

[Title anonymized by author] Music and the Séance: *Second Empire Paris*

ABSTRACT

Music has featured prominently in the occult from as far back as histories of the subject may be traced. However great the occult's importance in French esoterism – at least from Mersenne to Messiaen – its more recent manifestations in the nineteenth-century séance have inexplicably ignored its music. Newly recovered accounts allow music's key role in the séance in the second half of the nineteenth century and beyond to be placed at the center of its history.

The séance – the practice of table-turning – arrived in Paris in early 1853. Within weeks, Parisian *salons* were swamped with spirits relaying words, images, and music from beyond the grave. Music's engagement with spiritism took many forms: the documentation of spirits at performances in the opera house, transmission of composers' posthumous views on terrestrial and celestial music, and the dictation of unknown works by Mozart. One *salon*, made up by the Fourierist members of the editorial board of the recently suppressed journal *La démocratie pacifique*, was remarkable for its success in recalling celestial music from the spirit world; the music thus broadcast to the *salon* was recorded by the critic and composer Allyre Bureau, and subsequently published. The music thus transcribed was reported to various musical authorities – the composer Félicien David and the pianist Émile Prudent – as well as to such well-connected *salonnières* as Delphine de Girardin. The occult musics and the discourses that surrounded them were transmitted to posterity in such different media as the fantastic novel and the oil painting.

[Title anonymized by author] **Music and the Séance: *Second Empire* Paris**

[ANONYMIZED BY AUTHOR]

The dead spoke to the living. Intruding on the gentility of the drawing room, the occult established itself in the 1850s and 1860s as a seemingly irresistible cultural force in contemporary Parisian sociability, as it claimed its place alongside conversation, cards, and parlor games. Sociable esoterism represented a distinctive element among forms of engagement with death that characterized mid-nineteenth-century Paris. As cemeteries were excavated from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, their contents were moved across the city to the more distant catacombs;<sup>1</sup> as late as the 1850s, corpses were being transported from one neighborhood to another in carts that resembled the tumbrils of the Revolution and Terror.<sup>2</sup> French culture furthermore placed significant emphasis on the *bonne mort* – death surrounded by family and friends accompanied by religious ritual – which conveyed a manageable sense of grief and loss, with the *mort laide* reserved for society’s outcasts.<sup>3</sup> As the dead crossed the city, and as death itself was dramatised, so the occult contributed to this foregrounding of death in

<sup>1</sup> Clément and Thomas, *Atlas du Paris souterrain* is fundamental. Recent Studies are Robin, Gély and Viré, *Au cœur des ténèbres* and Koudounaris, *L’empire de la mort*. For an early nineteenth-century view, see Héricart de Thury, *Description des catacombes de Paris*. This article originated in a panel [anonymized by author]

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the evocative photograph of workmen installing bones in the catacombs as late as 1860 by Nadar [Gaspard-Félix Tournachon], reproduced in Colonna-Désari et al., *Les catacombes de Paris*, 23.

<sup>3</sup> The contrast between *la bonne mort* and *la mort laide* as the basis for a fully-developed theory of the theatricality of death is developed in Ariès, *L’homme devant la mort*; Ariès, *Essais sur l’histoire de la mort*, and is deployed to musicological ends in [anonymized by author].

French culture by contributing a unique musical and aesthetic dimension to the world of literature, religion, theatre, and the *salon*.

Such rituals of death in the mid nineteenth century did much to support alignments of music, esoterism and the occult.<sup>4</sup> Although French esoterism spilled over into musical thought from Mersenne to Messiaen, the essentially hermetic qualities of the occult would become democratized with the emergence of spiritism during the *Second Empire* (1852-1870).<sup>5</sup> Spiritism, from its beginnings closely linked with music, was initially driven by a vogue for séances involving table-turning which arrived in Paris in March 1853, and which upended not only French attitudes to the occult but also disrupted *salon* culture, medicine, art, dance, poetry, organized religion, and especially the reception and memory of music.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For esoterism in music, see Godwin, *L'Ésotérisme musical en France, 1750-1950*; for a broader survey, Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth*, and the collections of essays: Wuidar, ed., *Music and Esotericism*; Roth and George, eds, *Explorations in Music and Esotericism*. Even as recently as 2018, the editors of a special issue of *Journal of Musicological Research* devoted to “Music and the Occult” could suggest at the beginning of their introduction that such a subject “calls for a bit of explanation at the outset” and “for many the very word ‘occult’ may have a sinister sound” (Ford and Reed, “Introduction,” 1). The special issue is “a reflection of [the occult’s] contemporary technological, cultural, social, and political developments” (Ford and Reed, 2). But even by then there had already been published studies of Debussy, Mozart and Bach and the occult (Pasler, “Revisiting Debussy’s Relationships with Otherness;” Baran, “Mozart and the Occult;” Berger, *Der okkulte Bach*) to say nothing of the literature on the self-confessed occultists: Scriabin, Sorabji, Scott, Schumann, and of the importance of the occult in subgenres of hip-hop and heavy metal (Witch House and Occult Rock in particular). A useful guide is Huckvale, *The Occult Arts of Music*; see also the helpful introduction in Brittan, “Music, Magic, and the Supernatural.”

<sup>5</sup> Works that underpin the current study are Cuchet, *Les voix d’outre-tombe*; Lachapelle, *Investigating the Supernatural*; Edelman, *Voyantes, guérisseuses et visionnaires en France, 1785-1914*; Marot, *Paris occulte*; Sharp, “Rational Religion, Irrational Science;” Sharp, *Secular Spirituality*.

<sup>6</sup> Studies of music and séances are rare. For recent examples, see Andrick, “Jesse Shepard’s Sensational Musical Séances” and Spinner, “(In)audible Sound” for the United States of America, and Raz, “Séances, “Sperrits,” and Self-Playing Accordions” for Great Britain. For music and séances in France see Fauquet, *Musique en utopie*, 298.

Séances engaged with music in several ways: from musical texts and words about music that were derived from simple table-turning, through the possibility of mediums evoking and speaking to musicians from beyond the grave, to such more rarefied activities as the automatic drawing of musical subjects and the transmission of musical works by well-known but long-dead composers. Furthermore, what emerges very early in the history of music and the séance is the distinction, drawn both through mediums and by the ventriloquizing of the spirit world, between terrestrial and celestial music. Terrestrial music embodied the work of composers while they were still living. Celestial music was the very different product of the spirit world itself, composed by spirits themselves, understood and valued by them; its difference to the terrestrial was stressed by many interlocutors from the spirit world: such composers as François-Adrien Boïeldieu and Mozart, Saint Louis (Louis IX, 1214-1270, King of France, 1226-1270), and playwright Victorien Sardou, all of whom also pointed endlessly to the difficulty of the terrestrial understanding of the celestial. Dictation, performance, and transcription of such celestial music took place during a séance in a Parisian *salon* on the Rue de Beaune during the 1850s. It was a central part of the history of spiritism in the *Second Empire*.

Uncovering music's place in the occult of the mid-nineteenth century points to the vulnerability of a music history that rejects the esoteric and that searches for the cultivation of music exclusively in the concert hall, opera house or church. Sitting somewhere between the *salon*, faith, and the history of ideas, music and the occult interrupts the disciplinary basis that underpins the study of nineteenth-century music; it does this by challenging assumptions about musical authority and authorship, and by questioning suppositions about music's ontology and epistemology.

### *Séances, Spiritism, and the Arts: Paris 1853*

The *Second-Empire* fashion for the séance took its cue from reports of table-turning in the United States of America at the beginning of the 1840s. Accounts of French séances invariably referred to the paranormal experiences of the Fox family in Hydesville, New York,<sup>7</sup> but the immediate touchstone for Parisian experience was an article published in the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung* that described the arrival of practitioners of the occult from North America in Bremen,<sup>8</sup> a text that was translated, reprinted and widely disseminated in French.<sup>9</sup> Its French publication in March 1853 triggered an unprecedented fashion for the séance in Paris that would overwhelm the city's *salons*, create a cadre of mediums that enhanced the séance's visibility, and embed spiritism as an intellectual and religious force that would last for decades. The textual nature of French society in the nineteenth century meant that the explosion of the séance and especially its musical dimension was documented from 1853 onwards in lavish detail.<sup>10</sup> Endless pamphlets and short books were published in Paris and all over the country during the years in which séances were popular, and these texts permit the most accurate of histories of the spread not merely of the séances themselves but also of the artistic disciplines – and music in particular – with which they were associated.

<sup>7</sup> An influential example was Erdan, *La France mystique*, 1:57, but a fuller account is given in the anonymous *Examen raisonné des prodiges récents d'Europe et d'Amérique*, 36-43. For a general view, see Holloway, "Enchanted Spaces."

<sup>8</sup> *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 March 1853.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Guillard, *Table qui danse et table qui répond*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Cuchot (*Voix d'Outre-tombe*, 75) counts more than 40 texts published on the phenomenon of table-turning between its appearance in April 1853 and the end of 1854. More than half refer to music.

Music's place in the ecosystem of the *séance* invites comparison with other types of esoterism. While magnetism and the dramatic expression of the supernatural relate to music in traditions that go back in some cases to antiquity, somnambulism, the *fantastique* and spiritism have a more focused history in the music of the nineteenth century. Despite its origin at least as early as ninth-century Persia, the therapeutic quality of magnetism was well known in the west from Kircher to Mesmer, and was appropriated in discourses around the *séance* in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> While it could be argued that supernatural underpins the certain parts of western culture right up to the present, and is fundamental to the emergence of opera, its codification and use in instrumental music as an *ombra* topic in the eighteenth century gave a further impetus to its deployment not only in instrumental music, but also in opera and song.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, two subsets of the esoteric – somnambulism and the *fantastique* – were more immediately located in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries respectively, but continued to exert an influence on the later *salon* environment of the *séance*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Burnett, "Music and Magnetism;" despite its very different disciplinary background, Evers, "Musik und Magnetismus" contains a useful historical overview of magnetism as a therapeutic practice and how music plays a role. For the nexus of music, electricity, and telegraphy, see van Rij, "A Living, Fleshly Bond'." Brittan associates electricity and telegraphy with the beginnings of interpretative conducting in "The Electrician, the Magician and the Nervous Conductor." For a study which brings magnetism together with hypnosis and music in the decades discussed here, see Frigaud Manning, *Ce que la musique fait à l'hypnose*.

<sup>12</sup>See McClelland, "*Ombra* Music in the Eighteenth Century," with a shorter summary in McClelland, "*Ombra* and *tempesta*."

<sup>13</sup> Pesic gives a valuable overview of the ways in which Mesmer's successors began to focus on questions of somnambulism in "Composing the Crisis: From Mesmer's Harmonica to Charcot's Tam-tam," while Hibberd broadens the understanding of somnambulism on the stage beyond the usual suspects of Bellini and Verdi ("Dormez donc, mes chers amours';" Hibberd, "Magnetism, Muteness, Magic"). For ballet, see Meglin, "Behind the Veil of Translucence;" for the *fantastique* in music, see Brittan, *Music and Fantasy in the Age of Berlioz*.

Parisian *salon* culture of the 1850s was the perfect environment for the development of the *séance*.<sup>14</sup> Around the edges of the drawing room, such solitary undertakings as reading, embroidery, needlepoint, and the inspection of engravings and other works of art largely precluded the interaction with large numbers of other participants; this was common in smaller *salons*, or even *parloirs* where the emphasis was on family, friends, and neighbors rather than on the diversion of many highly varied guests. Across the spectrum of *salon* activity for larger numbers of individuals, there was an array of conduct that ranged from the fully active to the completely passive. Passive activities assumed a clear difference between audience and executant, with seats in rows affording the best views to those at the front and the worst at the back. Performances of music and *théâtre de société* were the obvious practices that involved this configuration, but so were recitations of poetry, dramatised proverbs, *tableaux vivants*, performances of song and instrumental works, *opéra de salon*, and more formalized versions of such games as charades.<sup>15</sup> Active practices for which an audience was not a prerequisite – conversation, cards, dice, and board games (*jeux de société*) – more frequently took place around a table. Although conversation was not so restricted, the nature of the activity presupposed a certain proximity, and audiences were not unknown: the theatrical nature of the *art de la conversation* is frequently revealed in images of bystanders admiring the rhetorical skills of others. Communal activities in the *salon* thus veered from the passive – where executant and

<sup>14</sup> For the *salon* of the *grand siècle* see Boon, *The Life of Madame Necker*; Kale, *French Salons*; Lilti, *Le monde des salons*. Older histories of the *salon* in the *Second Empire* are Ancelot, *Les salons de Paris*; de Bassinville, *Les salons d'autrefois*; Beaumont-Vassy, *Les Salons de Paris*; Bled, *La société française*. For recent scholarly attempts to engage with the *salon* of the *Second Empire* see Rièse, *Les salons littéraires parisiens*; Zucconi, “Les salons de Mathilde et Julie Bonaparte;” Glincoer and Laisney, *L'âge des cénacles*.

