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Musical Materiality: 19th Century French Music Culture Embodied in the Palais Garnier Main Facade

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Library Award for Undergraduate Research, Essay

Reflective Essay

Paris is an alluring city to many individuals, but my desire to research French culture is unique to my individual gravitation to Paris as an amateur musician and artist. When I enrolled concurrently in my first two seminar courses - Dr. Derek Katz's seminar on Romantic Music and Dr. Carole Paul's seminar on Public Art - I had the serendipitous opportunity to engage in research on Parisian projects. After reading David Atkinson and Denis Cosgrove's article "Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities" (1998), which briefly mentioned the Paris Opera House, I knew there was more to explore on that magnificent edifice and its relationship with Parisian culture, art, and music history. Once I committed to this project, the UCSB library resources, including meetings with the librarians and professors in my field, finding and requesting articles, images, and books, and accessing library spaces, enabled me to turn it into a rich academic project.

My research project analyzes the main facade of the Palais Garnier - the Paris Opera House - in the context of nineteenth-century French music culture. I aim to address how the Opera House's main facade acts as a vehicle for asserting and conveying codified music values in nineteenth-century Paris through its urban and sculptural design. My first method of research was to seek out historical information from books and articles at the library contextualizing the political impetus for the Second Empire of France to commission an imperial opera house. Then I considered how this architectural project functioned within the urbanization of Paris and the need to create a city worthy of an empire. For that I used articles from JSTOR citing contemporary and historic attitudes. I also reached out to a graduate student in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture, who suggested I consult the work of Benjamin Walter. Understanding these nationalistic qualities led me to connect the application of Charles Garnier's Neo-Baroque style, analyzed in images of the facade from books and ARTSTOR, with the political agenda of the French empire. To learn how to gather this material, I consulted with the Art & Architecture Reference Librarian, Chizu Morihara, who also taught me how to refine searches for books, articles, and images in the UCSB database, specifically using JSTOR and ARTSTOR.

To address the context of nineteenth-century French music culture I used materials from my course with Dr. Katz and met with the Music Librarian, Kyra Folk-Farber; both of them encouraged me to meet with Dr. Martha Sprigge. I also took advantage of the interlibrary loan system, which I used to request Walter Frisch's *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (2013) from the University of California, San Diego. Once I established an historical and cultural understanding of the middle-class contribution to the modernization of musical culture, I met with Dr. Sprigge

from the Department of Music for more information on how these ideas concerning classical music were transformed into material representations. Dr. Sprigge provided me access to Abigail Fine's dissertation on *Objects of Veneration* (2017), whose work I otherwise would not have searched for in the library catalog. At this point, I used an iconographic approach to analyze how the facade expresses the social and musical hierarchy by observing the stylistic approach and organization of the Mozart and Beethoven gilded busts with images I found using ARTSTOR. I also explored the public scandal regarding Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's *La Danse* (1868). The books and images I found recounted contemporary public opinions of the latter and provided visual data on the defacement of this sculpture. This revealed the elitist preferences to which the Paris Opera catered, ultimately supporting my project's argument on the facade's social and hierarchical system and musical value in 19th century Paris.

Conducting research for this paper not only enabled me to familiarize myself with UCSB library resources and build relationships with experts in my field, but also to practice essential aspects of academic research. Utilizing UCSB library resources like the Music Library listening rooms provided a location where I could independently focus on writing and researching my paper. Finally, meeting with professors and librarians allowed me to formulate questions about archival research and how to utilize special collections in order to produce original scholarship.

University of California, Santa Barbara

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Figure 1: Achille Quinet, *Le Nouvel Opéra* (ca. 1860)¹

The Palais Garnier, the Paris Opera House, is an architectural monument of the Second Empire of France echoing the style of Baroque-period architecture in a Neo-Baroque marriage of classicism and modern social interpretations. Commissioned by the last emperor of France, Charles-Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, known as Napoleon III, the new opera house aimed to evoke the “Baroque metaphor of *theatrum mundi* - that the world is a stage”², while asserting its place as a national *immeuble* or building. Constructed by architect Charles Garnier between 1860-1875, the opera’s main facade presents a spectacular exposition of the Beaux-Arts style,

¹ Achille Quinet. *Le Nouvel Opéra*, ca. 1860s. Place: Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Purchase. https://library-artstor-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/asset/AWSS35953_35953_38098733. Accessed 19 February 2020.

