Marie-Emmanuelle Bayon Louis

(1746–1825)

By Deborah Hayes

Madame Louis, née Marie-Emmanuelle Bayon (Baillon), was a French composer, pianist, and *salonnière* of considerable activity and influence. Her principal published works are, as Mademoiselle Bayon, a collection of six keyboard sonatas, three of them with violin accompaniment, opus 1 (1769), and, as Madame Louis, the full score of her two-act opéra-comique *Fleur d'épine* ("May-Flower"), scored for solo voices, chorus, and orchestra. Composed to a libretto by Claude-Henri Fusée, abbé de Voisenon (1704–1775), a leading writer and librettist, *Fleur d'épine* had twelve performances in Paris during the 1776–1777 season by the Comédie Italienne, one of the official, privileged French theatrical companies of the ancien régime; the final performance was attended by the queen, Marie-Antoinette, and members of the royal family. Collections of musical numbers from the work arranged for unaccompanied voice were also published, as was an arrangement of the overture for keyboard with violin and cello accompaniment; other vocal arrangements appeared in music periodicals and collections from 1776 until around 1786. The composer's unpublished works, discussed during her lifetime but not yet found, include further instrumental chamber music and opéra-comiques, and music for La fête de Saint Pierre, a *divertissement* to a libretto by Antoine-François Quétant (1733–1823), performed at the Château de la Cour-Neuve in Paris on St. Peter's day (29 June) in 1771.

HER LIFE

According to her husband's biographer, Victor Marionneau, Marie-Emmanuelle Bayon was born in Marcei, department of Orne (west of Paris), in 1746. In her preface to the op. 1 sonatas she refers to "the many kindnesses bestowed upon me since my tenderest infancy" by the family of Madame la Marquise de Langeron to whom the volume is dedicated. It may be assumed that Bayon grew up in or near Paris and received, perhaps through this patronage, special training in music. Accounts of her activities from the age of about twenty-one appear in the memoirs and correspondence of some of the leading women and men of the eighteenth-century French

Enlightenment. The influential playwright, teacher, and musician Stéphanie de Genlis (1746–1830) considered her a friend. The Encyclopedist and *philosophe* Denis Diderot (1713–1784) loved her like a daughter; his actual daughter, Angélique, later Madame de Vandeul (1753–1824), studied harpsichord with her from about 1765 until 1769 and remained her lifelong friend and confidante.

By the late 1760s Mlle Bayon had become known as a virtuoso harpsichordist and pianist. Diderot described her as a player whose "entire soul was in the tips of her fingers"; he found "facility, expression, grace, melody" in her keyboard music, which he compared to that of Domenico Alberti, Johann Christian Bach, Johann Gottfried Eckard (Eckhardt), Johann Schobert, and other foreign composers whose music was currently admired in Paris. She composed instrumental music and music for plays, which she performed at Madame de Genlis's salon on the rue de Grenelle in collaboration with noted amateurs like herself as well as internationally known French and foreign professional musicians. She also participated as actor-singer in salon dramatic productions, such as *comédies*, skits, and *proverbes*.[1] Her six sonatas op. 1 appeared in 1769 and brought recognition outside France.

In 1770, on 20 June, Mlle Bayon married Victor Louis (1731–1800), an architect with important social and political connections similar to her own. In 1774 the couple's only child was born, Marie-Hélène-Victoire Louis (d. 1848).

In the early 1770s, through the patronage of the duc de Richelieu, Louis was commissioned to design and supervise construction of the Grand-Théâtre in Bordeaux, the building for which he is perhaps most famous today. In Bordeaux the Louis residence became the site of a highly select salon. Sources also mention performances of two "opéras" by Mme Louis. It was during this period, probably in 1775–76, that she completed *Fleur d'épine*.

A few months before the Paris premiere of *Fleur d'épine*, Bordeaux was the site of a great ceremony when Louis-Philippe-Joseph d'Orléans, duc de Chartres, at the invitation of Victor Louis, came to lay the first stone for the new theatre. In the princely retinue was Madame Louis's friend, Madame de Genlis, who was a lady-in-waiting to the duchesse de Chartres. The full score of *Fleur d'épine*, probably published around the time of the premiere, includes a dedicatory preface to the duchesse de Chartres in which the composer employs the conventionally flattering,

[1] The "proverb" (*proverbe*) was a favorite amateur dramatic form in which, as illustration of a short saying or proverb, such as, "It never rains but it pours," a scandal of the day was related in dialogue.

obsequious phrases of a courtier addressing her patron.[2] One of the copies of the full score now in the Bibliothéque Nationale in Paris bears the coat of arms of the duc de Chartres, and another that of Madame de Genlis.

With the completion of the magnificent Grand-Théâtre in 1780 the Louis family returned to Paris, where their residence on the rue de la Place-Vendôme became a gathering place for distinguished literary and artistic figures. Louis sought membership in the Académie Royale d'Architecture but, owing to internal politics, was rejected, a major disappointment to him. He began working with the duc de Chartres on plans for extensive development at the Palais Royal, including a newly designed theatre (l'Opéra du Palais-Royal). Correspondence between Diderot and his daughter, Madame de Vendeul, indicates that Mme Louis devoted considerable energy to furthering her husband's interests. While no new musical works by her are reported, *Fleur d'épine* was performed in Brussels, and in 1784 it was performed in Bordeaux. A play by Victor Louis was performed in Paris the same year.

With the notable exception of *Fleur d'épine*, Madame Louis evidently wrote and performed music principally for private gatherings. Her social position, both before and after her marriage, prevented her from holding a paid, professional appointment, yet it gave her considerable influence in matters of taste and style. In 1776, a notice in the *Correspondance secrète*—news of the French court, society, and culture—identified Mme Louis, composer of *Fleur d'épine*, as the person who was "already famous under the name Mlle Bayon for her musical talents. She is the one who brought into fashion the forte-piano, the instrument that is now all the rage."