<sup>15</sup> For *théâtre de société*, see the collection of essays: *Tréteaux et paravents*, especially Yon “Introduction,” and its extensive bibliography.

recipient were clearly separated – to the active, with which most individuals present were absorbed. Levels of commitment remained in a constant state of flux, as disengaged audiences moved from one activity to another but also re-engaged as the mood took them. In this distinction between active and passive zones of attention, the physical object – the table – is critical in defining behaviors and activities. It is also key to the *séance*.<sup>16</sup>

In the preface to one of several works that claimed to examine séances in a considered and scientific manner, an anonymous Parisian author, who signed himself merely as a *philosophe*, bore witness to the astonishment with which the paranormal gripped Parisian society. Writing in October 1853, six months after the appearance of séances in Paris, he reported that

... suddenly a mass of marvelous phenomena was seen to arise and spread throughout Europe. To the great astonishment of men of all conditions and opinions, many hundreds of pieces of furniture and other material objects started first to move on their own and then to reply to questions that were addressed to them.

In the face of this unexpected spectacle, there was a general sense of stupefaction. The facts being visible every day in a thousand different places, and each day verified by a crowd of observers, it was no longer possible to deny with mild assurance.<sup>17</sup>

The anonymous *philosophe* – and his work is a careful, contextualized study of examples described in newspapers and other printed works – well illustrates the extent of Parisian

<sup>16</sup> For the concept of the “zone of attention,” see Deaville, “The Well-Mannered Auditor.”

<sup>17</sup> *Examen raisonné*, 3-4.

enthusiasm for the séance, the astonishment with which it was greeted, and the speed with which it spread. When he speaks of “pieces of furniture and other material objects [that] started first to move ... and then to reply to questions,” he points to the specific technologies of the séance that developed during the 1850s.

The earliest Parisian séances began with tables – usually a three-legged *guéridon* – moving under the putative influence of a spirit from the other world. This developed very quickly into a system whereby a spirit could knock or rap on the table (French accounts borrowed the terms “knocking” and “rapping” from North American descriptions) and through which elementary dialogue could take place.<sup>18</sup> As early as June 1853, however, individuals deemed more susceptible to approaches from the other world emerged as mediums who might use alphabetical clock faces (the so-called *table-Girardin*, discussed later), to transcribe prose or – as in the case of the novelist and playwright Victor Hugo in exile in Jersey – simply record occult words using pen and paper.<sup>19</sup> Under these circumstances, it was a short distance to the dictation of poetry from beyond the grave, and Pierre-François Mathieu gave an account of various poems being dictated, including to himself, from the spirit world: “Two or three times, I took up the pen ... and nothing equaled my surprise, not to say my stupefaction, when I saw verses emerge little by little, following all the rules of prosody, hemistiches following hemistiches, the rhyme arriving without effort, etc.”<sup>20</sup> Mathieu invoked a similarity with the literary improvisations of Pierre-Marie-Michel-Eugène Coulray de Pradel, who had been dumbfounding Parisian audiences with his ability to extemporize poems and even plays since the

<sup>18</sup> Cuchot, *Les voix d’outre-tombe*, 65-74; Lachapelle, *Investigating the Supernatural*, 9-14.

<sup>19</sup> Simon, *Les tables tournantes de Jersey*.

<sup>20</sup> Mathieu, *Un mot sur les tables parlantes*, 19.

1820s.<sup>21</sup> Mathieu also described the use of the magic pencil, and although he did not extend his account beyond the transcription of paranormal texts, the technique he used was of importance in the transmission of works of graphic art to the *séance*.<sup>22</sup>

*Séances* well illustrate the varying zones of attention that characterize the nineteenth-century *salon* (figure 1).

[Figure 1]

The engraving is found on the first page of the *comédie-vaudeville: La table tournante*, by Eugène de Mirecourt and Jules-François-Félix Fleury-Husson (better known as Champfleury), which was premiered at the Théâtre des Variétés just weeks after the trend for the *séance* started.<sup>23</sup> The picture shows six participants, five around the table with the sixth standing; the dress of the participants, the furniture and the decor – as well as the action of the *comédie-vaudeville* itself – identify a *moyen-* or even a *petit-bourgeois* environment for this activity, with no non-participant observers (although the role of the standing male is ambiguous). But while this might confirm the hermetic sense of the *séance* common to much popular fiction, the practice of turning or talking tables could be significantly more public, as an exactly contemporary depiction in a more formal *salon* clearly shows (figure 2).<sup>24</sup>

[Figure 2]

<sup>21</sup> Coulray de Pradel, *Recueil poétique*.

<sup>22</sup> Mathieu, *Un mot sur les tables parlantes*, 14-18.

<sup>23</sup> *La table tournante*, frontispiece.

<sup>24</sup> *L'illustration*, 14 May 1853.

Here, there are no fewer than three simultaneous *séances* in progress in a more elaborate *salon*, with large mirrors, candelabra, opulently framed paintings on the wall, with costume and furniture to match. The number of non-participant observers is greater than the number of those involved in the *séances* themselves; there are at least two non-participant pairs in conversation (front-left and back-left of the image), the second of which seem to be totally disengaged from the diversions of the *séance*. Furthermore, the mechanics of the *séance* – particularly the touching of hands – seem, in the table at front-right at least, to be as much a pretext for flirtation as for communication with the other world.

Most published responses to the growth in the popularity of the *séance* were either forms of satire – much of which appeared in the theatre and frequently with music<sup>25</sup> – or could be described as falling into the domain of experimental science, with various forms of text and trial investigated and documented at length.<sup>26</sup> The easiest of these scientific explanations was that the phenomenon of tables that moved or enabled speech, poetry or music was simply a fraud, triggered by conscious movements on the part of the participants;<sup>27</sup> a further rationalization was that the movements were all triggered through human agency but were involuntary, and this was the reasoning preferred through official channels by the *Académie des Sciences*. More popular were arguments that read the motion and discursive acts of the turning tables (*guéridons*) as a manifestation of magnetism whose proponents – after the collapse of interest in Mesmer at the

<sup>25</sup> Theatrical parodies of *séances* and their music are discussed in [anonymized by author].

<sup>26</sup> For an overview of the systems of explanation for the *séance*, see Cuchot, *Les voix d'outre-tombe*, 82-92.

<sup>27</sup> This position is well illustrated by the contribution to the journal *Cosmos*, 15 May 1853 (so just days after the phenomenon of the *séance* had arrived in Paris) by François Moigno, the journal's Jesuit founder, the title of whose article reveals his complete rejection of any scientific basis for the practice of turning, dancing, or speaking tables (“Variétés”).

Revolution – had been vociferous during the 1840s; these enthusiasts then saw confirmation of their approach (which included somnambulism, animal magnetism and fluid manifestations, and which around 1900 would be termed “ectoplasm”) in the outcomes of the séances of the 1850s.<sup>28</sup> But the most common view was that séances revealed exactly what they claimed: that they simply empowered the poetic, dramatic, artistic and musical voices of the spirit world; such a perspective offered a challenge not only to the burgeoning world of experimental science but also to various forms of religion.

Early on, the relationship between the church and the occult was surprisingly casual. Unofficial responses were remarkably generous, as when Eugène Panon-Desbassayns, comte de Richemont, reviewed both the history of the séance in the United States and in France in late 1853, and observed that “Nearly all the spirits’ spontaneous communications bear on religious questions. .... The truth is that ... the aim, ... which most of them admit, is to wipe out all Christian sects,” but de Richemont offered no countermeasures.<sup>29</sup> His views carried some weight since he was both a member of the General Council of the Society of Saint-Vincent de Paul as well as a distinguished chemist and physicist. Writing in the same year, journalist Henri Carion, who had initially ridiculed spiritism, then found himself convinced by its veracity and proposed that it should be “judged by an august tribunal, in front of whose decisions there is not *a single Christian* who would hesitate to demur [emphasis added],”<sup>30</sup> a view that triggered a published exchange with the Bishop of Cambrai. Formal reactions were slow and hesitant, in

<sup>28</sup> For an account of encounters with spiritism by nineteenth-century proponents of magnetism, see Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith*, 64-94.

<sup>29</sup> Panon-Desbassayns, *Le Mystère de la danse des tables*, 17-18.

<sup>30</sup> Carion, *Lettres sur l'évocation des esprits*, xvi.

large part because it was clear that many priests were engaged in séances themselves. Most bishops simply advised their clergy to abstain from séances but went no further. Serious response from the Vatican had to wait until the early 1860s, by which time turning and speaking tables had evolved into a well-organized cult, with the full panoply of ritual practices, vocabularies, and texts.<sup>31</sup>

Responsibility for redirecting the enthusiasm for séances in the direction of what would be termed spiritism lay in the hands of a single charismatic individual: Allan Kardec. Born Hippolyte-Léon-Denizard Rivail in 1804, Kardec began his career as a teacher and educational reformer in his native Lyon.<sup>32</sup> He was associated with music and theatre as the administrator of the Théâtre des Folies-Marigny between 1852 and 1853,<sup>33</sup> and it is likely that it was in these circles that Rivail – as he was then still known – encountered Sardou, who would become a very public actor – and a proponent of music – on the stage of spiritism.<sup>34</sup> Rivail changed his name to Kardec with the publication of the first of several extensive tracts on spiritism: *Le livre des esprits*, published in 1857, followed by *Le livre des mediums* in 1861; both works, alongside his

<sup>31</sup> Cuchot, *Voix d'outre-tombe*, 353-387.

<sup>32</sup> Given his near-legendary status throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and his continuing influence in parts of Latin America today, it is unsurprising that biographies of Kardec were published in most decades of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Recent useful studies are Prieur, *Allan Kardec et son époque* and Moreil, *Allan Kardec*, with a short introduction available as Bouchet, *Kardec*. Kardec's modern celebrity is attested *inter alia* by a *bande dessinée* of over 100 pages (Luis, *Kardec et les Esprits*).

<sup>33</sup> Moreil, *Allan Kardec*, 97.

<sup>34</sup> d'Andrea, "Victorien Sardou et le spiritisme." Although Rebell, *Victorien Sardou, le théâtre et l'époque* remains useful, two recent collections of essays bring scholarship on Sardou up to date: Ducrey, ed., *Victorien Sardou*, and Moindrot, ed., *Victorien Sardou*.

journal *La revue spirite* which began publication in 1858, are basic texts for tracing the history of music and the occult in the 1850s and 1860s.

In a note in his *La France mystique* dated 28 June 1853, only weeks after séances had begun in Paris, journalist Alexandre Erdan could observe that the phenomenon had completely overwhelmed the city. But he particularly stressed the importance of music. “Now,” he wrote, “the watchword is *music!* And in a building where there were two or three séances taking place...” (he was clearly thinking of apartment buildings rather than *hôtels particuliers*), “... all the doorbells sound, glasses tinkle and carafes resound as if struck with a spoon.”<sup>35</sup> Erdan was right; barely a single description of a *Second-Empire* séance could avoid some mention of music.

### ***Spirits, Séances, and Sound***

Explanations of music in the séance pointed to various continuities with the occult of previous generations.<sup>36</sup> In an 1854 defense of turning tables, Agénor de Gasparin pointed to earlier practices that made the outcomes of séances simple to understand. At the end of his linkage of séances to somnambulism, for example, he declared that sleepwalkers “repeat one of Jenny Lind’s improvisations, forgetting not a note of the music nor a syllable of the poetry composed in a language that they do not know; thus [and this is Gasparin’s recurrent refrain] it is entirely simple that tables turn!”<sup>37</sup> And in a less polemic mode, he claimed that participants in the séance “followed the table in its dance, when it beats time with a foot, with two, when it precisely

<sup>35</sup> Erdan, *La France mystique*, 1:57.

<sup>36</sup> See de Sennevoy, *La magie dévoilée*, 132-163.

<sup>37</sup> Gasparin, *Les tables tournantes*, 182 [page numbers refer to 1888 second edition].

reproduces the rhythm of the music that has just been sung, when obeying in the most comical way the invitation to dance the minuet, [the table] takes on a grandmother's airs, gravely makes a half-circle, bows, and then moves forward."<sup>38</sup> Gasparin further suggested that spirits were as susceptible to corporeal movement as humans; although contradicted in some later literature on spiritism, his text was also cited with approval by his contemporaries.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, Alcide Morin elided somnambulism, mortality, and phrenology with the art of the medium when he recalled a young woman who exhibited "the phrenological signs of the somnambulist on her forehead and a fatal predestination on her chest."<sup>40</sup> He placed a perfectly-tuned violin on a resonant table and placed his hand and that of the young woman on either side of it. After three minutes, "... the violin began to emit, for me and the two spectators at the experiment, a sound as if the wind had passed through its strings."<sup>41</sup> After the dumbfounded woman asks Morin how he could create such sweet music, she realizes that "It is not you [Morin]..., it is I who am playing.... Do you know why that seems so sweet to me?.... It is my death that I am singing."<sup>42</sup> That the woman died six months later was as much justification for Morin's narrative as the rhetoric of experimental science that characterizes his explanation.