² Read, Gray. *Modern Architecture in Theatre: The Experiments of Art et Action*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 4.

reviving classical elements of architecture and celebrating the art of music. Charles Garnier's opera house engages with Paris' nineteenth-century boulevards, redesigned in the urban landscaping by Baron Haussmann, as an axial center offering a public sphere for theatrical interaction and social display. With a selective representation of musical giants, including Mozart, Beethoven, and Rossini, depicted on the loggia, the facade negotiates the elite consumption of music and art by the nineteenth-century Parisian bourgeois elite and the disparity between music classes. The social gap between art and music patrons is confirmed by the century's consolidation of a musical hierarchy and further confirmed by the public defacement of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's *La Danse* (1868). This paper will explore how the Paris Opéra's main facade embodied nineteenth-century Parisian music culture with respect to its role as a public work of art and a place for community engagement.

Nineteenth-century Paris

In the nineteenth century, France witnessed political upheaval, reconciliation, and instability following the revolution of the eighteenth-century and Napoleon Bonaparte's (1769-1821) rise to emperor. The initiation of the Napoleonic Wars left what could only be the fantasy of a nation in a state of uncertainty despite the emperor's intended establishment of a new "Roman Empire" with the erection of public monuments echoing the architecture of antiquity, such as the *Arc de Triomphe* (1806-1836) and *Vendome Column* (1806-1810).³ After the defeat and evacuation of Napoleon's troops in Moscow during the War of 1812 and the emperor's exile, France experienced a brief restoration of the House of Bourbon until the July

³ Ackerman, James. "Arch, Column, Equestrian Statue: Three Persistent Forms of Public Monument" in *Remove Not the Ancient Landmark: Public Monuments and Moral Values*, ed. Donald Martin Reynolds (Amsterdam 1996), pp. 23.

Revolution of 1830, when Louis-Philippe (1773-1850) assumed the throne, until he was forced to abdicate and replaced by the presidential reign of Charles-Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (1808-1873) in 1848.

Charles-Louis Napoleon Bonaparte adopted the public title of Napoleon III, and as the nephew of the late emperor of France and rising successor in a shaken society, it was important for him not to revive the negative structures of imperial history. Napoleon III's transition from the Second Republic (1848-1852) to the Second Empire (1852-1870), ending with his defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, indicated a need to initiate social developments within a rising public market and consolidate Parisian life as a homogenous culture in nineteenth-century France. One of the most historical developments initiated by the new emperor was his mid-century city-project - the urbanization of Paris by Baron Haussmann (1809-1891) called Haussmannization. This not only prevented the practice of revolutionary barricading but also erased the spatial memories of a politically contentious period, making way for the modern era, graced with wide boulevards, new buildings, parks, and a sewage system.⁴ Preceding this renovation, Parisian streets resembled medieval slums suffocated by disease and darkness. The emperor requested Haussmann to bring "air, light, and cleanliness" to his new empire worthy of national pride, power, and public investment.⁵ This mission was reflected in broader international initiatives where "capital cities of European nations and empires were replanned and reconstructed to express a newly conceived national-imperial identity..." with "...public

⁴ Parry, D. L. L. and Girard, Pierre. *France Since 1800*. Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 50.

⁵ Chapman, Brian. "Baron Haussmann and the Planning of Paris", *The Town Planning Review*, vol. 24, No. 3, 1953, pp. 182.

monuments that sought to locate and embody national and imperial identities and meanings in key metropolitan locations.”⁶

Nineteenth-century Europe confronted the industrial revolution, advancements in technology, and the beginnings of international communication and globalization through increased material accessibility and production. This, along with the rise of the middle class and economic stability, developed a public sphere paralleling the landscaping of Haussmann, as the bourgeois middle class cultivated enlightenment ideology in salons, cafes, and other public venues. Walter Benjamin captures the interactive atmosphere of nineteenth-century Paris with an analysis of the capital’s “Second Empire... at the height of its power... [where] Paris was confirmed in its position as the capital of luxury and of fashion.”⁷ This interest in material commodities expresses the moral and aesthetic pride embellishing Parisian identity.