During the Revolution of 1789–92 and the even more turbulent times that followed, when the French passion for theatre, including music theatre, continued to find new means of expression, "citizen Louis" still worked in Paris. He designed the Théâtre National and supervised its construction from 1791 to 1793. Mme Louis and Mme de Vandeul continued their friendship; in 1791 M. and Mme de Vandeul signed the Louis daughter's marriage certificate. By the late 1790s (according to Mme de Vandeul), Mme Louis was becoming deaf and infirme (in what way is not specified) and her husband had little to do with her. Mme de Vandeul, with whom she attended the occasional concert and spent much time, described him as totally selfish and self-centered, concerned only with his projects, while Mme Louis was left with "the children and their thousand complaints, a sick father, a retarded brother, penniless sisters."

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[2] "À Son Altesse Sérénissime Madame La Duchesse de Chartres. Madame, Votre Altesse Sérénissime a daigné permettre que la Musique de Fleur-d'Épine lui fut offerte: c'est l'ouvrage d'une Femme; l'hommage en étoit dû à une Princesse qui fait le charme et l'ornement de son Sexe. Son nom à la tête de mon ouvrage est un titre glorieux qui m'assure le suffrage du Public. Cette marque de la protection de Votre Altesse Sérénissime excite dans mon cœur une vive sensibilté et mes foibles talens animées par la reconnoissance ne me deviendront chers désormais qu'autant que je pourrai les lui consacrer.

"Je suis avec un profond respect Madame, De Votre Altesse Sérénissime, La très humble, très obéissante, et très respectueuse Servante, Bayon Louis."

("To Her Most Serene Highness, Madame la Duchesse de Chartres. Your Ladyship, Your Most Serene Highness has deigned to permit the music of *Fleur d'épine* to be offered to her. It is the work of a woman; the homage to it was owed to a princess who embodies the charm and adornment of her sex. Her name at the head of my work is a glorious title which assures me of the public's approbation. This token of Your Most Serene Highness's patronage stimulates a keen feeling in my heart, and my feeble talents, animated by gratitude, will henceforth be precious to me only insomuch as I will be able to devote them to you.

"I am, with deep respect, Your Ladyship, Your Most Serene Highness's very humble, very obedient, and very respectful servant, Bayon Louis.")

After Victor Louis died in 1800, Mme Louis remained in Paris and lived for a time in the Vandeul apartment. Almost nothing else is known of her life. She died at the family's country residence at Aubevoye, a rich abbey her husband had owned in the vicinity of Rouen, canton of Gaillon, department of Eure, on 19 March 1825.

Performer and Composer

Mlle Bayon's early recognition is evident from writings from the late 1760s. Madame de Genlis in her *Mémoires* recalls a season of theatrical productions and music. She names the actors—three men and three women, including herself and Mlle Bayon—and refers to fifteen spectators, of whom she names eleven.

> I had an especially good time at home that winter (1767). My salon was very large. We performed not only some proverbs but an opéra-comique for which my friend Mlle Baillon [sic] (later Mme Louis, wife of the famous architect) composed the music. M. de Sauvigny had written the words and a role for me in which I played the harp, guitar, and musette. We also performed a nice comedy entitled "The Miser in Love" (*L'Avare amoureux*). Mlle Baillon was a charming young person, pretty, gentle, modest, wise, witty, playing the piano with utmost skill, composing marvelously and with an astonishing facility. She [later] composed an opéra-comique *Fleur d'épine* which was performed with success . . . . Our little skits, executed between folding screens, always ended with delicious music, in which the famous Cramer [Wilhelm Cramer, 1746–1799, from Mannheim], who spent that winter in Paris, was first violin and the most perfect I have heard, and Jarnovitz [perhaps Ivan Jarnovitz = Giovanni Mane Giornovichi 1745–1804] second violin; Duport [Jean-Louis Duport, 1749–1819] played violoncello, Mademoiselle Baillon the piano, I sang and played the harp. Friseri who, although blind, played the mandolin in a surprising way, also came, as well as Albanèze [Antoine Albanese, 1729–1800] the Italian singer.

Diderot's first enthusiastic accounts appear in letters to his principal correspondent Mlle Volland. In August 1768, he implies that Bayon had some concern with her musical reputation outside France. In London, Johann Christian Bach (1735–1782), the composer, keyboardist, and royal chapelmaster, had suggested to two English friends that they look up his friend Diderot in Paris. Diderot writes that he took them first to hear Johann Gottfried Eckard (1735–l809) and found Eckard's playing "divine, marvelous, sublime." He then took them one morning to hear Mademoiselle Bayon (whom he had "warned" beforehand). Diderot reports: "She played like an angel. Her soul was entirely at the ends of her fingers. Our good Englishmen believed she was doing all that for them. Of course not! It was for their friend Bach, to whom they would not fail to speak enthusiastically about her—a commission that she was giving them without their being aware of it and perhaps without her being aware of it herself." A couple of weeks later he again mentions visiting her on occasion, when "she sits down at her harpsichord for me and plays everything I want to hear."

Shortly after she married Victor Louis, Diderot (who may have arranged the marriage) writes to his friend, writer and critic Baron Frédéric-Melchior de Grimm (1723–1807) of the concern caused him by the "fateful ceremony. He writes directly to Victor Louis as well: "O, my friend Louis, your wife is an angel; she composes like an angel, she plays like an angel, she sings like an angel, she has the hands, the character, all the qualities of an angel. I love her as tenderly as

my child. I enjoin you to make her happy. . . . She has turned all our heads; remember that you are threatened by a swarm of enemies if you don't behave yourself."

Late the year before, in 1769, Diderot had engaged a new teacher for his daughter Angélique, the theorist and pedagogue Anton Bemetzrieder (1739–ca. 1817). In a letter of November 1770 Diderot refers to Bemetzrieder and "Mademoiselle Bayon" (now Madame Louis), Angélique's former teacher, "despising" each other, "unfairly," he believed, although he does not explain their reasons. He invited them both to a party, however, and "by chance" managed to "reconcile" them. She was still an "angelic" musician and so was Bemetzrieder. "I had my daughter's teacher play a concerto. Mademoiselle Bayon heard him and discovered that he played like an angel. I had the girl, now a woman, play and sing. She sang and played like an angel, and he thought so, too."