By the time Kardec began his codification of spiritism in the late 1850s, such correlation between somnambulism, phrenology and other parascientific practices – music among them –

<sup>38</sup> Gasparin, *Les tables tournantes*, 29.

<sup>39</sup> For example in Mirville, *Question des esprits*, 42.

<sup>40</sup> Morin, *Psychologie expérimentale*, 159.

<sup>41</sup> Morin, 159.

<sup>42</sup> Morin, 159-160.

with the outcomes of séances had been largely purged in favor of a focus on the human who mediated between the spirit and the terrestrial worlds: the medium. In his *Livre des médiums*, Kardec devotes no less than three chapters to a typology of mediums, the third of which is dedicated to “special mediums” with particular aptitudes.<sup>43</sup> He distinguishes between *médiums musicaux* and *médiums à effets musicaux*; the first are mediums who play, compose or notate music under the influence of spirits and who are inspired in the same way as literary mediums while the second – very rare, according to Kardec – trigger the sounds of certain instruments without touch. Despite their rarity, members of the second group were the subject of a long exchange in a séance between Kardec himself and Saint Louis. Kardec asked about the use of a spirit’s hands in moving a table, and he declared that he had seen, during certain séances, spirits’ hands that had moved up and down a piano keyboard, that had made the strings vibrate and create sounds. Saint Louis’ reply was withering – “You cannot understand the nature of spirits and their behavior except by comparisons that give you but an incomplete idea, and it is wrong to wish always to assimilate their processes to yours” – but his point was one that Kardec retained:<sup>44</sup> when a spirit touched the keys of a piano, they were touching them not by muscular force, and the keys were responding to the spirit’s will. Saint Louis’ comments echoes the distinction between celestial and terrestrial music that continued to be so important for music in séances since their origins in the early 1850s.

The *medium voyant* saw spirits in action. When Kardec described a performance at Paris’ Théâtre-Lyrique during the 1857-58 season, where a “very good *medium voyant*”<sup>45</sup> was

<sup>43</sup> Kardec *Spiritisme expérimental. Le Livre des médiums*, 195-220.

<sup>44</sup> Kardec, 83.

<sup>45</sup> Kardec, 205.

present at a performance of Weber's *Oberon*, the medium explained to Kardec how some spirits were behaving badly by standing behind the artists on stage and imitating them, and how one in particular paid excessive attention to one of the female artists (Giovanna Rossi-Caccia, Caroline Girard or Juliette Borghèse);<sup>46</sup> when criticized by Kardec and the medium, the spirit declared themselves to be the artist's "guide and protecting spirit,"<sup>47</sup> reproached the two humans, and returned to their protégé's dressing room. The spirits occupied all the vacant seats in the house; one of these was the spirit of Weber himself who, when asked his opinion of the performance, declared "It's not too bad, but it's limp; the artists sing, but that's all; there is no inspiration. Wait, I will try and impart a bit of sacred fire." Kardec then related that "he saw [Weber] on the stage, hovering over the actors; a fluid [ectoplasm] seemed to leave him and shower on them; at that moment, they enjoyed a visible increase in energy."<sup>48</sup> Kardec's account mixed several well-worn tropes with some striking differences. The guardian angel directing and protecting one of the artists, and the spirits in the audience and misbehaving on the stage, were hardly usual in criticism of music in the theatre; neither was the composer hovering over the stage offering assistance, although transmitting a *feu sacré* is a more conventionalized gesture. But other images are more familiar: the performance is mediocre, and the composer intervenes to improve a lackluster event in a way of which no-one else seems capable. The subject of the performance is Weber's last stage work, premiered only three weeks before the composer's death, and therefore deserving of a similar occult respect as that accorded Mozart's *Requiem* or Schubert's

<sup>46</sup> For this production and its cast, see Walsh, *Second Empire Opera*, 309; it began its run on 27 February 1857 and ran for 68 performances that year with a further 15 in 1858, and was revived (17 performances) in 1863.

<sup>47</sup> Kardec, *Livre des médiums*, 205.

<sup>48</sup> Kardec, 205-6.

*Unfinished Symphony*. But in this mixture of the conventional and exceptional, Kardec emphasizes just how essential music is to the broader project of spiritism, how mediums can emerge from the séance and work directly in the theatre, and how they can engage critically with musical repertoires that are known outside the spirit world.

For the shade of a composer who died thirty years earlier to critique a contemporary performance of his own work was a long way from a spirit commenting on the work of a contemporary artist. Among a sequence of descriptions of spirits dictating poetry, Mathieu related a moment when a spirit had dictated a quatrain that ridiculed the assembled company:

When the merriment aroused by this quatrain had calmed down a little, we asked the table for more poetry. At this moment a music-lover [*amateur*] with a pleasant voice was singing *Les Hirondelles* by Félicien David. The table rapped:

Delicious poetry,

Angel hatched from God's smile,

Spread your heavenly ambrosia

And your streams of love in this place.<sup>49</sup>

David's *Les hirondelles* was a well-known and much-arranged *romance* by the composer, recently republished in the first volume of André-Étienne Chailiot's *Échos d'Europe* but which had originally appeared in 1844.<sup>50</sup> The choice of a work by David may be serendipitous, but the

<sup>49</sup> Mathieu, *Un mot sur les tables parlantes*, 20.

<sup>50</sup> *Échos d'Europe: premier volume*.

composer was heavily invested, even as late as the early 1850s, not only in Saint-Simonianism<sup>51</sup> – as is well known – but also in the *séance*.<sup>52</sup> Mathieu’s account also reveals an instance of a *séance* taking place in a *salon* where other activities were taking place: someone was singing David’s *romance* at the same time as a *séance* was in progress, with the performance overheard and admired by the spirit themselves. Although the scenario evoked by Mathieu brings into question the assumption that silence surrounded the *séance*, and perhaps suggests a noisier environment in which not only song but speech, conversation, and even such parlor games as charades and enacted proverbs could co-exist with the recovery of the occult in a *salon* context, this account of *Les hirondelles* is the only instance of a musical performance interrupting a *séance*.

Weber was not the only canonic composer to be envoiced by a medium: the spirit of his older contemporary, Boïeldieu, was also invited to comment from beyond the grave, this time at the celebration of the 1000<sup>th</sup> performance of the latter’s *Dame blanche* at the Opéra-Comique. A panegyric to the composer was written and read at the Opéra-Comique by François-Joseph-Pierre-André Méry on the occasion itself (13 December 1862); the noble alexandrines of the final stanza seemed an open invitation to adherents of spiritism: “Who knows?,” wrote Méry, “perhaps here, under this vault hovers / A shade that, this evening, joyfully listens to us, / One more listener we cannot see!”<sup>53</sup> The invocation of Boïeldieu’s spirit was too much for the *Société spirite de Paris*, who had Méry’s poem read at a *séance* three nights later; Boïeldieu obligingly responded to the medium’s approach there, and in his brief rejoinder spoke of “... a

<sup>51</sup> Locke, *Music, Musicians, and the Saint-Simonians*, 128-133, 171-225 and *passim*.

<sup>52</sup> He was a key witness to the musical events in the Rue de Beaune *séance* (see below, 000-000).

<sup>53</sup> “Boïeldieu à la millièème représentation de la *Dame Blanche*,” 11-12.

voice, more melodious than terrestrial melody, which sings of death devoid of its antique terror, and appearing less as a somber divinity of Erebus [the personification of the Underworld] but more as the brilliant star of hope and of resurrection.”<sup>54</sup> Here again, Boïeldieu was invoking the idea of a celestial music, and its opposition both to the terrestrial and to the Underworld, that was to emerge with some force when such celestial music was physically transmitted to the séances in the Rue de Beaune.

While Weber and Boïeldieu were recruited to speak and act from the distant past, the recent deaths of composers triggered attempts to reach them through a medium and encouraged documentation of the results of the séance. So Gioachino Rossini (†1868), Hector Berlioz (†1869) and Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (†1871) all graced the pages of the *Revue spirite* shortly after their deaths.<sup>55</sup> This posthumous envoicing of the composers contributed to canonic pressures on the reputations of each, and while the individual orations by the three composers reinforced their status, they all carefully played up particular characteristics of each composer’s career, features that formed part of the later reception of all three composers.

### **Mozart: Sound and the Supernatural**

Chopin was introduced – melancholy and self-reflective, as his image in the 1850s and 1860s would have it – into a séance dedicated to a composer who figured more prominently there than

<sup>54</sup> “Boïeldieu à la millièrme représentation de la *Dame Blanche*,” 15.

<sup>55</sup> *Revue spirite*, 12 (1869): 30-31 and 87-94 (Rossini); *Revue spirite*, 14 (1871): 184-188 (Auber) and *Revue spirite*, 284-285 (Berlioz).

any other: Mozart.<sup>56</sup> Mozart appeared at least three times in séances in the 1850s and 1860s: his house in the spirit world was described at length, a fragment of a work was transmitted through a medium, performed, transcribed, and published, and he was frequently presented as a spokesperson for the spirit world in matters relating to modes of perception for, and performance of, celestial music.

Although the exchange with Chopin and Mozart took place in the second volume of the *Revue spirite*, two séances involving Mozart had already been transcribed in the very first issue of the journal. After some very generalized questions and answers about the spirit world in the first séance, the second turned to music; Mozart began: “I will converse with you; I shall tell you what we understand by melody in our world. Why have you not raised it with me sooner? I would have replied to you.”<sup>57</sup> Mozart, like Boïeldieu, was then quizzed on the nature of celestial music, and similarly stressed its differences to terrestrial music. But unlike Boïeldieu, Mozart offered a commentary on melody:

Melody is often for you a memory of past life; your mind remembers what it glimpsed of a better world. In the planet where I am, Jupiter, melody is everywhere, in the murmur of the water, the sound of the leaves, the song of the wind; the flowers rustle and sing; everything makes melodious sounds...; you have chosen well in singing to God: sacred music helps lift the soul.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Mozart describes Chopin as “sadder and more somber than I” in “Musique d’outre-tombe,” *Revue spirite*, 2 (1859):124-125.

<sup>57</sup> “Entretiens familiers d’outre-tombe: Mozart,” *Revue spirite*, 1 (1858): 140.

<sup>58</sup> “Entretiens familiers d’outre-tombe: Mozart,” 140.

The choice of Jupiter for Mozart's home is intriguing, since although his last symphony was known as the "Jupiter" in English-speaking circles from the 1810s, the first appearance of the title in French appears to date from 1869, a decade after the publication of the text in the *Revue spirite*.<sup>59</sup> The appeal to nature that infused Mozart's commentary on melody is clearly explicable in terms of views on the composer's music in Paris during the *Second Empire*; the encomium to the sacred is likewise understandable as part of the cult surrounding the composer's *Requiem* and the recent popularity of the Mass in c minor K. 427, to say nothing of the rituals attendant on *Don Giovanni* and its autograph manuscript.<sup>60</sup> The records of the séances at which Mozart spoke align clearly with others that reveal engagements with artists from the spirit world: renaissance ceramicist Bernard Palissy, Mme de Stael, journalist, and playwright Frédéric Soulié, Benvenuto Cellini, Goethe, Lamennais, Alfred de Musset, Delphine de Girardin and Charles Nodier, all in the first three issues of the *Revue spirite*. But unlike his spirit colleagues, Mozart vouchsafed a work of art – a fragment of a piano sonata – to one of his mediums.

The prompt for Mozart's two-handed séance with Chopin was the performance and transcription of a four-page fragment of a piano sonata in E-flat major, transmitted through the medium of Édouard-Barthélemy Brion d'Orgeval, a conservatoire-trained bass and composer.<sup>61</sup> In the spirit of experimentation, which characterized so many séances in their first decade in Paris, d'Orgeval played the fragment "to several artists without indication of its source, and

<sup>59</sup> The title appears in the late 1810s, and is used on a publication at the beginning of the following decade. See King, "The Origin of the Title 'The "Jupiter" Symphony'," 264. The first use of the title in a Parisian publication, however, appears to be an arrangement of the slow movement by Francis Planté published in 1869 (*Andante de la Symphonie en ut, dite Jupiter*).

<sup>60</sup> See [anonymized by author].

<sup>61</sup> Pierre, *Conservatoire National*, 2:709.

simply asking what color [*couleur*] they found in the piece; each recognized without hesitation the stamp of Mozart.”<sup>62</sup> It was then, according to the account in the *Revue spirite*, performed at a meeting of the *Société [spirite de Paris]* “in the presence of several experts”<sup>63</sup> by a pianist described only as M<sup>lle</sup> de Davans, a pupil of Chopin. Further in the spirit of experimentation, de Davans prefaced the performance of the sonata fragment dictated to d’Orgeval with an unspecified sonata composed during Mozart’s lifetime. There was unanimity “not only on the perfect identity of the genre [the attribution to Mozart] but also on the superiority of the spirit composition.”<sup>64</sup> In support of her credentials as the composer’s pupil, de Davans concluded her performance with an unnamed work by Chopin. The verbal séance with the two composers then followed.