To ensure nationalistic efficacy of Louis-Napoleon’s new Paris, the emperor employed the construction of a new opera house. This would become the location for the Paris Opéra and Paris ballet company, but was also a “representational building”. For, “institutions when concretized as groupings of architectural volumes [that] will communicate... the Opéra’s function as the principal theater of France, the state-run Academie imperiale de musique.”⁸ However, before unwrapping the monumental significance of the Palais Garnier one must understand music in the context of nineteenth-century Paris.

⁶ Atkinson, David and Cosgrove, Denis. “Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities: City, Nation, and Empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome, 1870-1945”. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 88, no. 1, 1998, pp. 32.

⁷ Benjamin, Walter. “Paris: Capital of The Nineteenth Century”. *Perspecta*, vol. 12, 1969, pp. 168.

⁸ Van Zanten, David. “Nineteenth-Century French Government Architectural Services and the Design of the Monuments of Paris”. *Art Journal: Nineteenth-Century French Art Institutions*, vol. 48, no. 1, 1989, pp. 18.

Classical Music in the Modern Era



Figure 2: Charles Garnier, *Paris Opera House (L'Opéra)*, exterior view (1857-75)⁹

Emerging from the courts, churches, and taverns, public concerts had not existed until after the late eighteenth-century to early nineteenth-century revolutions, due to government censorship. However, following the final cessation of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, a period of economic stability provided a foundation for the expansion of the middle class, who became independent entrepreneurs, and the mass production of musical instruments and dissemination of sheet music. The city of Paris established itself as an essential capital for music development as early as in the eighteenth-century, where “Mozart acknowledge[d] that Paris was a ‘must’ financially and for reputation.”¹⁰ Previously, the exclusivity of classical music in courts and upper-class homes required contemporary listeners to have exceptional abilities in memorizing

⁹ Garnier, Charles (French architect, 1825-1898) architect, Associated Name: Yip, Chris (photographer). Paris Opera House, L'Opera (alternate title), Exterior views, Exterior: south facade. opera houses. 1857-1875 (creation); 1860-1875 (creation); 1861 (creation); 1861-1874 (creation); 1861-1875 (creation); 1862-1875 (creation)https://library-artstor-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/asset/HUCB_SHARE_109912222068. Accessed 19 February 2020.

¹⁰ Levy, Janet. *The Quatuor Concertant in Paris in the Later Half of the Eighteenth Century*. University Microfilms, 1971, pp. 6.

and notating what they heard from live concerts. In addition to urban development and technology, distinct social classes molded the modern music sphere, venues for amateur and professional musicians, the consolidation of musical hierarchy, and canonization of European composers into the classical narrative.

Italian opera informed French music culture with the establishment of operatic institutions like the *Opéra* and *Opéra Comique*, but the fascination with light, pleasurable music evolved into a form of popular music, critiques as entertaining and insubstantial rather than cognitively stimulating. This distinction in musical taste became an identifier between social circles. These preferences had roots in the philosophy of individuals like Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who endorsed “simplicity” and “natural” content supported by the demands of intellectual contemplation (i.e. the works of Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)). The distinction in musical taste intersects with social status and geographic regions. According to Walter Frisch, the period of 1815 witnessed a manifestation of musical practice in the private and public sphere by both amateurs and professional musicians. With respect to the rise of the middle class and access to materials, this early period in the nineteenth-century is coined “the age of Beethoven”, or interchangeably, “the age of Rossini” or “of Paganini.”¹¹ These titles represent styles of classical music including symphonic and chamber (Beethoven), opera (Rossini), and virtuosic repertoire (Paganini). The lineage of German masters, including Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven claimed the status of high culture, reserved for intellectual discourse between elite groups, whereas the operatic literature and virtuosic form occupied a position in popular music. William Weber states “Popular culture is always assumed to be contemporaneous and non-esoteric...