The next year, in 1771, Diderot published his famous account of his daughter's lessons, the *Leçons de clavecin et principes d'harmonie, par M. Bemetzrieder*. He presents the *Leçons* as dialogues or dramatic scenes being performed by a "master," (Bemetzrieder), "student" (Angélique Diderot) and *philosophe* (Dénis Diderot). "I can stumble through almost all the composers," the "student" observes, "but I don't know what harmony is, I can not preludize at all, and I am ignorant of accompaniment."[3] The *Leçons* cover harmony (scales, chord progressions, formal structure), preludizing (improvisation), and accompaniment (figured bass), in keeping with the theories of Rameau so admired by Diderot and the other Encyclopedists.

Some idea of Madame Louis's character, her own music, and the repertoire she taught Angélique can be derived from the dialogues. At one lesson the student describes her earlier teacher as "a charming woman, in whom one does not know what to praise the most—her mind, her character, her morals, or her talent," and adds that her composition has "facility, expression, grace, melody." At a subsequent lesson the student compares "pieces by my friend Madame Louis" to those of the Venetian composer Domenico Alberti (ca. 1710–1740), a collection of whose sonatas had been published in Paris in 1760: both composers must be played "with delicacy and good taste" and are therefore difficult to perform, the pupil observes. By contrast, she knows pieces that are "strong in harmony, loaded with sounds, varied through modulations," so that, while they may sound difficult, they "require only precision and a steady beat." In this category she names the J.S. Bach disciple Johann-Gottfried Müthel (1718–1798), J.S. Bach's sons Johann Christian Bach and Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach (1714–1803), and the Mannheimer Ignaz-Franz von Beecke (1733–1803). At another lesson the pupil offers to play "Abel [Karl-Friedrich Abel, 1723–1787] Alberti, Emmanuel [Bach], Jean Back [Bach]." Her father says she can "manage passably" (actually Angélique was considered very skilled) the works of several other composers, naming another Mannheimer, Georg Chrstoph Wagenseil (1715–1777) and three more Germans who had settled in Paris and were currently enjoying great popularity, Leontzi Honauer (1735–?), Eckard, and Johann Schobert (ca. 1730–1767).

Diderot's musical references to the current repertoire of the music lesson corroborate Madame de Genlis's naming of performers and instruments at her l767 salon. Solo keyboard sonatas are evidently a large part of this repertoire, for the solo sonata is the genre of Alberti and Eckard.

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[3] Quotations are from Diderot, *Leçons de clavecin . . .*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Jean Mayer and Pierre Citron (Paris, 1983), 19:61–62, 159, 162, 175, 193–194, and 209.

Accompanied sonatas, concertos, and other ensemble music for keyboard with accompanying instruments are also important, although at the lesson and even at some performances the keyboardist evidently foregoes the accompanying instruments. Diderot's mention of Bemetzrieder's apparently solo performance of a "concerto" was quoted earlier. Similarly at one of her lessons Angélique plays "a concerto by Müthel" but no string players are present to accompany her. At another lesson the teacher, Bemetzrieder, plays Schobert's *Sonate en symphonie*, Op. 9, no. 3, in F major but he plays only the keyboard part without its accompaniment of violin and two horns.

After less than a year of lessons, Diderot no longer had much use for Bemetzrieder. One reason, to be inferred from the *Leçons*, may have been Bemetzrieder's musical taste and his interest in becoming something of a public figure. While Bemetzrieder (as Diderot describes him) does share Angélique's fondness for Alberti, whom he judges "always new" (and whose music, like Bayon's, requires "delicacy and good taste"), Bemetzrieder prefers music for the "instruction or amusement" of the "multitude" of people over music for a small, select audience, like music of Cramer (the violinist from Mannheim) or "the most sublime sonata by Schobert or Eckard." Diderot would seem to prefer the sublime sonata and was even to choose Eckard as Angélique's next teacher in l772. It must be noted that in spite of Eckard's fame his published works consist of only eight sonatas and a set of variations. From this it may be inferred that Madame Louis's similarly small number of published works results from her choosing to preserve most works for private performance only, thus preserving her musical reputation. In the *Leçons* Angélique sums up her position—and presumably her father's and perhaps Madame Louis's—as follows: "Even supposing that the perception of excellence is not reserved to a few privileged souls, as I am persuaded it is, it would still be better to lead the multitude to recognition of what is beautiful than to stop at mediocrity out of regard for the multitude."

THE SONATAS

A set of sonatas was the usual debut publication of a performer and composer already known in private circles, and typically when the composer was around twenty-one, sometimes younger. (In l769 when her op. 1 appeared Mademoiselle Bayon was already twenty-three.) The set of six sonatas was published for her—also a usual arrangement—evidently with financial help from the Marquise de Langeron to whom the volume is dedicated. In her preface, which is around 250 words long, Bayon assumes a conventionally humble tone in praising the Marquise. The composer speaks of her own lack of "genius" and of her "gratitude" to her patron who, while not a performer, is still a "true judge" of music because of her sensitivity, taste, and other natural gifts.

The title page says the sonatas were engraved by "Mlle [Marie-Charlotte] Vendôme," who was one of the most important music engravers of the century, and her associate "Sr. [François] Moria." It also says the volume is to be purchased directly from the composer (a financially advantageous arrangement for a composer), whose address is given as "Rue de la Four, opposite the café," or at music publishers' hourses or shops (*aux addresses ordinaires de Musique)*. The absence of a publication date is typical of eighteenth-century music, and was perhaps intended to allow music sellers to proclaim an edition to be the latest thing in subsequent years.