After such reports, the public appearance of Mozart’s sonata fragment was inevitable (figure 3).<sup>65</sup>

[Figure 3]

As well as being put on sale commercially, the edition was distributed as an appendix to subscribers to the *Revue spirite* for 1859.<sup>66</sup> It is difficult, with nearly 200 years of style-critical

<sup>62</sup> “Musique d’outre-tombe,” *Revue spirite* 2 (1859): 123.

<sup>63</sup> “Musique d’outre-tombe,” 123.

<sup>64</sup> “Musique d’outre-tombe,” 123.

<sup>65</sup> *Fragment de sonate dicté par l’esprit de Mozart*, title page.

<sup>66</sup> The announcement is in *Revue spirite* 2 (1859): 125.

hindsight to accept the piece as work by Mozart. In E-flat major, triple time and marked *moderato* it would be very easy to claim the piece as a mid-century pastiche (figure 4),<sup>67</sup>

[Figure 4]

and its resistance to any middleground move to a related key at midpoint could be read as inept by late eighteenth-century standards. But participants in the culture of the *séance* in the late 1850s were so anxious to receive such a work by Mozart through the means of a medium that even “*nombreux connoisseurs*” could happily suspend disbelief. This perception was quite possibly reinforced by the work being “dedicated” by the composer to the medium himself, Brion d’Orgeval. Its reception was in many ways analogous to Mozart’s so-called *Twelfth Mass* which – although clearly not by Mozart – undertook vast amounts of cultural work on the composer’s behalf during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.<sup>68</sup> Objections from the professional music press came from the newspaper *Le siècle* and its music critic, Oscar Comettant.<sup>69</sup> But rather than engage in a technical critique of the work – a copy of which he admitted to owning – Comettant engaged in ill-judged ridicule; this simply encouraged both Kardec and Brion d’Orgeval to write careful, measured responses in the *Revue spirite* which simply pointed out the intemperate tone of Comettant’s essay, and allowed both Kardec and Brion d’Orgeval to emerge, paradoxically, as the more rational and level-headed. Kardec concluded by quoting François Arago, the astronomer and physicist: “Doubt is a sign of

<sup>67</sup> *Fragment de sonate dicté par l’esprit de Mozart*, 1.

<sup>68</sup> [anonymized by author].

<sup>69</sup> *Le siècle*, 27 October 1859, reprinted (including the response from Kardec and Comettant’s counterresponse) in Comettant, “Le monde des esprits.”

modesty, and it has rarely harmed the progress of science.”<sup>70</sup> Comettant replied again in as injudicious vein as in his first intervention, and the correspondence closed with him snatching critical defeat from the jaws of victory.<sup>71</sup> It is perhaps appropriate, then, that despite Comettant’s professional posturing, modern associations of spiritists still take the *Fragment de sonate* seriously and were responsible for its modern recording.<sup>72</sup>

The pastiche of a Mozart piano sonata movement raises the questions of who might have prepared it, for what ends, and by what means; and the affair raises broader questions about the authority and authorship of commentaries from beyond the grave on music and musicians. Clearly, a critical practice needs to respect and reflect the possibility that such voices – including Mozart’s sonata movement – did indeed emanate from the unknown; it however also needs to contemplate the possibility of a complicit human. Given that almost all the commentaries offered in séances, ostensibly from composers, do little more than transmit received wisdom whose genealogies are simple to trace, there is no need to attribute much technical expertise to their authors; it is possible that the texts emanated from the circle around the *Revue spirite*, since that is where so many were published, and even that they were written by Kardec himself. Be that as it may, the cultural effect of these texts – based as they were on major figures who already

<sup>70</sup> *Revue spirite* 2 (1859) 309-314. Kardec mistitles his source: Arago, *Bailly*, 2:313 [page numbers refer to 1854 reprint].

<sup>71</sup> Comettant, “Le monde des esprits,” 115-116.

<sup>72</sup> See “Performance of a Lost Fragment of Psychic Sonata.”

had accrued canon-forming discourses around them – was as powerful, and as important to the composers’ reputations, as more formal critical reports or sustained sequences of performances.

Among the various disciplines subject to the possibilities engendered by the séance was the process of psychography – writing dictated by spirits – of which an important subgroup was the creation of works of art. The very earliest of these came from Sardou, who in his late 20s created an etching entitled “Mozart’s House on the Planet Jupiter.”<sup>73</sup> Sardou’s etching, as in the case of the *Fragment de Sonate*, was distributed to subscribers of the *Revue spirite*.<sup>74</sup> Although Sardou himself was the medium, and responsible for the etching himself, he claimed that his hand was guided by the spirit of Palissy whose *entretien familier d’outre tombe* was published in the same volume as Sardou’s etching. But Sardou did not merely receive the image from Palissy’s spirit: he was also given a verbal account of Mozart’s house both by the former and by a second, anonymous, spirit; also published in the *Revue spirite*, the description needs to be read against Sardou’s etching (figure 5).<sup>75</sup>

[Figure 5]

“I asked Mozart,” wrote Sardou, “who his neighbors were,” to which the composer’s spirit replied: “Above and below are two sprits that you do not know; but to the left, I am only

<sup>73</sup> Gaillemin, “Sardou Medium.”

<sup>74</sup> [Kardec], “Observations à propos des dessins de Jupiter,” 222.

<sup>75</sup> Sardou, “Des habitations de la planète Jupiter,” *Revue spirite* 1 (1858): 223-232. The image is now Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des estampes et de la photographie, AA3 (Sardou, Victorien), A23270. The engraving went on to achieve some notoriety in the 1930s as the frontispiece to André Breton’s article “Le message automatique” in the surrealist journal *Le minotaure*, alongside texts by Jacques Lacan, Salvador Dali, Tristan Tzara, Paul Éluard, and Igor Markevitch’s fragment “La musique est l’art de recréer le monde dans le domaine du son” (Breton, “Le message automatique”).

separated by a large meadow from the garden belonging to [Miguel de] Cervantes [Saavedra].”<sup>76</sup> The description that Sardou gives of Mozart’s house is suffused with musical imagery which elaborates on his engraving. He describes the decoration of the main window as consisting of “enlaced and petrified spider plants” which take the form of a g-clef.<sup>77</sup> And in the decoration of the ground floor, he points to “a bow, a sort of theorbo or mandolin, a lyre, and a complete music stave. Higher up is a large window which vaguely recalls the form of an organ; the other [windows] have the appearance of large notes....” Sardou concludes with a disclaimer that echoes the distinctions between terrestrial and celestial music already drawn by Boïeldieu, Mozart and Rossini: the use of terrestrial symbols does not speak to a similarity between celestial and terrestrial music, Sardou insists, but spirits decorate their houses in manners that reflect the terrestrial lives that earned them their places on Jupiter.<sup>78</sup>

Throughout the 1850s, the spirits of composers – some recently dead, others enjoying or rapidly approaching canonical status – were evoked during séances through the power of mediums. The composers who were disturbed from their celestial repose were already well known, and their temporary return to the terrestrial sphere merely constituted an additional emphasis on their status. But composers were also co-opted as ambassadors for the spirit world, being called on not only to explain the difference between celestial and terrestrial music, but to explain in detail the lives and behaviors of those who lived beyond the grave. Their canonic

<sup>76</sup> Sardou, “Des habitations de la planète Jupiter,” 229.

<sup>77</sup> Sardou, 230.

<sup>78</sup> Sardou, 231.

status was used as an *imprimatur* for the descriptions of the spirit world that the texts in the *Revue spirite* would transmit and then defend.<sup>79</sup>

### ***The Séances on the Rue de Beaune***

Celestial music, to judge from the interviews published in the *Revue spirite*, was one of the most difficult parts of the spirit world for non-spirits to understand. The transmission, then, of celestial music to terrestrial séance is the most striking instance of communication between the two sides of the grave, and comes from a series of meetings that took place in a *salon* on the Rue de Beaune, where celestial music was not only transmitted to the séance, but also notated, performed, published, and widely discussed.

The membership of the séance on the Rue de Beaune centered on the editorial board of the journal *La démocratie pacifique*. Founded in 1843, the publication had succeeded *Le phalanstère* and *La phalange* which had been the principal mouthpieces of the movement dedicated to the promulgation of the work of François-Marie-Charles Fourier since 1832. Music formed a crucial part of Fourier's system of human relations. It was a means of explanation, as music was used as a series of analogies (the keyboard for each phase of human history; harmony as a metaphor for human co-existence), but it was equally fundamental to Fourier's educational philosophy, in which he placed cuisine and music on a similar footing as primary components.

<sup>79</sup> Except for Boïeldieu, for whom the 1000<sup>th</sup> performance of *La dame blanche* was a unique event, the composers envoiced in séances were those whose reputations would last up to the present: Weber, Chopin, Mozart, Rossini, Berlioz. Yet among other composers who died during the 1860s, neither Halévy († 1862) nor Meyerbeer († 1864) figures among the necrologies or interviews. With his aim to create a new Christianity for the nineteenth century, Jewish composers were apparently excluded from Kardec's celestial world.

Fourier developed alternative and simpler methods of music notation (in the same spirit as the Galin-Paris-Chevé method of sight-singing, discussed later) but most importantly positioned choral singing as a means of developing the soul of the working class, a preoccupation that was already bearing fruit with the *Orphéoniste* movement before Fourier's death in 1837.<sup>80</sup>

Reportage of music had been an element in both *La phalange* and *La démocratie pacifique*; their music journalist, Allyre Bureau, was also a member of the rue de Beaune séance, and his musical skills were essential.<sup>81</sup>

*La démocratie pacifique* had been summarily closed during Napoléon III's *coup d'état* in early December 1851. Left idle in their editorial offices at 2 Rue de Beaune, the five contributors to *La démocratie pacifique* who constituted the séance included four members of the editorial board: Louis Franchot,<sup>82</sup> Charles Brunier,<sup>83</sup> Eugène Nus<sup>84</sup> and Bureau;<sup>85</sup> they were joined by Antony Méray, a further contributor to the publication.<sup>86</sup> Bureau had been a board member since 1843, and a contributor to *La phalange* and *La démocratie pacifique* since 1836. Brunier was one of three managers of the *Société pour la propagation et la réalisation de la*

<sup>80</sup> See Spencer, "Charles Fourier;" Fulcher, "Music and the Communal Order;" Fulcher, "Le socialisme utopique;" Sylvos, "L'utopie au xixe siècle;" Mondelli, "Parisian Opera;" Fauquet, *Musique en utopie*, 251-265.

<sup>81</sup> The corpus of music journalism in *La phalange* and *la démocratie pacifique* is given as an online critical edition in [anonymized by author], and a full account of the music activity in the two journals is presented in [anonymized by author].

<sup>82</sup> Desmars, "Franchot, Charles-Louis-Félix."

<sup>83</sup> Desmars, "Brunier, Charles (François)."

<sup>84</sup> Schopp, *Dictionnaire Alexandre Dumas*, 427.

<sup>85</sup> See Rey, *Le Fouriériste Allyre Bureau*.

<sup>86</sup> Desmars, "Méray, Antoine, dit Antony."

*théorie de Fourier*, as well as an artist and occasional contributor. Nus had been a successful author of various theatrical works since 1840 and was also the author of *Choses de l'autre monde*, which published the proceedings of the Rue de Beaune séances, including the key musical outcomes,<sup>87</sup> and Méray had contributed on music to *La démocratie pacifique* in 1851. Bureau was the specialist musician; at the time of the closure of *La démocratie pacifique*, he had written nearly 200 reviews in the journal. Only Franchot, a distinguished engineer, was a participant in the séance without musical experience.

Given this interest in music, it was almost inevitable that the first contact for the séance would be Pythagoras, a familiar figure in the early pages of histories of music throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twenty-first.<sup>88</sup> After interrogating a further spirit on the nature of spiritism in general, the séance settled on questioning their interlocutors on matters relating to the group's philosophical interests, especially those related to utopianism and Fourierism: non-violent revolution, religion, and power; they then went on to such subjects as the infinite, scientific discipline, friendship, love, family, and around 30 other topics. There was no direct relation between Fourierism and spiritism beyond the Fourierist background of the participants, and there is no evidence that any of the rue de Beaune group knew Kardec or contributed to *La revue spirite* (Bureau had already left for the United States of America by the time it was founded). But the group's use of the techniques of table-turning to advance their Fourierist interests was incontrovertible.

<sup>87</sup> Nus, *Choses de l'autre monde*.

<sup>88</sup> See Champigneulle, *Histoire de la musique*, 8, as a single, popular, but telling example.