¹¹ Frisch, Walter. *Music in the Nineteenth Century: Western Music in Context*. W. W. Norton and Company, 2013, pp. 4.

High culture is the opposite: focusing upon classical forms, it is assumed to require some kind of knowledge for its comprehension, and thereby received an elevated cultural standing.”¹²

Despite the seemingly disunified music audience, it maintained its place as a social fundamental in French culture, for it was regarded to be an integral part in the breeding of refined bourgeois children and families.¹³

Contemporary composers illustrate the essence of nineteenth-century Paris, “to see and be seen” informed by the notion of commodity fetishism proposed by Walter Benjamin. In a review of Benjamin’s “Paris: Capital of The Nineteenth Century”, Higonnet et al. crystallizes how modern ideas advised the architecture of the new opera house under the leadership of Charles Garnier (1825-1898):



Figure 3: Louis Béroud, *The Staircase of the New Opera of Paris* (19th Century)¹⁴

¹² Weber, William. *Music and the Middle Class: The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna*. Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1975, pp. 11.

¹³ Ausoni, Alberto. *Music in Art*. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2009, pp. 179.

¹⁴ Béroud, Louis (1852-1930). *The Staircase of the New Opera of Paris*. Art Resource. https://www.artres.com/C.aspx?VP3=ViewBox_VPage&VBID=2UN36554QI60U&IT=ZoomImageTemplate01_VForm&IID=2UNTWADWWFF8&PN=1&CT=Search&SF=0. Accessed 19 February 2020.

“Jacques Offenbach gives a costume party at which guests who pay five francs will be called ‘mon prince’. The Opéra is a facade rather than a building. It expresses the innermost principles of the Second Empire... the facades, writes Garnier, of his *opus magnum*, is the most typical and the most personal part of the whole work’.”¹⁵

The manifestation of luxury and “bombastic, overblown expressions of bourgeois high culture” permeated throughout Europe in preparation to entertain international exhibitions and world fairs¹⁶, which foster “places of pilgrimage to the fetish commodity.”¹⁷ The demands of a spectacular edifice proved to be a monumental project that would be submitted to public opinion.

The Palais Garnier: Main Facade

The project to build a state institution for the performing arts was awarded to Charles Garnier (1825-1898), a student of the École des Beaux-Arts and recipient of the Prix de Rome in 1848. Garnier received the commission following a competition and under collaborative drafting and redrafting Garnier’s plan to reformulate classical architecture to serve a modern public came to fruition. The facade of the opera house greets the citizens of Paris “at a nexus of avenues [that] elevate the Opéra House to an urban role normally reserved for civic or religious buildings.”¹⁸

The grandiose collocation of classical, baroque, and renaissance style throughout the opera house

¹⁵ Higonnet, Patrice et al. “Facade: Walter Benjamin’s Paris”. *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1984, pp. 399.

¹⁶ Atkinson, David and Cosgrove, Denis. “Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities: City, Nation, and Empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome, 1870-1945”. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 88, no. 1, 1998, pp. 32.

¹⁷ Benjamin, Walter. “Paris: Capital of The Nineteenth Century”. *Perspecta*, vol. 12, 1969, pp. 167.

¹⁸ Read, Gray. *Modern Architecture in Theatre: The Experiments of Art et Action*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 38.

confused Garnier's patrons; Empress Eugenia was aghast with Garnier's designs, stating "What is this style? It is not a style? It is not Greek, nor Louis XVI, not even Louis XV!"¹⁹ Garnier is said to have replied that his opera house was in the style of Napoleon III. Whether or not Charles Garnier truly uttered such a phrase is conjecture, but historians have adopted this term to express the revival of what Charles Mead refers to as the "Renaissance of French Classicism". It is known, however, that "Garnier wanted the Opéra's decoration to express an artistic school - a school created by gathering a group of artists who shared his training..."²⁰ This statement identifies the social class Garnier was working for, elites and individuals educated in the classics.