The sonatas are designated "for harpsichord or piano," an option offered with increasing frequency, perhaps to appeal to more potential buyers. Half of the movements have *forte* and *piano* dynamic markings and there is one *pianis*.—markings characteristic of piano music—but at the same time, as with harpsichord music, there are almost no articulation markings. Madame de Genlis recalled piano as the instrument at her 1767 salon; Eckard several years earlier had published his preference for piano or clavichord for his Opus 1 sonatas (1763)[4] and a Mademoiselle Lechantre the year before (1768) had given the first public performance in France on a piano, a "clavecin forte-piano" from England, at the Concert Spirituel.[5]

The style of the sontatas, as can be guessed from the preceding account of contemporary keyboard repertoire, combines traditional French keyboard writing and German and Italian influences. The first four sonatas—the three for solo keyboard and the first of the sonatas with violin accompaniment—are, like Alberti's sonatas, in two movements, both in the same key but with contrasting tempos and characters. The other two accompanied sonatas, like many sonatas of Eckard and Schobert, have three movements in the pattern fast-slow-fast; middle movements are in the dominant key. Except for Sonata IV/ii, a rondo, the movements are in the usual two-reprise form, that is, "sonata form," of the Classic era; distinctive melodic material marks the second key area of the first reprise and, in the second reprise, a recapitulation of opening material occurs at the return to the home key. In the two-movement works no repeat marks are printed but they may be assumed—at double bars at the end of each reprise and at the end of the rondo's first couplet. There are several printing errors as well—occasional wrong notes, misplaced trills, and, most often, missing sharps or natural-signs with the modulation to the dominant in the first reprise.

The sonatas show the usual Classical variety of musical "topics"--marches (as in Sonata V/i), dances such as the minuet (I/ii) and gigue (the final movements of Sonatas III and VI), songs and opera arias (the "cantabile" of VI/ii), symphonies and overtures, and concertos. Sonata I/i is an energetic study with almost continuous sixteenth-note accompaniment patterns; performance seems to require only "precision and a steady beat," a style that, as noted earlier, Angélique Diderot was to find atypical of Bayon. Other movements are more "delicate," or typical. The second movement of Sonata I begins in a melodically elegant and graceful manner; a single-line left-hand accompanying part contributes to the sparse, Italianate texture. This movement, unlike the first movement, has occasional piano and forte markings. Left-hand notation in alto clef occurs here and in other sonatas in this set as well.

The first movement of Sonata II is the only first movement not marked *Allegro*; marked *Andante affectuoso*, it is an expressive melody over Alberti bass and other accompaniment patterns. The phrasing is regular and galant, in two- and four-measure groupings. The second phrase (mm.9–16) completes the period and gives this main idea added substance and seriousness. Measure 17 moves to the dominant and subsequent phrases remain there to the close of the first reprise in measure 45, after repeated cadential motives.

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[4] Eckard's *Avertissement* for the Opus 1 sonatas (1763) is quoted by William Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era,* 2nd ed. (New York, 1972), 634–635: “I have tried to make this work equally appropriate to the harpsichord, clavichord, and piano. It is for this reason that I have felt obliged to mark the softs and louds so often, which [editing] would have been useless if I had only the harpsichord in mind.”

[5] Michel Brenet, *Les Concerts en France sous l'Ancien Régime* (1900; rpt. New York, 1970), 292.

The three sonatas with violin accompaniment are generally of a more lyrical character than the solo sonatas, in keeping with the violin's ability to sustain tone. The violin is truly "obligatory" (*obligé*) as described on the title page, and there is a continuous exchange of musical ideas between the two players. Because the sonatas are published in score format the violinist is presumably meant to read over the shoulder of the keyboard player. Solo keyboard performance would be possible, but not as easy as in Schobert's *Sonate en symphonie* mentioned earlier, where accompanying instrumental parts can simply be omitted. In Bayon's accompanied sonatas a keyboard player performing alone would have to read all three staves and choose the two most important parts to play in each phrase.

In several passages the violin melody is set over only a figured bass, not an unusual scoring even at this late date. These passages occur in Sonata IV/i, Sonata V/i and iii, and Sonata VI/i and ii. In Sonata VI/i the violin first states the melody in measures l–8 with figured bass accompaniment; beginning in measure 9 the restatement is by right-hand keyboard with a fully notated left-hand and violin accompaniment. For realization the keyboard player can use the left-hand part of mm. 9–15 as a model. It is also acceptable to play the keyboard part as written, preserving the thin texture and subtle harmonic movement of the galant style (as heard in the solo keyboard sonatas). On the other hand, the repetition of opening material in two different instrumentations in this accompanied sonata suggests an allusion to the tutti-solo contast of the concerto format, where the keyboard plus violin is the "tutti" and the keyboard is the solo instrument; if performers choose to dramatize the similarities to concerto texture the pianist should play a full-voiced realization to create a fuller, not thinner, texture for the "tutti" than for the "solo" statement that follows. As this movement proceeds the two instruments alternate more frequently, as in the violin's repetition in measure 16 of the pianist's previous measure.

Sonata IV/i shows similar restatement of the opening idea except that the pianist begins and the violin, with figured bass, provides the restatement. A different arrangement occurs in Sonata V/i, where there is only one statement of the initial idea, mm.1–11, by the violin with a fully written-out keyboard part, including half-measure answers in the right hand. The virtuosic violin writing of this sonata, even more than the violin's independence in the other two accompanied sonatas, indicates that they were written for, and performed by, someone as skilled as the famous Cramer whom Madame de Genlis so admired, if not by Cramer himself. The keyboard continues the violin's bravura cadence, mm.12–16, and then continues on to begin the dominant-key material.

Fleur d'épine

As it was unusual for an amateur musician, let alone a woman, to have an opéra-comique performed by the Comédie Italienne, it is evident that Madame Louis had the help of influential people. Her husband specialized in the design and construction of theatres; by the time of his marriage in 1770 he had worked with some of the leading writers, composers, and directors. He was the protégé of the duc de Richelieu who was one of the king's Premiers Gentilshommes de la Chambre who supervised the Comédie Italienne and the Comédie Française. In 1763, Louis had been scenic designer for a production at the Comédie Italienne under the direction of Charles-Simon Favart (1710–1795), created at the request of the government in celebration of the ending of the Seven Years War; Voisenon wrote the words and François-André Danican-

Philidor (1726–1795) the music. Louis apparently became a good friend of the prominent composer André Ernest Modeste Grétry (1741–1813); in late 1782 he accompanied Grétry to the composer's native Liège, where both men were honored by the government.[6]

Voisenon's friend and secretary, Mme la Comtesse de Turpin, in her edition of the libretto published in 1781, notes that it had been set once before, by the abbé Charles Gauzargues (ca. 1725–1799), Maître de la Chapelle du Roi, for the comte de Noailles. Mme Louis asked Voisenon for the play and wrote new music for it. Upon Voisenon's death in 1775, Mme Turpin had "some men of letters" read *Fleur d'épine* to members of the Comédie Italienne, in accordance with the troupe's procedures for considering new plays. They accepted it for performance, and as composer, they chose Mme Louis. The premiere was on 22 August 1776.

