the character of the society of his time and the divergent cultural influences that shaped it.

Because the truth of music lies in its affiliations and its ability to develop and expand, Watteau's figures participate in the sensibilities relative to what they expect from making and listening to the music. His musical strings and winds are the nerves and fluid-like substances that operate as flowing conduits for responsive actions from the sense organs to the heart. Watteau understands how the vibrations of sound convey physical and social well-being. Although seventeenth-century physiologists had no means of observing music's effects on the nervous system directly, Watteau's blendings of musical, emotional and social milieus bridge that space and provide visual embodiments that speak to the divergent sensibilities required to achieve a harmonious whole. The artist gives the language

of sensibility a palpable, pictorial reality. Like the scientists, he describes his social sensations as musical keys or fibers; they are vibrating transmitters of elastic and emotive sensibility.

Because music joins with reason and is organized on measurable rational principles, Watteau's paintings incorporate cosmic lucid order into the elusive ethic of delighting the senses. Watteau unites nuanced visual and acoustic elements in synthetic moments of sensibility in shared communion and group dynamics. His guitars are social and erotic conduits for social and sexual cohesion; as such, they operate like his paint to efface boundaries and pliantly persuade. The candor and fluidity of his brush echo the musical notes that smooth the way for group affection as well as the initiation and reception of erotic signals. The anticipatory significance of a figure tuning an instrument is a frequent motif in Watteau's pictures, acting as a sweet overture to music- and love-making. His use of guitar music is a palpable passage that links the sentiments of the soul with the passions of the body.

Music's relation to the body endows it with the power to anticipate, delay and transmit emotion. Because the reality of music rests in its interrelationships and its ability to unfold, the figures in Watteau's images participate in the inner experience relative to what they seek in making and listening to the music. It is this unfixed and nuanced nature of music and its temporality that enables Watteau to blend both French and Italian sensibilities, mixing the sensations of Apollo and Dionysus. What Watteau's observers and listeners discover in his art is a direct and immediate response to the sensibilities that combine to identify a uniquely evolving period in the artistic, social and cultural history of France. Antoine Watteau is a painter of sensibility because his crayon and brush confer pictorial resonance on the multivalent connotations of sensation that informed medical theories of the senses and framed them in musical metaphors. His artistic touch, infused with delicacy and wit, tonal harmony and resonant fluidity, is the exemplar of expressive sensibility.

Watteau's paintings are never monumental or heroic; they are often small depictions of minor, yet delightfully imagined, events. In the artist's resourceful combinations of the ancient Apollonian/Dionysian debate, his art absorbs, emits and modulates styles within pictorial cadences that fluctuate between French and Italian musical ideas. With sensitive crayon or brush in hand, Watteau paints these incongruities and, in the process, finds a new expression for social confluence within a fresh artistic coherence.

The history of manners, originating from ancient orators and philosophers and Renaissance writers survived to encompass French ideas of *honnêteté* as a modern paradigm of sensibility. The sympathetic courtier became the emulated ideal, the *aemulatio*, functioning from a distance but still within sight and memory. In Watteau, sensibility exists in the cult of *honnêteté* that is reflected in his figures and the contexts in which he places them. Watteau's artful bodies are self-aware, visual displays of sensibility based on deportment, good taste and moderation. Watteau's work is the essence of *honnêteté*; he achieves effortless elegance and refined artifice within elusive and ambiguous frameworks. The personal manner of the artist is part of the mystery that surrounds the man and his short life. Deflection and ambiguity are the properties of *honnête* conduct that extend to the contextual strategies of the artist as well. As the cult of *honnêteté* became intrigued with masked balls and the mixing of identities, boundaries were tested and redefined. Watteau uses visual cadences that color this assimilation of classes while underscoring them with melodic rhythms that pervade each scene. Hence, his personal ambitions, his graceful themes and his painting technique, are all in keeping with the eighteenth-century behavioral requirements and tastes of an *honnête homme*.

By sensitively portraying the similitudes that exist between the visible and invisible, Watteau makes possible a sensory understanding of his world. Feelings are shared, mutually understood experiences which inform further related encounters. These resemblances impose adjacencies that in turn guarantee further connections. By drawing

his figures together in exterior and visible movements, he also gives rise to the hidden interior movements felt in the music of his scenes. Watteau does not merely report; instead, he carries the timbre, the scent and the ambiance of a society forward while mixing the often-opposing cultures that shaped it. His paint flows with agility from one passage to the next; it is atmospheric and mutable. In this way both the fabric and spirit of music enables his images to permeate and efface temporal dimension. Watteau's artistic vocabulary may be viewed in terms of melody, harmony, and rhythm. The age of sensibility appears in the form of a vitality and directness, overcoming fictional, historical and other barriers that separate the sympathizers from the sympathized.

The delicate phrasing of Watteau's paintings is in keeping with the musical sensibilities of the period as exemplified in the music of François Couperin. Grace and the judicious use of *agréments* signified *le bon goût* of French musical styles. Watteau's *beau faire* is smooth, tempered and redolent with *la politesse du chant*, much like his musical contemporary, Couperin. The artist's easy, fluid lines are visual echoes of the composer's graceful melodic contours punctuated with ironic piquancy. Like the oil that binds his pigments, music is the medium that unites both Italian and French sensibilities that underscore the images of the artist. His works are also visual and acoustic embodiments of the ideas of philosophers like Crousaz and du Bos who maintained that beauty was a feeling, an indescribable essence, a sentiment. Watteau's fluid precision and sensuous timbres are not mere embroidery; they are, instead, harmonious constructs that affect the characters of his subjects and shape the contours of his scenes.

Watteau unites music and sympathy and thus opens up the possibility for communication across differences and distances, bringing the viewer towards a closer understanding of the age of sensibility. In his paintings, sensibility sounds like the delicacy of a transverse flute and the drone of a bagpipe, the stridency of a violin and the gentle

melody of a guitar. Sensibility looks like the delicate profile of the pale, slender neck of a lady and the hesitant gesture of her suitor – painted with the yielding fluidity and lucent timbre of the artist’s brush. The works of Watteau are musical and pictorial moments of sensibility that elude direct definition and carry multi-layered sensations. Like musical notes, his pictures enter the consciousness of the viewer and reverberate beyond the dimensions of time.

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