The facade is divided into three parts, the arcade, loggia, attic, and flytower adorned with gilded sculptures of *Poetry* and *Harmony* by Charles Gumery (1827-71), topped with a bronze sculpture by Aimé Millet titled *Apollo, Poetry, and Music* (1860-69). Here Apollo, an oxidized teal color, raises his golden lyre to the heavens overseeing the people of Paris. Acting as the apogee of European music, grounded in ancient history, the sculptural contributions echo early imperial architecture such as the *Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel* (1809-06). Millet's statue crowns the auditorium dome centered in front of a large pediment as "the facade speaks loud and clear of the cult celebrated within: that of all the arts united in opera under the aegis of Apollo."²¹ Moving downward, the facade incorporates comique and tragic ancient masks, "N" and "E" medallions in the attic, the renamed title of the institution "Académie Nationale de Musique", seven gilded busts of composers below the attic, separated by polychrome collonettes and

¹⁹ "Qu'est-ce que ce style-là? Ce n'est un style! Ce n'est ni du grec, ni du Louis XVI, pa même du Louis XV!", Mead, Christopher. *Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra: architectural empathy and the renaissance of French classicism*. MIT Press, 1991, pp. 3.

²⁰ Mead, Christopher. *Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra: architectural empathy and the renaissance of French classicism*. MIT Press, 1991, pp. 177.

²¹ Fontaine, Gerard et al. *Charles Garnier's Opéra: architecture and interior decor*. Opéra national de Paris, 2004, pp. 11.

Corinthian columns, and an arcade divided by four composer medallions and eight sculptures (four centered individual designs and four group sculptures). Garnier's appropriation of historical buildings like the Louvre solidified the opera's presence as "the architecture of palaces, not of theaters...."²² It is noteworthy that the location Garnier was provided at the Place d'Opéra is framed by large apartments, as an emblem of the Haussmannization, that dwarf the Opéra's exterior as one looks down the grand boulevard. Therefore it was an essential task for Garnier to build "A successful facade..." that "... explains the function of the building and draws him [the passerby] inward."²³



Figure 4: L'Avenue de l'Opéra (1905)²⁴

²² Mead, Christopher. *Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra: architectural empathy and the renaissance of French classicism*. MIT Press, 1991, pp. 105.

²³ Higonnet, Patrice et al. "Facade: Walter Benjamin's Paris". *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1984, pp. 402.

²⁴ Image: Historical Date: 1905. Paris - L'Avenue de l'Opera - LL., general views, parts of city, View, with the Place de Theatre Francais. photographs. 1905 (creation), https://library-artstor-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/asset/HUCB_SHARE_109912235731. Accessed 19 February 2020.