Information about the circumstances leading to performance appeared around the time of the premiere in the *Mémoires secrets*, a collection of political, literary, and theatre news gathered by members of a salon in which Voisenon had been a colorful and noteworthy participant. The entry for 20 August reported that the Comédie Italienne was to perform *Fleur d'épine*. The entry for 21 August referred to the efforts of Mme Turpin, Voisenon's "intimate acquaintance" whom he had appointed as "his residuary legatee for his manuscripts and literary productions," to have the play accepted for performance with music by Mme Louis, and noted that it was scheduled ahead of other plays that had been accepted earlier.

L'Histoire de Fleur d'épine, or *The Story of May-Flower*, a rather long, wonderfully rambling fairy tale by the Irish-born French writer Antoine Hamilton (1646–1720), was familiar to many in the audiences at the Comédie Italienne in 1776. Hamilton's story begins in the court of the idyllic caliphate of Kashmir[7] and recounts the adventures of the courageous Tarare ("Nonsense") on his quest for the magical maiden Fleur d'épine (May-Flower) who could save the caliph's daughter.

Using Hamilton's main characters and ideas, Voisenon wrote his *Fleur d'épine*, which is, as the title page describes it, a *comédie mêlée d'ariettes*—a comedy (spoken dialogue) mixed with arias (and other musical numbers). Voisenon reduces Hamilton's story to the plight of the two young lovers, Fleur d'épine and Tarare, a beautiful princess and her brave prince. The evil fairy Dentue has kidnapped Fleur-d'épine, who is the daughter of the good fairy Seraine, and has taken her far away. (Dentue and Seraine are sisters; Dentue detests Seraine's goodness.) Dentue has a son, the stupid prince Dentillon, whom she wants Fleur-d'épine to marry. If Fleur d'épine made the slightest attempt to flee, Dentue's mare, named Sonnante ("Ringing"), who has bells attached to every hair on her body, would emit a "ravishing" harmony. Dentue's power also depends on a magical luminous cap studded with diamonds; Dentue has locked it up and carries the key.

When Tarare comes to rescue Fleur-d'épine, Dentue declares she wants to marry him herself. Tarare is now in danger because Dentue brews a potion—she stirs it with her large tooth (*dent*)—that transforms men into ugly monsters. (In Hamilton's story, Dentillon, too, is a monster; in

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[6] David Charlton, in private correspondence of 9 July 1996, suggests that Mme Louis and Grétry's wife, the painter Jeanne-Marie Grandon (1746–1807), may have accompanied their husbands on this trip.

[7] In Hamilton's story Kashmir is mountainous and wild and beautiful, like the actual Kashmir region in northwest India and northeast Pakistan, and has further, magical qualities besides.

Voisenon's libretto he is only a stupid prince.) In desperation, Fleur d'épine and Tarare try to convince Dentue that Tarare returns her affection. An old woman, destitute but of good heart, comes upon Fleur d'épine and Tarare. The woman gives Tarare a small packet of bird-salt for ruining Dentue's brew, and he in turn presents her with a diamond, demonstrating his generosity.

In Hamilton's story, Tarare rescues Fleur d'épine and carries her back to the caliph's court on the galloping Sonnante with the luminous cap lighting the way. In Voisenon's version, Fleur d'épine uses her wits to contrive her own rescue. Voisenon writes the scene as follows. Dentue has entrusted Dentillon with the all-important key, which he has attached to his boutonnière. Fleur d'épine, left alone with Dentillon, tries to lull him to sleep so that Tarare, who is hiding in the bushes, can come and steal the key. She sings a brilliant, virtuosic aria, because Dentillon has said that music puts him to sleep—a reaction he attributes to his being a "great nobleman." When Tarare, hidden, says something to Fleur d'épine, Dentillon half awakes and asks who was talking. "The echo," she answers. Dentillon wants to try; he talks (sings) and the "echo" answers him. Fleur d'épine now sings a gentler song, her famous "sleep aria"; Dentillon falls asleep, and Tarare steals the key.

Dentue's power is destroyed. The monsters are turned back into men, and Fleur-d'épine and Tarare can be married and live happily ever after. Seraine, exalted and beneficent, appears in all her glory. Lo and behold, the poor old woman whom Tarare presented with a diamond was the good fairy Seraine in disguise! Seraine leads the final ensemble that delivers the point moral: that suffering is good for the soul, that jealousy and inhuman power are not to be feared, and that love triumphs in happy hearts.

Performers and Audiences

The first performance at the Comédie Italienne, on Thursday, 22 August 1776, was followed by performances on the next three Saturdays, Mondays, and Thursdays for a total of ten performances in August and September, and two more on 12 and 14 April 1777, a Saturday and Monday. The Comédie Italienne had been developing a repertoire of musical plays since their merger with the Opéra-Comique in 1762. While the terms of their royal privilege required them to perform Italian plays on Tuesdays and Fridays, they performed French works the other five days of the week. Performances started at 5:30 in the afternoon and lasted about three hours; two plays were presented, sometimes three.

The first few evenings of *Fleur d'épine's* run, it was preceded by a comedy of Italian origin, such as a harlequin play. Later it was billed with another opéra-comique. These included Pierre-Alexandre Monsigny's *Le roi et le fermier* (1761) on 5 September, and, on 7 September, Niccoló Piccinni's La bonne fille (1771, the French version of La cecchina, ossia, La buona figliuola). On three evenings there was an opéra-comique by Grétry, who since 1771 had been the company's salaried music director: *Le tableau parlant* (1769) on 9 September, Silvain (1770) on 12 September, and *Le huron* (1768) on 12 April 1777. On two of these evenings, in between the singer-actors' performances of *Fleur d'épine* and a Grétry work, the company's Italian actors presented a short Italian comedy. The theatre, in the Hôtel de Bourgogne, held about 1500 people; records of the company indicate good attendance. On 14 April, in the presence of the queen and members of the royal family, sitting in the queen's box, a packed house heard *Fleur*

d'épine and Philidor's setting of a libretto by Voisenon and Quétant, *Le maréchal ferrant* (1761), a perennial favorite.