When activities around the table turned to music, the participants had the idea of asking the spirit world its opinion of composers known to the group. The anonymous spirit replied as follows:

Mozart: “The sweet gift of the soul, the melodious poetry of the heart, the grace of the spirit”

Beethoven: “Genius, soul, grace, strength and gentleness, science united with feeling”

Handel: “The shadowy power of science, strength and rigidity, an alliance of energy and ease”

Haydn: “Delicacy, clarity, much candid goodness in resonance, soul in harmony”<sup>89</sup>

Apart from Handel, for whom any mid-nineteenth-century French testimony is something of a rarity, the sketches of the three Viennese figures are conventional for time and place. With these vignettes reported, among which only the absence of Gluck is noteworthy, the séance moved away from music and on to Rabelais.

Nus’ description of the séance stressed three features: (1) that the séance engaged with a single spirit who offered opinions on a wide range of subjects and was frequently just referred to as “the table;” (2) that it did not consider any of the group a medium; because (3) the entire spirit discourse was transmitted via a series of knocks identified on the table, with one representing “a,” two, “b,” three “c” and so on.<sup>90</sup> This apparent clumsiness was mitigated by identifying

<sup>89</sup> Nus, *Choses de l’autre monde*, 37-38.

<sup>90</sup> Nus, 10-11.

words based on their first three or four letters. Bureau was responsible for the translation of the spirit's knocking into words, and was also responsible for taking down musical works from dictation.<sup>91</sup>

The system of dictation used for words and texts in *Second Empire* séances would not function for dictating music. But the most recent developer of the system of movable-do sight-singing that had started with Rousseau – the Galin-Paris-Chevé system – was Émile-Joseph-Maurice Chev , a committed Fourierist who had collaborated with *La d mocratie pacifique* in the 1840s.<sup>92</sup> At the heart of the Galin-Paris-Chev  system was the numbering of pitches; this was an ideal system for the sort of verbal dictation that the Rue de Beaune s ance witnessed, especially since the participants in the s ance had attended a course given by Chev  in the late 1840s.<sup>93</sup> The s ance's notation of rhythm and the addition of accidentals was laborious in the extreme, and triggered protracted textual exchange.<sup>94</sup> The s ance hired an *orgue expressif*<sup>95</sup> on which Bureau then played the piece just dictated while the spirit indicated the tempo by beating

<sup>91</sup> Nus, 85-86. Fauquet argues (*Musique en utopie*, 297) that “*Pour composer*, Bureau sollicite souvent les tables tournantes [emphasis added].” There is no evidence that Bureau mingled his transcriptions of the Rue de Beaune s ances with his own compositions (see the catalogue in Rey, *Le Fouri riste Allyre Bureau*, 13-34, of all Bureau's published works, and those surviving in manuscript in Pontpoint (Oise), private collection of Pierre-Allyre Bureau; I am grateful to Gabrielle Cadier-Rey, Philippe and Alexis Bureau-Thibault for access to this archive).

<sup>92</sup> See, for the history of the Galin-Paris-Chev  method, Fauquet, *Musique en utopie*, 266-269. For its functioning, with well-chosen illustrations, see Rainbow, “Galin-Paris-Chev  Method.”

<sup>93</sup> Nus, *Choses de l'autre monde*, 86.

<sup>94</sup> Nus, 87.

<sup>95</sup> The *orgue expressif* had been developed during the previous half decade as a free-reed instrument fueled by pressure from pedal bellows which allowed the *expressivit * that gave it its name in France. In anglophone circles the instrument was known as a harmonium. For a good introduction to the instrument, see Raz, “‘The Expressive Organ within us’.”

on the table (presumably spelling out the verbal tempo indications) and correcting any errors.<sup>96</sup> Bureau then took the piece home, where he created the accompaniment which was then submitted to the spirit at the next séance; results could range from simple acceptance, through minor correction, to outright rejection, at which point Bureau would leave, to return later with a new accompaniment.<sup>97</sup>

Whether it was the participants themselves in the séance who asked for music from their spirit or whether the latter proposed it remains unclear, but the titles of the fourteen short works supported many of the utopianist ideas promulgated by spirits during earlier séances and which were warmly received by their audience: the natural world, the cosmos, the planets themselves, and humanity's place there. Table 1 gives titles, durations, keys, and tempi.<sup>98</sup>

[Table 1]

All the pieces were originally dictated as monodies, apart from *Le chant de la terre dans l'espace* and *Le chant de la mer*, whose simple basses were also given by the spirit; the remaining accompaniments were prepared by Bureau.<sup>99</sup> In general, the pieces were of between around ten and twenty measures, and keys ranged from B major to D-flat major; every work was in a major key and modulations to relative or tonic minors almost completely absent. Slow compound meters that gestured towards *sicilienne* or *barcarolle* were common, as were slow

<sup>96</sup> Only the first eight compositions published by Nus carry verbal tempo indications.

<sup>97</sup> Nus, *Choses de l'autre monde*, 87-88.

<sup>98</sup> The works are presented in score, Nus, 92-103. Modern transcriptions of the complete repertory, as well as recordings of all fourteen works are given at [anonymized by author].

<sup>99</sup> Nus, *Choses de l'autre monde*, 89-90.

minuets; chorales and march topics were also popular, but the latter were also in triple meter (surely prompted by Mozart's "O Isis und Osiris" from act ii of *Die Zauberflöte*). Dance profiles were also frequently contradicted by mismatched tempi and rhythmic structures.

The series of works began with attributes of the earth: the earth itself, the seas, tides, and wind. The *Chant de la nue silencieuse et voilée* was the single allusion to human life, but even here the subject, her silence, and the fact that she was veiled, all pointed less to a human status and more to the artistic quality of the nude ("silent and veiled"), institutionalized as the *Académie de nu* in exhibitions, galleries, and competitions, rather than to human depiction. These earthbound elements were distanced from the intermediate qualities of the moon (*Chant de l'astre satellite lunaire* and *Chant de la lune à son déclin*) before moving on to the planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, and the *Chant de religieuse dans Vénus*. Finally the *Chant de la planète-firmanent* perplexed the members of the séance; its meaning, according to Nus' commentary, "we have not yet had the advantage of knowing, and whose meaningless (*insensé*) name surprised us greatly."<sup>100</sup> This orderly disposition was disrupted by three works whose titles appeared to direct attention elsewhere: the *Chant de Vesta*, and two *mélodies d'Herschel* entitled *Adoration* and *Désespoir-Miserere*. Vesta, well known as the virgin goddess of the hearth, home, and family in Roman mythology, evokes a world unknown in spiritist discourses.<sup>101</sup> It is uncertain whether the two *mélodies d'Herschel* relate simply to the planet Uranus – which was named *Herschel* during the first half of the nineteenth century in France – or whether it was a reference to Sir William Herschel – a distinguished Hanoverian-English musician and composer

<sup>100</sup> Nus, 87.

<sup>101</sup> Brelich, *Vesta*.

– who was the first to discover the planet in post-enlightenment times.<sup>102</sup> The position in the sequence strongly suggests that the reference is to the planet Uranus, although there is no astronomical logic to the order of the planets in table 1 that supports this claim. While *Adoration* is a simple chorale, *Désespoir-Miserere* displays a rare degree of chromatic intricacy which posed a challenge both the spirit giving the dictation and to Bureau who had to interpret it.<sup>103</sup>

The working methods of the Rue de Beaune séance are recoverable from the first of the works published by Nus (example 1), the *Chant de la terre dans l'espace*.<sup>104</sup>

[Example 1]

With a melodic range of no more than a sixth, and no chromatic or modulatory passages, the *Chant de la terre...* represents little challenge to musical dictation: assigning unambiguous Paris-Galin-Chevé numbers is unproblematic, the rhythms are simple and the crescendo-decrescendo in m. 4 and the *messa di voce* in m. 9 (a stock-in-trade of the *orgue expressif*) are both explainable in prose. The spirit adds the simplest of accompaniments, exploiting enhanced tonic pedals with oscillating tonic and dominant chords above.

<sup>102</sup> Alexander, *The Planet Uranus*.

<sup>103</sup> Nus, *Choses de l'autre monde*, 88-89.

<sup>104</sup> Nus, 92.

Not all the dictation from the spirit world was so easy. The second of the two *Herschel* pieces – *Désespoir-Miserere* – posed so many problems that Nus gave a detailed account of its transcription (example 2).<sup>105</sup>

[Example 2]

Although more complex than the *Chant de la terre dans l'espace*, the melody could be assigned numbers for dictation in the Chev  system without difficulty since the range is exactly an octave, from tonic to leading note. As soon as Bureau attempted to play the piece with his accompaniment, he claimed that it made no sense and there must be an error; the spirit flatly contradicted him, and Bureau returned home to work further on the accompaniment. When he returned the following day, Bureau declared the piece to be “complete nonsense,” and challenged the spirit to “admit that your *Désespoir* is a mystery, and that you wanted me to spend a sleepless night with this cacophony;”<sup>106</sup> Bureau was sent back, day after day, until he returned with an accompaniment that included the three measures that precede the melody in example 2. Exactly what stages fell between the dictation of the unpromising melody and Bureau finding the solution that satisfied the spirit will never be known, but the extended exchanges between Bureau and the spirit reveal much about the technical resources required to transmit celestial music to terrestrial sound and then to the printed page.

In taking their point of departure from a monody and adding an accompaniment, Bureau’s transcriptions reflected practice which reworked pre-existing monophony from very

<sup>105</sup> Nus, 100.

<sup>106</sup> Nus, 88-89.

different musical cultures, and supplied it with a mid-century harmonization. Two Parisian traditions that exhibited the same technique, of which Bureau must have been aware, were plainsong and medieval secular song. An exact contemporary of the Rue de Beaune séance was François-Auguste Gevaert's 1856 *Méthode pour l'enseignement du plain-chant et la manière de l'accompagner*,<sup>107</sup> an example from which took the third antiphon for Vespers on the feast of the Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary (12 September), "Dum esset Rex" (example 3),<sup>108</sup>

[Example 3]

and supplied it with the same, although simpler, sort of keyboard accompaniment that Bureau gave to the séance transcriptions (example 4).<sup>109</sup>

[Example 4]

In a similar vein, Jean-Baptiste Weckerlin took Machaut's monophonic *chanson* "Douce dame jolie" (example 5),<sup>110</sup>

[Example 5]

<sup>107</sup> Gevaert, *Méthode pour l'enseignement du plain-chant*.

<sup>108</sup> *Antiphonarium sacri ordinis prædicatorum pro diurnis horis*, 931.

<sup>109</sup> Gevaert, *Méthode*, 46.

<sup>110</sup> Schrade, ed., *Works of Guillaume de Machaut*, 5:30 [page numbers refer to 1977 reprint].

and gave it a similar keyboard accompaniment in the first volume of his *Échos du temps passé* which appeared in 1857 (example 6).<sup>111</sup>

[Example 6]

In the case of the antiphon “Dum esset Rex,” Gevaert took a monody that had no metrical rhythm and created a four-part keyboard version that also eschewed metrical rhythm; on the other hand Weckerlin adopted a fully measured piece and reworked an unambiguous duple meter into an erroneous 3/4 and then added an accompaniment for keyboard. But in both cases nineteenth-century musicians took a modal melody from the middle ages and embedded it in an accompanimental framework that sat awkwardly between modality and tonality: in g minor for Weckerlin and E major/c# minor for Gevaert: in both instances melodic and harmonic procedures were inflected by a flat seventh.

Despite its very different origins, Bureau’s original material was paradoxically less ambiguous than nineteenth-century understandings of plainsong and medieval secular monophony allowed, given that questions of rhythm were never in question. His addition of accompaniments to monody – in some sense “other” – demands reading alongside Weckerlin’s and Gevaert’s work, as it corresponds to similarly other musics from distant – and largely misunderstood – pasts. Mid-nineteenth-century Paris brought together various forms of reflection on music that were characterized by three different “others.” While plainsong remained a living tradition, medieval monophony was so distant as to be indefinable (as Weckerlin’s capricious edition of Machaut’s “Douce dame jolie” makes clear). The celestial

<sup>111</sup> Weckerlin, ed., *Échos du temps passé*, 1:10.

music from the séance on the Rue de Beaune threw the two other traditions into relief, both by borrowing their techniques for display in the present and by showing how other forms of belief, other world-views, could equally be exhibited in a musical form.

### **Legacies and Heritages**

As they seized the unique opportunity to hear and transcribe celestial music, the participants in the Rue de Beaune séance carved an indelible space for themselves in the history of French esoterism and music. Their immediate impact was on other initiates of spiritism, both within and beyond the world of music: Delphine de Girardin, the daughter of Sophie Gay and wife of the editor of *La presse* Émile de Girardin; the pianist Émile Prudent, then at the height of his powers; and the composer David. But more general musical echoes of spiritism were felt throughout the nineteenth century through a range of media as well as music, and continue to resound today.