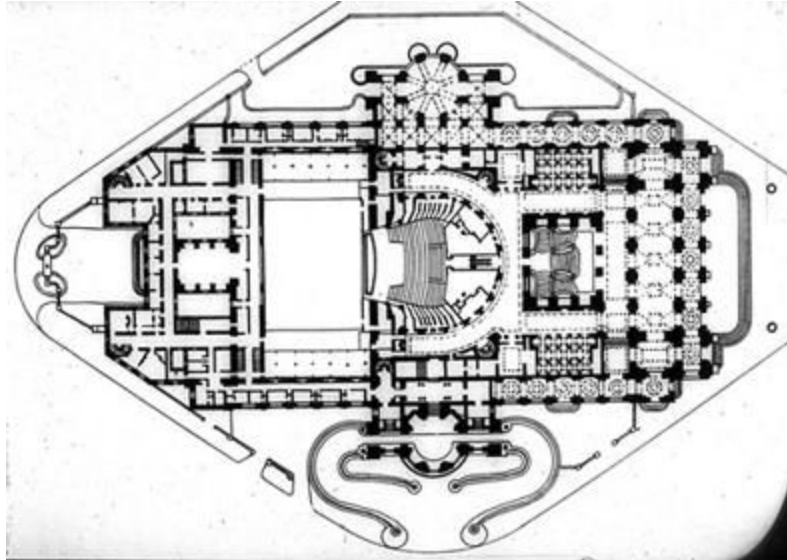


Figure 5: Charles Garnier, *Paris Opera House (L'Opéra)*, floor plan (1857-75)²⁵

Garnier's Beaux-Arts project was stripped of its scaffolding for public view just before the Universal Exhibition of 1867. Despite concern for propagandizing the state's elites, Garnier's unveiling met a positive opinion where "The public response was enthusiastic... a 'remarkable edifice'... Bravo Garnier'."²⁶ However, the front of the Opéra was not the main entrance - rather the east and west facades acted as the gateway into the theatre for the King and season ticket holders, whereas the facade was utilized as the entrance for those living a humble life within the extravagant displays of the upper-middle class. These guests walked to the theatre, which only had 400 available tickets of the 2,000 seat opera house²⁷, revealing a significant disparity in Opéra attendance as Patrice Higonnet asserts the facade excluded the non-bourgeois class.

²⁵ Garnier, Charles (French architect, 1825-1898) architect. Paris Opera House, L'Opera (alternate title), Floor plans, Plan. opera houses. 1857-1875 (creation); 1860-1875 (creation); 1861 (creation); 1861-1874 (creation); 1861-1875 (creation); 1862-1875 (creation). https://library-artstor-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/asset/HUCB__1099_39429838. Accessed 19 February 2020.

²⁶ Mead, Christopher. *Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra: architectural empathy and the renaissance of French classicism*. MIT Press, 1991, pp. 185.

²⁷ Fontaine, Gerard et al. *Charles Garnier's Opéra: architecture and interior decor*. Opéra national de Paris, 2004, pp. 12.

Higonnet's claim is emphasized in the facade's use of musical emblems, including the gilded busts, stone medallions, and four group representations of music - the most intriguing being Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's *La Danse* (1868), which established itself as a cultural emblem of public art and democracy. As previously mentioned, distinctions in class were informed by taste in music. This knowledge crystallized itself when "Hierarchies of music were conceived by mid-century, which rated dance music at the bottom... This was catchy music that had lots of glitz but no substance."²⁸ In turn, the refined compositions of Beethoven and Mozart held their position at the head of the hierarchy, as symphonies and chamber music physically excluded the public sphere. The stratification of music is highlighted in the selective placement and materialization of musical icons and histories as the architect and artist negotiate and cater to the class that filled the opera house seats.

Busts: Mozart & Beethoven

The bronze busts of classical composers are placed within niches. They have expressionless faces resembling death masks, for the composers' eyes are closed as if in an eternal slumber undisturbed by the public affairs and internal activities passing beyond and within their resting place. The truncation of the busts is distinctly geometric and unnaturalistic, absent of textured drapery or illusions of natural anatomy; rather the busts appear to be faithful to the human form and identity from the top of the head to the base of the neck where the throat meets a flattened pentagon support with no clavicle, musculature, or bodily structure. In comparison to the facade as a whole entity, these busts are formal and underwhelming as they

²⁸ Baron, John Herschel. *Intimate Music: A History of the Idea of Chamber Music*. Pendragon Press, 1998, pp. 305.

materialize the legacy of these composers for the sake of architectural and intellectual ornamentation. Despite the lack of expressivity, the integration of composer busts correlate with “the emergence of composers as cultural heroes” who “had become objects of public veneration” and “cultural icons in their own right.”²⁹

In her dissertation, Abigail Fine equates the materiality of music culture to the Catholic practices of collecting and cultivating venerated relics of saints “to position their native composers as local saints.”³⁰ Fine continues to demonstrate how the commodification of these objects reflected the social status of its beholders. Garnier’s decision to continue this ritual within the facade of the new opera house asserts the strong dialogue between public architecture and nineteenth-century music culture. Each bust has a plaque detailing the date of birth and death and the name of each composer. However, it is interesting to recognize the placement of these figures within the attic. As previously addressed, German composers were held in great reverence within high culture and often built upon each other’s musical form. The composer’s genius and international reputation transformed their successes as national symbols of pride. Their depiction acts within a space of public familiarity, indicating that this edifice was to be a location where the arts intersected for the sake of cultural and intellectual enlightenment, as well as “a genuine tribute to the arts, a recognition of the intangibles of culture.”³¹

²⁹ Bonds, Mark. *After Beethoven: Imperatives of Originality in the Symphony*. Harvard University Press, 1996, pp. 93.