The production of *Fleur d'épine* attracted the attention of several Paris writers and critics. The *Mémoires secrètes* for 23 August, the day after the premiere, noted that *Fleur d'épine,* a "fairy play" (*féerie*), was "well received." The writer commented that, while the beginning was cold and without wit, the end of the first act was better and the second act was "charming," with "flashes of wit" and "a magnificent spectacle." (The theatre had a suspended platform that could be lowered and raised over the stage and this was probably used for Seraine's final entrance in all her glory.) The short review concluded: "The Comédiens spent a lot of money on this play. The music, not very strong, is pleasant."

A second review, dated 26 August, was longer and more enthusiastic. The plot was recounted at some length and the play was reported to be "wonderfully successful." The echo scene was singled out for praise, as was the spectacle of Dentue's "assembled relatives," an "indescribly laughable" collection of "the most hideous and bizarre figures." The writer reported that Mme Trial (as Fleur d'épine) "sings deliciously," and described the effectiveness of each of the other four actors in glowing terms.

The review in the *Correspondance secrète* dated 31 August pronounced the premiere performance "monstrous," especially the sight of a man playing a woman (Dentue). The reviewer recounted the plot in detail, noting that the joke about the sleepy "great nobleman" was "singularly applauded." The writer also reported, erroneously, that *Fleur d'Épine* was based on "a few fragments" found in Voisenon's papers, and named "Anseaume, Cagliava [Cailhava] & Saussaye [?]" as the work's producers. The music was described as "sweet but feeble," offering few memorable tunes. A second report on 7 September noted that in a subsequent performance *Fleur-d'Èpine* had undergone so many "corrections" that it was "tolerable enough" to continue playing.

Diderot attended a performance, as might be expected, and pronounced the production *cahin-caha,* "so-so." A substantial review appeared in the *Correspondance littéraire,* another chronicle of Paris literary culture, this one from Diderot's circle. The reviewer quoted much dialogue from the scene where Fleur d'épine tricks Dentillon, including the ensuing echo duet, and noted that "the ingenious duet, which the music rendered well, was applauded wildly." Though referring to some "rather brilliant features" in Mme Trial's "display aria," the writer found the work generally "cold" and concluded that "the words and music alike promise only mediocre success."

Another prominent critic, Jean-François de La Harpe, declared that the libretto "falls far short of" Hamilton's delightful story, and that "the late abbé" had been overrated. "He could have cast some interest into the role of this young Fleur d'épine, oppressed by an evil fairy and longing for her lover and for liberty (*la liberté*), and into the role of this lover who braves all danger to help the one he loves." Mme de Genlis, in her *Memoires,* recalled that although *Fleur d'épine* was "performed with success," it would have had more success if the poet had not "absolutely ruined" Hamilton's charming story.

In general, the composer's contemporaries found the music and production to be stronger than the libretto. Antoine D'Origny in the *Annales du Théâtre Italien* for August 1776 (published in 1788) reported that, while the words were sometimes funny, sometimes bizarre or in bad taste, the music had "moments of real beauty," the most striking being a trio in dialogue, Fleur

d'épine's virtuosic aria, and her sleep aria. D'Origny reported also on the April 1777 performances: "The public was satisfied with the return of *Fleur d'Épine,* considerably embellished since its printing." The music was very effective, he says, especially the sleep aria with Mme Trial's "new ornaments," and M. Julien's "tasteful" singing of Tarare's aria, *On ne doit compter.*

Besides the full score, music from *Fleur d'épine* was published in many different arrangements for smaller, chamber forces. Two collections of *ariettes* for unaccompanied voice include a duet for Fleur d'épine and Tarare, *En quoi déja il faut nous séparer,* which may have been performed in the original version but is not in the published score. Another collection included an "Air de Mme Louis" also not part of the full score, *Voici les lieux charmans ou mon âme ravie.* In periodicals and other collections of theatre music, Mme Louis, barely thirty years old when *Fleur d'épine* was performed, was in the company of the best men creating opera and opéra-comique—such composers as Philidor, Grétry, Piccinni, Monsigny, Nicolas Dezède, and Antonio Sacchini.

The Music

The published score of *Fleur d'épine* contains an overture and twenty musical numbers—eleven ariettes, or arias, sung by four of the five characters (Dentillon has no aria), plus two duets, two trios, ensemble finales for each act, two small chorus numbers, and a brief instrumental fanfare for Seraine's final entrance as *dea ex machina*. Republished in *Women Composers: Music Through the Ages* (1996–)*,* vols. 4 and 5, are the overture and six of the vocal numbers that were most popular in the eighteenth century: Fleur d'épine's first and third arias (of her three), Tarare's first two arias (of his three), Seraine's second aria (of her two), and the famous "echo duet" for Dentillon and Tarare.

The arias are generally in A-B-A form with a brief orchestral introduction. Voisenon's ariette texts that contrast two states of mind are given musical settings that contrast A and B sections in different tempos and keys. The arias are melodious and sophisticated in the currently favored Italianate manner, with much repetition of text and melodic motives. Mme Louis would have written them for particular actor-singers of the Comédie Italienne. Mme Trial and M. Julien, two of the troupe's leading members, played Fleur d'épine and Tarare, M. Trial was the simpleton Dentillon, M. Michu (in a tenor *travesti* role) was Dentue, and Mme Moulinghem was Seraine.

The Comédie Italienne was a cooperative, profit-sharing troupe; members chose the works to be performed (as noted earlier) and hired the orchestra and chorus. In 1776 the chorus might have consisted of as few as nine men and six women, about two or three singers on each part. The orchestra consisted of about 26 men—18 string players and eight wind players: six first violins, five seconds, two violas, three cellos, two double-basses (the last two instruments doubling the "basso" part), two players doubling flute and oboe (the *Fleur d'épine* score does not call for flutes and oboes at the same time), two horns, and two bassoons.[8] The concertmaster directed the performance from the first violin part, which may have included some cues for other

[8] David Charlton, "Orchestra and Chorus at the Comédie-Italienne (Opéra-Comique), 1755–99," in *Slavonic and Western Music: Essays for Gerald Abraham,* ed. M. H. Brown and R. J. Wiley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 97 (chorus) and 99 (orchestra).

instruments. Customarily the composer would be expected to supervise rehearsals; the assertiveness this required, however, was not something a woman could display, and thus another, male musician would have acted on behalf of Mme Louis.