By 1853, Girardin had been a predominant figure in the world of the Parisian literary *tableau vivant* for thirty years; a poet, dramatist, journalist and *salonnière*, she was once described as “the country’s muse.”<sup>112</sup> When she married in 1831, she and her husband presided over one of the most influential literary *salons* of the July Monarchy, through the Second Republic and into the *Second Empire*. She was at the forefront of promoting séances from 1853 to 1855 (she died in June 1855) to the extent of having invented – or at least having given her name to – the so-called *table-Girardin*, a small table (*guéridon*) in the center of which was a rotating circle around whose circumference were the letters of the alphabet, numbers and the

<sup>112</sup> See *Esprit de Mme de Girardin*; the standard text for the twentieth century was Malo, *La gloire du Vicomte de Launay*, now supplemented by Wittmeier, “Delphine Gay, Madame de Girardin.”

words “yes” and “no:” the medium could simply apply their hands to the table and allow dictation to take place.<sup>113</sup> She was also responsible for transmitting the elements of the séance and table-turning to Victor Hugo, in exile in Jersey, also a victim of Napoléon III’s *coup d’état* that closed *La démocratie pacifique*; Hugo’s engagement with spiritism was among the most intense, and certainly the best documented outside the immediate world of initiates.<sup>114</sup> Bureau played his transcriptions of the *musique celeste* transmitted by the spirit world at the Girardin *salon* in the early 1850s; he enjoyed enormous success, and was apparently asked to play *Le chant de la mer* more than twenty times.<sup>115</sup>

Although she was an enthusiast for spiritism, there is no evidence that Girardin was engaged with its broader philosophical tendencies. This was not the case for the composer David who visited the Rue de Beaune séance expressly to hear Bureau’s transcriptions, and whose Saint-Simonian commitments are well known. By the mid 1850s, with the success of *Le perle de Brésil* at the Opéra-National behind him, David’s longstanding relationship with the Saint-Simonians was restricted more to personal faith than institutional action, so it was hardly surprising that he should know the members of the Rue de Beaune séance more as individuals rather than as representatives of an organization.<sup>116</sup> Nus reported that “Félicien David, for whom this slightly cloudy form of music recalls his favorite type, came to hear it here, and was

<sup>113</sup> Kardec, *Le livre des mediums*, 182.

<sup>114</sup> See the transcriptions in Simon, *Les tables tournantes de Jersey*.

<sup>115</sup> Nus, *Choses de l’autre monde*, 90.

<sup>116</sup> For David’s ambivalent position *vis à vis* Saint-Simonianism in the 1850s, see Locke, *Music, Musicians and the Saint-Simonians*, 215-220.

as charmed as he was surprised.”<sup>117</sup> In speaking of David’s “favorite type,” Nus might have been offering nothing more than a general comment about David’s style in the late 1840s. But the composer’s next major work was his *Herculanum*, which still retained an aura of Saint-Simonianism; whether one would want to read Satan’s appearance from Hell at the end of act ii as some sort of reflection of his experience at the séance on the Rue de Beaune remains an open question; given the regularity with which Satan was summoned during Parisian séances during the 1850s it would hardly be surprising.

“Our Prudent” was how the pianist Émile Prudent was considered by many Parisian critics as he achieved a status alongside Liszt and Thalberg as their most serious French rival. His classmate, Antoine Marmontel, wrote admiringly of him, fifteen years after Prudent’s death in 1878:

As for his characteristic idiosyncrasies – the little touch of madness that according to Auber no artist could escape – Prudent’s special mania was for social issues. Fourier and Saint-Simon were his prophets. Prudent, like all the youth of 1830, had awakened to moral life during the great current that was sweeping humanity along unknown paths, and this first mirage made a strong impression on him.<sup>118</sup>

While such an ethical position was frequently cited as the basis for the “poet-musician’s” enthusiasm for “pastoral subjects, idylls, eclogues,” his main contribution to the Rue de Beaune

<sup>117</sup> Nus, *Choses de l’autre monde*, 90.

<sup>118</sup> Marmontel, *Les pianistes célèbres*, 67.

séance was not only strongly to encourage the participants to preserve Bureau's transcriptions but also to act as a musical proselyte for their philosophical outlook.<sup>119</sup>

The interest of David, Prudent and Girardin was clearly that of the committed individual. A more influential and equally-reliable prose account of the Rue de Beaune séance was given by Erdan, a writer and journalist whose publication, *L'évènement*, had suffered the same fate as *La démocratie pacifique*: closure after the 1851 *coup d'état*. No Fourierist, Erdan had worked on simplified forms of writing and reading that were directly analogous to the Galin-Paris-Chevé method that was so important to Bureau's Rue de Beaune transcriptions of celestial music; his *Congrès linguistique: les révolutionnaires de l'A.-B.-C.* was published the year after the Rue de Beaune séances.<sup>120</sup> In his *La France mystique*, published the following year, he dedicated several pages to what he called "la fameuse séance des Phalanstériens," and records a visit that he and a journalist colleague made to the Rue de Beaune on 30 July 1853, shortly after the transmissions of music to the séance started. He gave a word-by-word transcript of the proceedings of the séance and commented:

*Everyone in the literate world* [emphasis added] knew what was going on in 1853 in the *spirituel* [*sic*] meetings of the Phalansterians. I do not therefore commit any indiscretion in noting here the part played in the turning of tables and the evocation of spirits by several members of Fourier's school, whose merit, moreover, is sufficiently well known and appreciated.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Nus, *Choses de l'autre monde*, 90.

<sup>120</sup> Erdan, *Congrès linguistique*.

<sup>121</sup> Erdan, *La France mystique*, 1: 58.

Erdan's account repeated the dictation, performance and preservation of the celestial music as recorded by Nus, but in Erdan's report the dictator of the melodies was no less than Pythagoras himself, already – according to Nus – a contributor to the séance. On the occasion when Erdan was present, Pythagoras dictated the *Danse de la terre autour du soleil*, a title that recalls the tone of the works listed in table 1 and published by Nus, but that does not figure among Bureau's transcriptions. It could simply be a mistitling of the *Chant de la terre dans l'espace* or it could be an additional work that suggests that Nus' account is incomplete. The journalist who accompanied Erdan to the séance asked why the melody was so lugubrious, and received two replies from the spirit responsible: "Because the earth is a sick planet" and – less helpfully – "Pythagoras has left. The new spirit is Rapaël, from Saturn."<sup>122</sup> Rapaël then derailed the entire séance by asking Allyre to take down the former's complete opera – to a libretto by Gilot, another spirit – at which point Erdan ended his chapter: "Although poor, I shall reserve a seat in the stalls. And you?"<sup>123</sup>

If everyone in 1853 knew what was taking place in the Rue de Beaune séance, as Erdan suggests, it is hardly surprising that the astronomer Camille Flammarion would still be taking the events seriously on the eve of the First World War.<sup>124</sup> Flammarion had his finger on the spiritist pulse with his recognition that much that took place at the Rue de Beaune séance was infused with a fully-engaged Fourierism that only stopped when Bureau left Paris to set up a community

<sup>122</sup> Erdan, 1:59.

<sup>123</sup> Erdan, 1:60.

<sup>124</sup> Flammarion, *Mémoires biographiques*. Two further volumes of "revelations from beyond the grave" recorded events at the salon on the rue du Mont Tabor by the otherwise unidentified medium Mademoiselle Huet, some of which dated from as early as 1855. See *Les habitants de l'autre monde*.

in Texas where he died in 1859.<sup>125</sup> Although Fourierist thinking had been recognized as a background to Kardec's spiritism, this was only a single trajectory alongside the work of Saint-Simon, Lammenais and Reynaud in an emerging faith that was as eclectic as it was extraordinary.<sup>126</sup>

Allyre may have died in Kellum Springs in 1859, but the alignment of music and spiritism continued well beyond. Most obviously, the results of the Rue de Beaune séance were not published in Nus' *Choses de l'autre monde* until 1880, and further related events in the 1860s were central to the preservation of the traditions described there. While one – the publication of the *Air et paroles composés par le roy Henry III en 1574* “revealed in a dream” – continues the tradition of transmitting music from occult sources seen in the Mozart sonata movement, others – Théophile Gautier's 1865 novel *Spirite* and the 1885 painting by George Roux based on it – ensured that music and spiritism remained on the artistic map to the end of the century.<sup>127</sup>

### **Music: Spiritism, Literature, Fine Art**

Gautier published his *Spirite* in serial form in 1865 and it appeared as a single volume the following year.<sup>128</sup> It was the last of the author's short stories that exploited the fantastic, and

<sup>125</sup> See Cooper, “Escape to – and from – Utopia.”

<sup>126</sup> Edelman, “Les rapports ambigus.”

<sup>127</sup> *Air et paroles composés par le Roy Henry III.*

<sup>128</sup> The work was issued serially in the *Moniteur Universel* between 17 November and 6 December 1865 and published in 1866 as *Spirite*; subsequent references to the work are from the published 1866 edition.

perhaps the one that was best received; it cast a long shadow over subsequent decades.<sup>129</sup>

Although the literary critic André Lebois called the novel “the most beautiful flower of spiritism,” Gautier’s engagement with the occult had originally been both generalized and skeptical.<sup>130</sup> He was present at the séances over which Girardin presided, and perhaps at earlier events elsewhere where he witnessed automatic writing; he also met Kardec in 1854. In these early years, although Gautier was immersed in the invasion of the *salon* by the turning table, his contemporaries saw his interest more in the soul (*âme*) than in the spirit. By the early 1860s, when *Spirite* was at the planning stage, things had changed, and Gautier was engaging with spiritism with as much enthusiasm as his contemporaries a decade earlier.<sup>131</sup>

*Spirite* has been analyzed from the standpoint of music, desire and the fantastic, but although its correlation of music and spiritism has not yet emerged, it was of importance in the history of the occult both in the 1860s and beyond.<sup>132</sup> The three terrestrial characters in *Spirite* have sharply chiseled musical personalities. The widowed M<sup>me</sup> d’Ymbercourt is one of the most experienced pupils of the pianist Henri Herz, and presides over a *salon* where “a great German

<sup>129</sup> For introductions to the genesis and reception of the work see Crouzet, “Notice;” Fizaine, “*Spirite*: notice.”

<sup>130</sup> Lebois, *L’occultisme et l’amour*, 154.

<sup>131</sup> Two studies examine the broader context for Gautier’s engagement with spiritism: Lefebvre, “Théophile Gautier et les spirites et illuminés de son temps,” and Crouzet, “Annexe: Gautier et le spiritisme.” For a study of spiritism in *Spirite*, see Delic, “Scepticisme et occultisme;” and for a summary overview of music in the text, see Brunet, *Théophile Gautier et la musique*, 352-357.

<sup>132</sup> For a study of the character Spirite as the muse for Malivert’s poetic work, see Kerlouégan, “Inspiration et spiritisme;” Whyte sets *Spirite* in the context of Gautier’s other fantastic writing (*Théophile Gautier, conteur fantastique et merveilleux*, 1-7, 100-110, and 145-147). Schapira reads *Spirite* in the context of the fusion of arts and of its similarity of treatment to the types of hallucinogen found in *Le club des hachins* (“La musique médiatrice de ‘l’extra-monde”).

pianist named Kreisler” played Liszt’s *Grand galop chromatique* and “the delicious Comtesse Salvarosa [sang] the Willow Song better than *La Malibran* ever had.”<sup>133</sup> M<sup>me</sup> d’Ymbercourt’s reluctant suitor, Guy de Malivert, arrives late to the performances and misses the music, but with what sounds like false modesty describes himself as a musical ignoramus “moved by what seems beautiful to me, admiring Beethoven and even Verdi.”<sup>134</sup> De Malivert’s diffidence, feigned or real, is triggered by the musical interests of the Baron de Féroë, a Swedish diplomat, who “a compatriot of Swedenborg, leans over the abyss of mysticism like him, and [is] at least as occupied with the other world as the latter.”<sup>135</sup> Féroë’s musical obsessions are, almost inevitably, Wagnerian, and he subjects both d’Ymbercourt and de Malivert to an “aesthetic and transcendental dissertation on the more abstruse operas by Wagner, *Der fliegende Holländer*, *Lohengrin* and *Tristan und Isolde*.”<sup>136</sup>

De Malivert is haunted throughout the novel by a spirit who stalks him, prompts him to write – in a style directly calqued on the automatic writing found in the séances of the previous decade – a dismissive letter to d’Ymbercourt (which he does not send), and who appears in his

<sup>133</sup> Gautier, *Spirite*, 20. While Malibran (Maria-Félicia Malibran, née Garcia) is clearly a non-fictional character, Kreisler has resisted identification and may owe more to Gautier’s devotion to E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Johannes Kreisler than to any living individual. Montandon believes the comtesse Salvarosa also to be a Hoffmannesque fiction (*Théophile Gautier entre enthousiasme et mélancolie*, 26). Gautier’s references to Liszt’s *Grand galop chromatique* and to the act iii aria from Rossini’s *Otello* are accurate.

<sup>134</sup> Gautier, *Spirite*, 46.

<sup>135</sup> Gautier, 24-25.

<sup>136</sup> Gautier, 45-46. Gautier’s choice of works is remarkably precise; none had been heard in their entirety in Paris (Wagner had presented excerpts in concerts in the late 1850s). Gautier however omits any reference to the single work that had been performed in Paris: *Le tannhauser*, the French adaptation of *Tannhäuser*, catastrophically premiered in 1861, and at which Gautier had been present.