³⁰ Fine, Abigail. University of Chicago Dissertation on *Objects of Veneration: Music and Materiality in the Composer-Cults of Germany and Austria, 1870-1930*. Proquest, 2017, pp. 3-24.

³¹ Chapman, Brian. “Baron Haussmann and the Planning of Paris”, *The Town Planning Review*, vol. 24, No. 3, 1953, pp. 189.



Figure 6.1: Franz Klein, Beethoven's life mask (1812)³²



Figure 6.2: Carl and Josef Danhauser, Beethoven's death mask (c. 1827)³³



Figure 6.3: Louis Félix Chabaud, Beethoven (c. 1869)³⁴

The didactic nature of these formal busts is enhanced by their positions within the facade and the way in which the composers' names "mark the building as [a] shrine, reminding music lovers of their primary duty, homage to the great masters."³⁵ The busts of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven are centered along the axis of the grand boulevard. Mozart's placement directly under the god of music evokes his innate talent as a music prodigy and "genius who accomplishes without effort", whereas Beethoven's orientation at the right hand side of Mozart asserts the German composer's continuation and improvement of classical music in the form of "great human achievement requiring enormous effort."³⁶ By formally

³² Fine, Abigail. University of Chicago Dissertation on *Objects of Veneration: Music and Materiality in the Composer-Cults of Germany and Austria, 1870-1930*. Proquest, 2017, pp. 3-24.

³³ Fine, Abigail. University of Chicago Dissertation on *Objects of Veneration: Music and Materiality in the Composer-Cults of Germany and Austria, 1870-1930*. Proquest, 2017, pp. 3-24.

³⁴ Chabaud, Louis Félix. *Beethoven* (c. 1869). Google Search: Images.

<https://www.google.com/search?q=beethoven+paris+opera&rlz>. Accessed 20 February 2020.

³⁵ Nettl, Bruno. *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music*. University of Illinois Press, 1995, pp. 19.

³⁶ Nettl, Bruno. *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music*. University of Illinois Press, 1995, pp. 20.

materializing the cultural impact of German music, the opera facade not only serves those educated enough to appreciate their work but also justify the immortalization of their legacy within public memory and architecture. However, the absence of French composers further emphasizes the social stratification of Paris, for Paris' own composers were more associated with Hausmusik or popular music that was ranked below the status of those entitled to seats at the emperor's opera house.

La Danse



Figure 7: Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, *La Danse* (1986 copy of 1869 original)³⁷

The most controversial event regarding the opera house facade involves the commissioned sculpture of dance music intended to grace the exterior arcade. This was to be a

³⁷ Copy: Belmondo, P.; Carpeaux, J.-B. 1869. Palais-Garnier Opera House. Architecture. https://library-artstor-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/asset/HARTILL_12328295. Accessed 19 February 2020.

series of four allegorical sculpture groups, including Jouffroy's *Poetry*, Guillaume's *Instrumental Music*, and Perraud's *Lyric Drama*, which are all consistently executed with a stoic winged-Genius accompanied with figures exemplifying the dignified decorum of their associated music genre. Carpeaux's design emerged from an outline of dimensions provided by Garnier, and in the final design "Carpeaux freely mixed sources from the past with contemporary observations."³⁸ Carpeaux's sculpture group increased the former quantity of figures from three to nine and with the additive number of bacchantes executed in a more naturalistic style, his work starkly contrasts with the lack of visual engagement in the other three statues. The Genius of dance music thrusts his extended arms in exaltation, waving a tamborine, with an open-mouth expression of laughter and song leading the bacchantes around him. Juxtaposing the formality in the heroic Geniuses of *Poetry*, *Instrumental Music*, and *Lyric Drama*, Carpeaux's bacchanal is sensualized by the disrobing of the Genius due to the engagement in physical movement and celebratory action. The Genius of dance directly participates in the revelry of his female company, who are in the nude, gallivanting about his music. A single putto is caught in the excitement, resting at the feet of the Genius, behind the steps of the bacchantes. Carpeaux's sculpture elevates the manner in which "Garnier moved beyond the formal paradigms of Beaux-Arts composition to its expressive purpose" in "[replacing] abstract natural order with immediacy of human action."³⁹

³⁸ Draper, James D. and Paper, Edouard et al. *The Passion of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014, pp. 144.