The Overture is in two sections, Allegro and Andante, each in Classic key-area form (sonata form). The energetic opening section in G Major modulates to D major and then explores D minor and other keys, with new melodic motives, before returning to the home key. In the Andante in C major the composer creates a softer texture by omitting horns and scoring initial statments of each melody for strings alone. The expected return to the first key of the overture is accomplished by the opening duet, which begins in G-major.

In *Quand on est tendre*, Fleur d'épine muses on her love for Tarare in a gentle aria in F major with strings and flutes. In the introspective Largo section, while she sings a dignified melody in sarabande rhythm, the steady sixteenth-note accompaniment reflects her troubled, agitated state of mind. As she describes the "night" of the lover's absence the melody moves downwards toward the dominant key, C major. In the second section, a bright Allegro that continues in C major, she imagines his return; the brief excursion to A minor includes chromatic inflections appropriate for such expressions of longing. The opening material returns briefly and the aria concludes with a graceful cadenza.

In *À l'Amour tout est possible*, Tarare, accompanied by strings alone, Allegretto, in B-flat major, assures Fleur d'épine of the power of his love. At the beginning he quotes the melody of the middle section of her aria (just described), where she was longing for him; he thus fulfills her hopes. In the second section, in G minor, the melody is chromatic and affective.

Tarare's aria, *On ne doit compter d'exister*, is another declaration of love, this one a sham declaration to Dentue. The aria's heroic character comes from the rather brisk tempo, businesslike phrases, and bold horns. Occasional sudden, unexpected forte chords, however, suggest insincerity, and the display of ornamentation suggests self-consciousness. The contrasting section in G minor is quieter and more convincing. This part could be staged so that Tarare would really be addressing Fleur-d'épine without Dentue's noticing it.

In *C'est l'état de notre cœur*, Seraine, disguised as a poor old woman, solemnly shares her wisdom concerning matters of the heart. The music contrasts the young and unsusceptible heart, Andantino, with the rejuvenated Allegro intensity of mature love. Time will stand still, she says, when her own lover returns.

In the echo duet from Act II, *Écho, que Fleur d'épine est belle*, Dentillon sings of his contemplated marriage to Fleur d'épine, and Tarare, hidden, answers in echo. While the conversation is rather sparse, the orchestration, as if to compensate, is substantial and rich—both horns and oboes are used, and in close spacing. In a clever comic touch, when one of Dentillon's phrases—on the word attrape ("trap")—cadences with an appoggiatura, the echo omits the appoggiatura (m. 46). When the phrase recurs, Dentillon omits the appoggiatura (m. 60) and the echo boldly adds it. Dentillon does not suspect a thing, nor does he notice that the "echo" answers his rhetorical questions, contradicts his boasting that he will marry Fleur d'épine, and tells him he is being tricked.

In her "sleep aria," *Au bord d'une onde pure*, a gentle lullaby accompanied by muted strings and gentle pizzicato beats in the cello, Fleur-d'épine sings Dentillon to sleep.

Conclusions

Investigation into the life and works of this composer is inseparable from consideration of the musical institutions and social environment in which she produced her music. As a musician she shared the tastes and musical values of her time. Her contacts and repertoire were international.

Her name was associated with the development of fortepiano music and fortepiano playing. Inclusion of the sonatas in the 1769 Breitkopf thematic catalog initiated her recognition by German music scholars. Publication of her sonatas also brought her the recognition Diderot thought she was seeking in England: the copy of her sonatas now in the British Library is inscribed "This Volume belongs to the Queen 1788" (Queen Charlotte, wife of George III). The connection may be J. C. Bach, perhaps through Cramer, who had left Paris for London in 1772 and worked with him.

Her participation in another favorite French musical genre in the latter half of the eighteenth century, *opéra comique*, was rewarded with a noteworthy public performance. Copies of the *Fleur d'épine* score found their way to the Berlin Staatsbibliothek, the Furstlich Öttingen-Wallerstein'sche Bibliothek in Harburg, and the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna.

As a musician her activity centered upon private music making, mainly in the salon. While information is not so abundant about music in this sphere as it is about public concerts and theatrical productions, her published music provides a glimpse of a skilled and well-connected eighteenth-century musician.

List of Works

The composer's surviving works are listed in order of publication within each category, beginning with the two principal titles and proceeding to smaller works, chiefly excerpts of various kinds from *Fleur d'épine*. First lines of these excerpts are listed by number in note 40. Library locations are from Barbara Jackson, *"Say Can You Deny Me": A Guide to Surviving Music by Women from the 16th through the 18th Centuries* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1994): 258–61. That list was compiled with the help of Calvert Johnson, who has also provided further details for the present list. Key to library sigla is on p. 21.

Full scores

Six sonates pour le clavecin ou le piano forte dont trois avec accompagnement de violon obligé ("Six Sonatas for the Harpsichord or Piano Forte, Three with Obligatory Violin Accompaniment") . . . Œuvre I. Paris: chez l'auteur, aux adresses ordinaires; Lyon: Castaud (gravée par Mlle Vendôme et le Sr. Moria) [ca.1769]. Score.

Library locations: F: Pan (Pmeyer). GB: Lbl (R.M. 16. L. 25, inscribed "This Volume belongs to the Queen 1788").

— Facsimile reprint in *Keyboard Sonatas of Marie-Emmanuelle Bayon and Francesca LeBrun,* with introduction by Deborah Hayes. Women Composers Series, 23. New York: Da Capo Press, 1990.

Fleur d'Épine, comédie en deux actes, mêlée d'ariettes, representée pour la première fois par les comédiens italiens ordinaires du Roi le 22 aoust 1776 ("May-Flower," a Comedy in Two Acts

with Ariettes, first presented by the Comédie-Italienne Players in Ordinary to the King on 22 August 1776). Paris: Huguet (imprimé par Bernard) [ca. 1776]. Score. 151 pp.