*salon* and plays the piano. He finds out Spirite's name after a visit to the cemetery (Lavinia d'Aufideni), and she visits him at home; this is a prompt for one of Gautier's extensive descriptive passages where he details every aspect of her physique, her deportment, her dress, de Malivert's gaze. Spirite begins to play.

The piece she played was by a great master, one of those inspirations in which the human genius seems to sense the infinite, and which sometimes powerfully formulates the secret postulates of the soul, sometimes reminding it of the heavens and paradises from which it has been driven. Ineffable melancholy sighs, ardent prayers, muffled murmurs are heard, the last rebellions of pride hurled from the light into the shadows.<sup>137</sup>

Given the references to "the great master," "inspiration," "genius," "the infinite," as well as de Malivert's musical preferences expressed earlier, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Spirite is playing a work by Beethoven. The language overlaps with the vocabularies of spiritism – "heavens and paradises," "the ineffable" and the play of light and shadow – in ways de Malivert is only too keen to acknowledge:

It seemed to Guy that he was listening to music for the first time. A new art revealed itself to him, and a thousand unknown ideas stirred in his soul: the notes awoke vibrations in him so deep, so distant, so long ago, that he thought he had heard them in a previous life, since forgotten.... Spirite rendered all the master's intentions, but it expressed the

<sup>137</sup> Gautier, 182.

ideal he dreamed of, and which human infirmity had not always allowed him to attain; she completed genius, she perfected perfection, she added to the absolute!<sup>138</sup>

Hearing music as if for the first time, the ability of music to evoke not only new ideas but those that seem to emanate from a previous life: these all could have stemmed from any of the encounters documented in the *Revue spirite* discussed previously. But here those concepts are elided with a performance from beyond the grave that renders complete all terrestrial shortcomings, even those of genius (and now it is almost certain that the performance Gautier describes is of Beethoven), in the way that Spirite “adds to the absolute.”

Just before Spirite’s performance begins, de Malivert glances towards the piano, and it is this scene that was captured two decades later in a canvas by (Alexandre-) George Roux, and that served as a further unequivocal site of reception for both Gautier’s *Spirite* and for the elision of the musical and the spiritist well after the establishment of the Third Republic in 1870. But despite the unambiguous title of Roux’s painting – *Spirite* – the fact that the picture is a direct translation of the scene from Gautier’s *Spirite* does not figure in the modern art-historical literature, and is unknown to music history (figure 6).<sup>139</sup>

[Figure 6]

<sup>138</sup> Gautier, 182.

<sup>139</sup> See Osterwalder, *Dictionnaire des illustrateurs*, 1:925. For his work on book illustration, there is an exhibition catalogue orientated more towards Verne, *George Roux: illustrateur de Jules Verne*; see especially Salques, “George Roux, peintre et illustrateur;” a broader perspective is offered in Clément, Fritchi-Roux and Salques, *George Roux, 1853-1929*.

Roux was known principally as a book illustrator and worked extensively with the publisher Pierre-Jules Hetzel on much of the work of Jules Verne; he also worked on illustrated projects for the authors Jean Aicard (*Le roi de Camargue*), Ferdinand Fabre (*Taillevant*), the French translation by André Laurie of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (*L'île au trésor*) and on Ernest Legouvé's *Une élève de seize ans*.<sup>140</sup> Hetzel had also published Gautier's six-volume *Histoire de l'art dramatique* in 1858-59 and lived long enough (he died in 1886) to have suggested Gautier's story to Roux as a subject for artistic treatment. Roux's *Spirite* is signed and dated 1885 on the canvas itself, and was exhibited at the Salon de la Société des Artistes français (the "Paris Salon") the same year; in the catalogue was an attributed quotation from Gautier's novel: "Guy looked towards the piano and little by little the charming shade [*ombre*] of a young girl sketched itself in a luminous vapor (Th[éophile] Gautier)" ("Guy regarda vers le piano et peu à peu s'ébaucha dans une vapeur lumineuse, l'ombre charmante d'une jeune fille." / (Th. Gautier))."<sup>141</sup> The absence of the title of Gautier's *Spirite*, however, implies that the novel would still have been familiar to anyone reading the catalogue in 1885, and looking at the painting in the Salon, but its absence equally concealed the painting's origins after Gautier's literary star had waned. Roux exhibited nine times at the Paris Salon: two other canvases also depict supernatural scenes: *Mirage* from 1893 and *Une histoire des revenants* (1903).<sup>142</sup>

<sup>140</sup> The standard text on Hetzel is Parménie and de la Chapelle, *Histoire d'un éditeur*.

<sup>141</sup> *Salons 1673-1914*. Catalogue no. 2150. The citation is from Gautier, *Spirite*, 180. Roux's painting was put up for sale by Christie's in London in 2009 (*London: Old Masters & 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Arts*, 84 (lot 224)). It did not form part of the 2012 Béziers retrospective exhibition of Roux's work, and was then described as impossible to find (Clément *et al.*, *George Roux, 1853-1929*, 13); the exhibition did however include a study for *Spirite* of the pianist with none of the ectoplasmic qualities of the finished work (Clément *et al.*, 13).

<sup>142</sup> There is an image of *Mirage* in the 1893 illustrated catalogue (*Catalogue illustré de peinture ... 1893*, 206); it has much in common with *Spirite* and depicts a long-abandoned wrecked ship on a coastline, above which spirits

Gautier's detailed description of the eponym in *Spirite* is mirrored exactly in Roux's image: dress, deportment (including the angle of the head to which Gautier devotes a good deal of attention), the colors of the surrounding shimmer and the way in which it merges into Spirite's body. The only difference is that Gautier's gaze is directed from de Malivert to Spirite whereas Roux paints with the viewer at a point which gives a perspective on both characters. The descriptions of pictures and furniture in de Malivert's home match those given in the earlier parts of *Spirite*.<sup>143</sup> In short, there is no doubt about the subject matter of the painting, its link to the Gautier novel, and little uncertainty that any of Roux's admirers or possible purchasers were in any doubt either. The fact that Roux chose this scene, rather than any other from the novel – which could have been more suitable as an artistic subject – projects the elision of music and spiritism from the séances of the 1850s, through Gautier's story in the 1860s, into the artistic world of the late nineteenth century.

Whether or not séances, the turning of tables, and spiritism were phenomena “that touched the entire western world,”<sup>144</sup> music played a massive part in their history, and especially during the *Second Empire*. Through the dictation of the words and opinions of musicians long dead, drawings of their homes on distant planets, or with transcriptions of composers' works or of music of celestial regions, music was central to spiritism throughout the 1850s and 1860s; it had

circulate in ways analogous to the subject in *Spirite*. The quality of the reproduction in the *Catalogue illustré de peinture* is very poor, but the vapidity of the spirits corresponds to that of the character in *Spirite*. There is no image of *Une histoire des revenants* in the 1903 catalogue (*Catalogue illustré de peinture et sculpture ... 1903*).

<sup>143</sup> Gautier, *Spirite*, 4.

<sup>144</sup> Cuchot, *Voix d'outre-tombe*, 433.

an impact on various forms of *salon* culture, theatre, literature of many types, experimental science, religion and fine art. Music and the occult veered from Fourierism, through Saint-Simonianism to the fully-developed spiritism of Kardec, and musicians were frequently used as mouthpieces for philosophical thought. Whatever the veracity of the claims made in discourses around music and spiritism, the pressure on the canon exerted by the tradition is beyond doubt, and largely unsurprising for the third quarter of the nineteenth century in France. Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven had been already established as clear *points d'appui* while Auber and Boïeldieu still remained as venerated authorities. Rossini was ubiquitous, while Chopin and – late in the tradition – Berlioz also appeared.

French enthusiasm for *spiritism* continued well after Kardec's death in 1869, but tailed off towards the end of the century;<sup>145</sup> the emphasis that it received in the United States continued to affect music well into the twentieth century, as studies of Jesse Shepard (Francis Grierson) and the community at Lily Dale have recently shown.<sup>146</sup> In Great Britain, séances were not perhaps as plentiful as in *Second-Empire* France, and also took different forms,<sup>147</sup> but when the British medium Rosemary Brown started to dictate works of major named composers in the 1960s, she emphasized her nineteenth-century background, noting that her family had enjoyed psychic powers back at least two generations to the 1860s (she was born in 1916).<sup>148</sup> Her claims may have won her much more support in the 1960s and 1970s than they enjoy today, but constitute a

<sup>145</sup> Attempts to promote spiritism continued into the twentieth century, but were largely experimental in nature and veered towards more general accounts of the paranormal (see Lachapelle, *Investigating the Supernatural*, 113-141).

<sup>146</sup> Andrick, "Jesse Shepard's Sensational Musical Séances;" Spinner, "Resonant Spirits."

<sup>147</sup> Raz, "Séances, "Sperrits," and Self-Playing Accordions."

<sup>148</sup> Parrott, *The Music of Rosemary Brown*; Bomfim, "'She Must be a Pure Vessel'."

near-living witness to the importance of music within the epistemologies of spiritism. Evidence of music and spiritism in German-speaking lands is less forthcoming, perhaps because of the imperatives surrounding the preservation of a serious and rational aesthetic for Austro-German repertoires, but there are indications that Schubert participated in séances<sup>149</sup> and that Max Reger spoke through the medium of his wife,<sup>150</sup> while Ferdinand Hiller left a detailed account of meeting musical friends in heaven.<sup>151</sup> Yet perhaps the best-known example of twentieth-century Austro-German music and spiritism, the discovery of the autograph of Schumann's Violin Concerto, was the product of a séance that took place in London in March 1933.<sup>152</sup>

Ultimately, the importance of music and the occult in nineteenth-century western music, and in the séance of *Second-Empire* France in particular, lies in its ability to destabilize the disciplinary basis that the last century and a half has bequeathed modern scholarship. The history related here invites reflection on modern assumptions about musical authority, attribution, and ultimately the ontological and the empirical; it also brings music into the domain of the burgeoning scholarship of the occult in nineteenth-century France. And if today's perspectives on music have focused on the concert hall, the church, or the theatre for too long, repositioning music within the domain of the occult, and specifically of spiritism and the séance, constitutes an important step in the direction of a broader grasp of musical practice, and a deeper understanding of music in the nineteenth century.

<sup>149</sup> Goldschmidt, "Schubert und kein Ende."

<sup>150</sup> Chelius, "Alles Schwindel? Elsa Regers spiritische Sitzungen."

<sup>151</sup> Locke and Thym, "Ferdinand Hiller's Twelve Trips to Meet Old Friends in Heaven."

<sup>152</sup> Macleod, "The Truth about the Schumann Concerto."

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[Title anonymized by author] **Music and the Séance: *Second Empire* Paris**

CAPTIONS

***Table***

Table 1. Compositions transcribed by Allyre Bureau during séances on the Rue de Beaune, 1853 (Eugène Nus, *Choses de l'autre monde* (Paris: Dentu, [1880]), 92-103)

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### ***Music Examples***

Example 1. Anonymous, *Chant de la terre dans l'espace* (Eugène Nus, *Choses de l'autre monde* (Paris: Dentu, [1880]), 92)

Example 2. Anonymous, *Désespoir-Miserere* (Eugène Nus, *Choses de l'autre monde* (Paris: Dentu, [1880]), 100)

Example 3. “Dum esset Rex;” third antiphon for Vespers on the feast of the Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Antiphonarium sacri ordinis prædicatorum pro diurnis horis* (Rome: In Hospitio Magistri Generalis, 1933), 931)

Example 4. “Dum esset Rex;” third antiphon for Vespers on the feast of the Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, transcribed with accompaniment by François-Auguste Gevaert (François-Auguste Gevaert, *Méthode pour l'enseignement du plain-chant* (Ghent and Liège: author; Paris: Katto; Amsterdam: Roothaan, 1856), 46)

Example 5. Guillaume de Machaut, “Douce dame jolie” (Leo Schrade, ed. *The Works of Guillaume de Machaut*, 2 vols, Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century 2-3 (Monaco: Oiseau-Lyre, 1956); *R* as *Guillaume de Machaut: Œuvres complètes*, 5 vols (Monaco: Oiseau-Lyre, 1977) 5:30 [page numbers refer to 1977 reprint])

Example 6. Guillaume de Machaut, “Douce dame jolie,” transcribed by Jean-Baptiste Weckerlin (Jean-Baptiste Weckerlin, ed. *Echos du temps passé*, 3 vols (Paris: Flaxland, 1855-1857) 1:10)

Example 1

Largo.

The musical score is written for piano in 2/4 time, marked "Largo." It consists of two systems of music. The first system contains four measures. The right hand begins with a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4 in the second measure. The third measure contains a half note C5, and the fourth measure contains a half note D5. The left hand plays a steady bass line of quarter notes: G2, F2, E2, and D2. The second system contains five measures. The right hand starts with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4 and B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, and a quarter rest. The left hand continues with quarter notes: G2, F2, E2, D2, and C2. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Example 2

The musical score for Example 2 is written for piano in 3/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It consists of four systems of music, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).