Library locations: A: Wn. D: Au, Bds, Mbs, WD (incomplete). F: Pn (4 exx.—Vm5 177, H.954, Rés.F.367 [formerly owned by Mme de Genlis], Rés.F358 [formerly owned by the duc de Chartres]). GB: Lbl (H.506). US: Phu, Wc.

Excerpts from *Fleur d'épine*

Overture

New edition in *Women Composers: Music Through the Ages*, edited by Sylvia Glickman and Martha Schleifer (8 vols; New York: G. K. Hall/Macmillan, 1996–), volume 5.

Overture, arr.

Ouverture de *Fleur d'épine arrangé pour le clavecin ou le forte-piano avec accompagnement d'un violon et violoncelle ad libitum par M. Benaut.* Paris: auteur/aux adresses ordinaires [1777]. F: Pn (kbd; kbd, vlc) (L.5306 [19]), (Vm7 5843)

Vocal Settings

New edition in *WC:MTA,* volume 4 of six vocal numbers— #3: ariette *Quand on est tendre*; #4, ariette *À l'Amour tout est possible*; #6, aria, *On ne doit compter*; #9, aria, *C'est l'état de notre coeur*; #16, Duo *Écho, que Fleur d'épine est belle*; and #17, ariette très lente, *Au bord d'une onde pure.*

Ariettes, arr.

Airs détachés de Fleur d'Épine. Paris: aux adresses ordinaires de musique (gravés par Huguet) [1776]. Contents: six ariettes (#3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 17) and a duet, "En quoi déja il faut nous séparer," not in the published score; in treble clef, unaccompanied.

F: Pa (Ars. M.734[1]), Pn (Y.522).

Ariettes de La fleur d'épine. Paris, Mlle. Girard [ca.1778] Contents: same selections as in the previous listing, in treble clef, unaccompanied, but in a different order and different engraving. F: V (Holmes C655 tome vii).

Ariettes in music periodicals

Two ariettes (#9, 17), in Les Soirées espagnoles ou choix d'ariettes d'opéra comiques et autres avec accompagnement de guittare, menuets et allemandes par Mr. Vidal . . . feuilles. Paris: Boüin, Mlle Castigny, Mr Blaizot, En province chez les Marchands de musique [1776] [hebdomadaire]. CH: Zz (inc.). F: Pn

Eleven ariettes, etc. (#2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 17), in *Journal hebdomadaire ou recueil d'airs choisies dans les opera comiques melé de vaudevilles, rondeaux, ariettes, duo, romances, &ca avec accompagnement de violon et basse chiffrée pour le clavecin,* XIV. Paris: chez M. De la Chevardière, 1777.
CH: BEk. D: LEm. F: Pn (Weckerlin I.150). GB: Ckc, Lcm (both incomplete runs). Added 15Sept97: US:I Cornell Univ Library

One ariette, arr. F. Petrini for voice and harp, in *Journal de harpe* [vol.] 10. Paris: chez l'auteur/ chez la d[am]e Oger [c.1779] F: Pn (Vm7 672)

Ariettes in collections

Two ariettes (#4, 6) in *IIè Recueil d'ariettes d'opéra comiques arrangées pour une voix et un violon ou pour deux violons* par Mr. Roeser . . . . Paris: Le Menu et Boyer, Mlle Castigny [1777]. F: Pn (A35.134)

Ariette (#6). S.l.: s.n., 1777. F: Pn (L.5192[2]) (library catalog specifies guitar accompaniment)

Two ariettes (#6, 17) in *12e & 14e Recueil d'ariettes choisies arrangés pour le clavecin ou le forte-piano avec accompagnement de 2 violons et la basse chiffrée* . . . par M. Benaut . . . . Paris: l'auteur, addresses ordinaires de musique [ca. 1778]. B: Bc (incomplete). F: Pn.

One ariette (#17) in M. Couarde de Narbonne, *Recueil d'ariettes avec accompagnement de harpe dédié à Mme de May par M. Couarde. Œuvre 1.* (Listed as *Le Sommeil de Fleur d'Épine,* Opera Comique). Paris: chez l'Auteur/Cousineau [ca. 1779]. F: Pn

"Voici les lieux charmans ou mon âme ravie," as "Air de Me. Louis" (not in *Fleur d'épine* full score), in *Recueil d'airs choisis avec accompagnement de harpe*, edited by P. P. Dufeuille. Paris: Mr. Naderman, [1779]. F: Pn (A.33.889)

Five ariettes (#3, 4, 6, 9, 17) in *Extrait des air françois de tous les opéras nouveaux qui ont été représentés . . . Aappropriés pour le chant ou la flûte avec la basse continue,* 10. Amsterdam: La Haye, B. Hummel [ca. 1780]. D: KIl. GB: Gu, Lcm, Mp (all three incomplete runs). US: Wc

Three ariettes (#3, 4, 17) in *IVe Recueil de douze ariettes avec accompagnement de clavecin ou forte piano. Choisis de différens opéra et opéras comique arrangés par Valentin Roeser . . .* Paris: Le Menu et Boyer, [ca. 1780]. F: ~~Pe~~ Pn

One ariette (#17) in *Elite de chansons et ariettes décentes avec accompagnement de basse continue.* Paris: Chez tous les M[archan]ds de musique (gravée par Mlle Ferrières); Lyon: Guera, [1786]. F: C, Pn

Ariettes in manuscripts

Ariettes (#8 and *Quelle amante dans sa flamme,* not in full score) for voice and keyboard, & for voice, vn, and continuo. 1776. F: Pn (Vma MS 967)

One ariette (#17) with harp accomp. in untitled French ms., ca. 1780. F: Pn (Vm7 4823)

One ariette (#17) in "Sonates pour clavecin des divers auteurs" for voice and harpsichord b.c. Portuguese ms from late 18th century. F: Pn [Vm7 4874])

Ariettes in "Recueil de chansons pour la harpe ou forte piano, mis en musique." Ms. Listed in the catalog *Collection musicale André Meyer,* vol. 2 (Abbéville: Imprimerie F. Paillart, 1960). F: Pn (Pmeyer).

(Library sigla follow on p. 21)

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