- System 1:** The right hand is silent. The left hand plays a sequence of notes: C4 (half note), C4-E4 (quarter notes), F#4-G#4 (quarter notes), and a final chord of F#4-C#5-G#4 (quarter note).
- System 2:** The right hand plays chords: C4-E4-G4 (quarter), C4-E4-G4 (quarter), C4-E4-G4 (quarter), and C4-E4-G4 (quarter). The left hand plays: C4-E4 (quarter), C4-E4-G4 (quarter), C4-E4-G4 (quarter), and C4-E4-G4 (quarter).
- System 3:** The right hand plays: C4 (quarter), C4-E4 (quarter), C4-E4-G4 (quarter), and a chord of C4-E4-G4 (quarter). The left hand plays: C4-E4 (quarter), C4-E4-G4 (quarter), C4-E4-G4 (quarter), and C4-E4-G4 (quarter). The instruction *crescendo.* is written above the right hand, and *ff* is written above the right hand in the final measure.
- System 4:** The right hand plays: C4-E4-G4 (quarter), C4-E4-G4 (quarter), C4-E4-G4 (quarter), and C4 (quarter). The left hand plays: C4-E4 (quarter), C4-E4-G4 (quarter), C4-E4-G4 (quarter), and C4-E4-G4 (quarter).

Example 3

Die 12 Septembris

SSM̃I NOMINIS B. MARIAE V.

TOTUM DUPLEX

Ad I Vesperas

Super Ps.

Ant. III b

**D**

um esset Rex in accú bi-to su- o, nardus me- a

de- dit odórem su- a- vi- tá- tis. *Ps.* Laudá- te. E u o u a e.

*R.* Stirps Jesse, *Hymnus* Ave maris stella, *et v.* Ora pro nobis, *ut*  
*in Festis B. Mariæ V., pag. 4\*-6\*.*

Example 4

The image displays four systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment, arranged vertically. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and the time signature is 4/4. The notation is as follows:

- System 1:** Treble clef contains a series of chords: G4-A4-B4, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, and a final chord G4-A4-B4-C5. The bass clef contains a single note G2 in each measure.
- System 2:** Treble clef contains chords: G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, and a final chord G4-A4-B4-C5. The bass clef contains a single note G2 in each measure.
- System 3:** Treble clef contains chords: G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, and a final chord G4-A4-B4-C5. The bass clef contains a single note G2 in each measure.
- System 4:** Treble clef contains chords: G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, and a final chord G4-A4-B4-C5. The bass clef contains a single note G2 in each measure.

Example 5

5



R 1.5 Dou - ce da - me jo - li - e, Pour Dieu ne pen - ses mi -  
4. He - las! et je men - di - e D'es - pe-rance ey\_ d'a - i -

10



- e, Que nulle ait sig-nou - ri - e Seur moy fors vous seu - le - ment.  
- e; Dont ma joie est fe - ni - e, Se pi - te ne vous en prent,

20



2. Qu'a - des sans - tri - che - ri - e\_\_\_ Chie - ri - e\_\_\_ Vous  
3. Tous les jours de ma vi - e\_\_\_ Ser - vi - e\_\_\_ Sans

25



ay et humn-ble - ment vi - lein pen - se - ment.

- R 1. Douce dame jolie, *etc.*
- 2. Mais vo douce maistrie  
Maistrie  
Mon cuer si durement
- 3. Qu'elle le contralie  
Et lie  
En amours tellement
- 4. Qu'il n'a de riens envie  
Fors d'estre en vo baillie;  
Et se ne li ottrie  
Vors chers nul aligement.
- R 5. Douce dame jolie, *etc.*

- R 1. Douce dame jolie, *etc.*
- 2. Et quant ma maladie  
Garie  
Ne sera nullement
- 3. Sans vous, douce anemie,  
Qui lie  
Estes de mon tourment,
- 4. A jointes main deprie  
Vo cuer, puis qu'il m'oublie,  
Que trempement m'ocie,  
Car trop languie longuement.
- R 5. Douce dame jolie, *etc.*

Example 6

Andantino. (Metr. ♩ = 80)

Chant.

Dou-ce da-me jo -

li - e, Pour Dieu ne pen - ses — mi - e

Que nulle ait sei-gnou - ri - e Sur moi. fors\_

2<sup>me</sup> STROPHE.

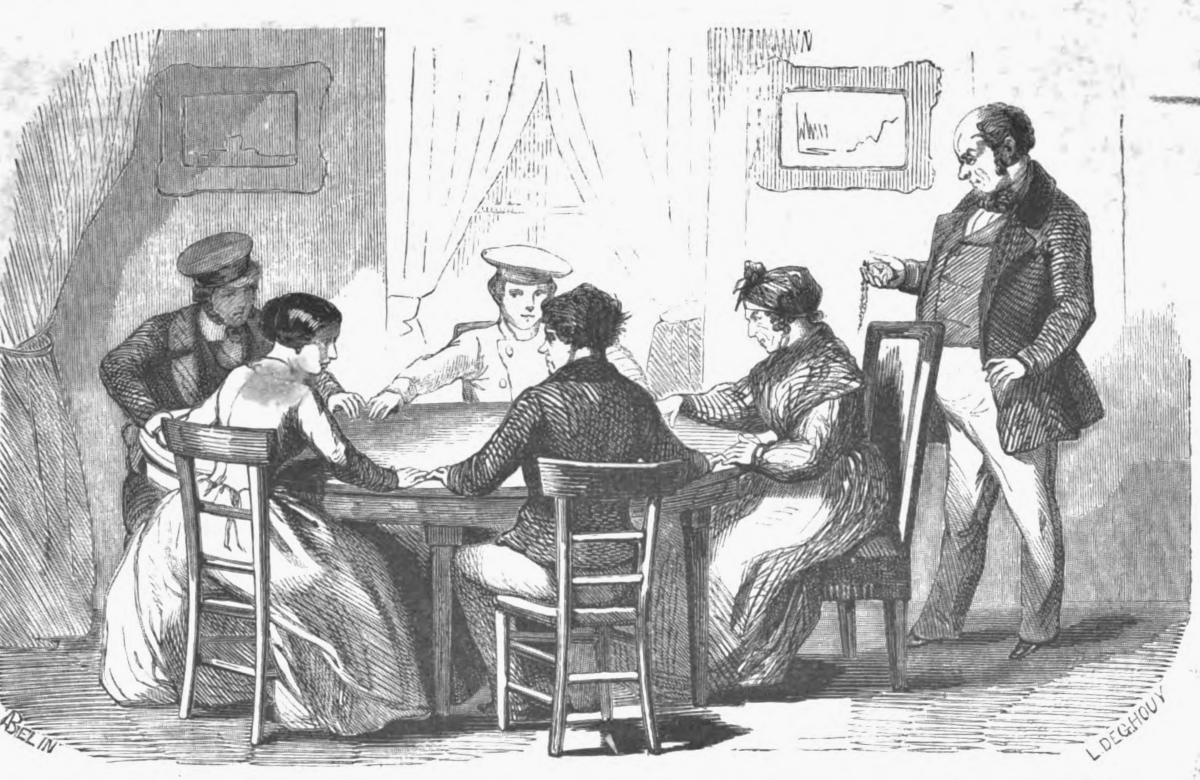
— vous seu - le - ment.

*p*

Dou-ce da-me jo - li - e, Tous les jours

de ma - vi - e. Sans nul - le tri - che -

ri - e, Vous ai ser - vie hum - ble - ment.





Ein Saal der Mode im Jahre 1840.

Fragment

SONATE

*Décrite par*

L'ESPRIT de MOZART

M<sup>r</sup>. Brion d'Orgeval

MEDIUM.

*Prix net: 2!*

Paris, chez M. LEDOYEN, Libraire spiritiste  
Galerie d'Orléans, St. Palais Royal

1859.

# FRAGMENT DE SONATE.

Dicté par

L'esprit de Mozart

à Monsieur BRYON DORGEVAL. Médium.

Moderato.

PIANO

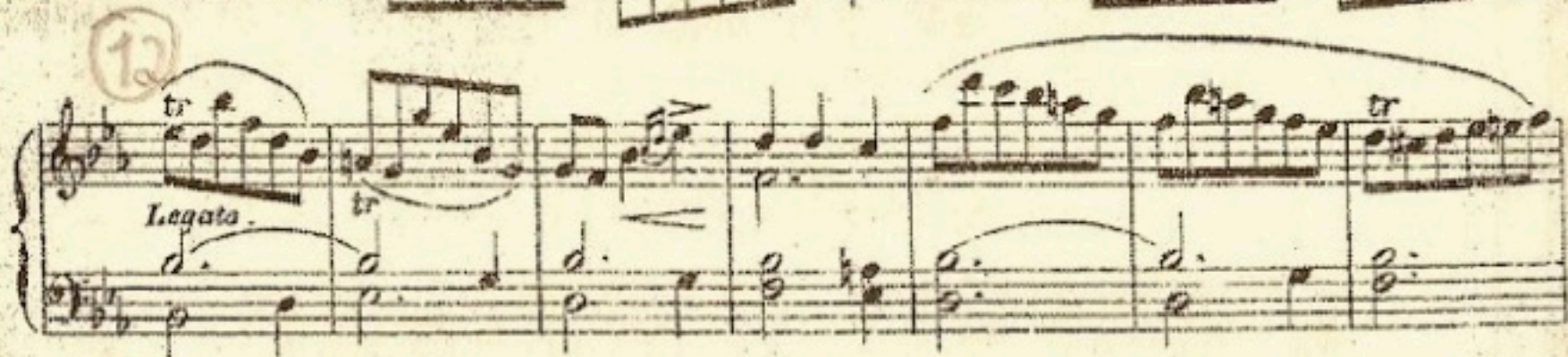


6

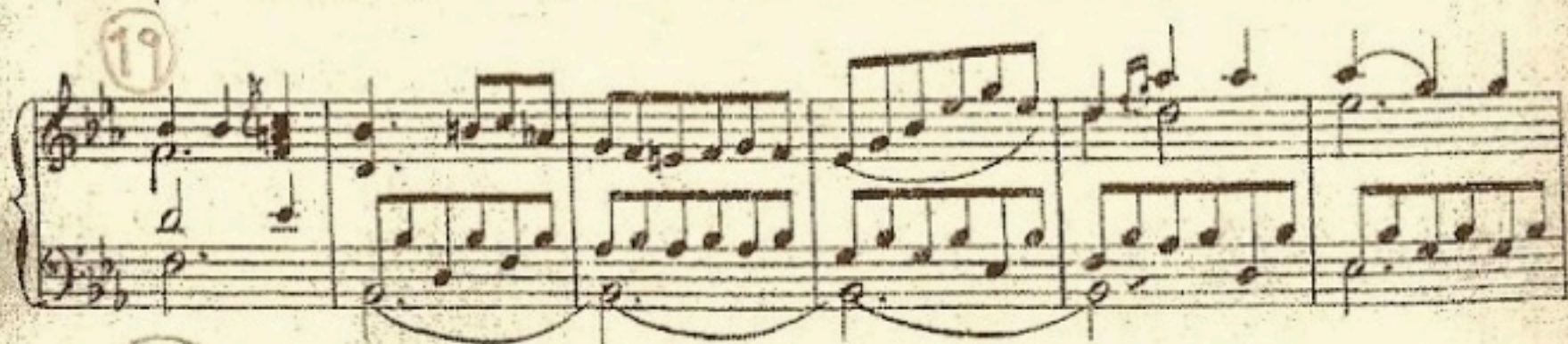


12

Legato.



19



25





Ernest Paludy  
à Metz

Paris, Imp. Bachelier fr. r. l'École des arts, 37

VICTORIEN SARDOU médaille

LA MAISON DE MOZART  
(ville basse)



Table 1

<i>Title</i>	<i>Key</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Tempo</i>	<i>Duration (mm)</i>
Chant de la terre dans l'espace	C major	2/4	Largo	9
Chant de la mer	C major	6/8	Adagio	22
Duo: voix de la marée, langoureuse mélodie du vent	G major	6/8	Andante	13
Chant de l'astre satellite lunaire	C major	C	Moderato. Molto legato et dolce	12
Chant de la nue silencieuse et voilée	D-flat major	3/4	Andante	11
Chant de la lune à son déclin	E major	2/4	Andante. Molto legato	14
Chant de Saturne	B major	2/4	Adagio	20
Chant de Jupiter	F major	3/4	Andante	9
Chant de Vesta	C major	6/8		8
Mélodie d'Herschel: Adoration	F major	3/4		24
Mélodie d'Herschel: Désespoir-Miserere	E major	3/4		16
Chant de la planète Mars	C major	3/4		21
Chant de religieuse dans Vénus	D-flat major	C		9
Chant de la planète-firmament	E-flat major	6/8		15