³⁹ Mead, Christopher. *Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra: architectural empathy and the renaissance of French classicism*. MIT Press, 1991, pp. 106-114.



Figure 8: Eugene Guillaume, *Palais Garnier Opera House*, sculptural group of Instrumental Music (19th Century)⁴⁰

Carpeaux's design was greeted with polarizing reactions, one of which praised his expansion of traditional design while criticizing the mediocrity of the other sculpture groups. The opposing opinion argued the subjects of *La Danse* were "... all-too-fleshy and erotic denizens of a Paris Dance Hall."⁴¹ Both sides had a resolution - to either remove the three mediocre groups or Carpeaux's set of lively entities, which coined a new euphemism for physically intimate practices *a trois* in a "Groupe de Carpeaux."⁴² The watershed moment immortalizing public response to the opera house facade occurred on August 26-27, 1869, when a citizen threw a bottle of ink, staining the right hip of the left bacchante and surrounding area. Solutions to mend

⁴⁰ Guillaumem Eugene. Palais-Garnier Opera House. Architecture. https://library.artstor.org/asset/HARTILL_12328294. Accessed 20 February 2020.

⁴¹ Mead, Christopher. *Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra: architectural empathy and the renaissance of French classicism*. MIT Press, 1991, pp. 190.

⁴² Draper, James D. and Paper, Edouard et al. *The Passion of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014, pp. 147.

the defacement of Carpeaux's group were proposed by the public who supported and financed the cleansing of the new martyr, a voice representing "all ages and social stations."⁴³ Although a chemist was able to remove the stain, under the supervision of Garnier himself, the sculpture group became the source of political upheaval and disapproval. To the dismay of Carpeaux, the emperor ordered the replacement of *La Danse*, which was offered and begrudgingly denied by the artist himself. Thus Garnier faced artistic tension between his responsibility to the state's demands, appeasing the people of that state, and the architect's loyalty to his artist's liberty⁴⁴, but ultimately Garnier submitted to the will of the public:

"There is something more decisive than the wishes of the architect, the good will of the administration and the Emperor's orders, and that is public opinion, and it is this opinion that obliges us all to have the group removed."⁴⁵

However, one must question who made up the public addressed in Garnier's statement, for where was the voice of those who flooded the opera house with letters of the sculpture's approval and preservation? It is probable that the public opinion with the loudest voice were patrons of high art culture, such as the Paris Opéra, who grounded their negativity towards Carpeaux's design in morality and decorum. In Mead's *Urban Contingency*, the author problematizes the national ethos of the Paris Opéra House by delineating its transition from an

⁴³ Draper, James D. and Paper, Edouard et al. *The Passion of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014, pp. 151.

⁴⁴ Mead, Christopher. *Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra: architectural empathy and the renaissance of French classicism*. MIT Press, 1991, pp. 190.

⁴⁵ Draper, James D. and Paper, Edouard et al. *The Passion of Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014, pp. 152.

imperial institution to a host of public engagement for the bourgeois class. Despite this shift in the identity of the public, the opera facade remains an elite emblem of nineteenth-century public art; quoting Jurgen Habermas, “the state is ‘private people coming together as a public’.”⁴⁶

Following the effects of the Franco-Prussian war, which transformed the opera house into a warehouse for military supplies, and the death of the artist who was to work on the replacement of *La Danse*, Carpeaux’s group became a representation of artistic tragedy and maintained its restored position at the opera’s facade until replaced by a copy in 1964 by Paul Belmondo (1898-1982).



Figure 9: Macduff Everton, *Paris Opera House*, photograph⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Mead, Christopher. “Urban Contingency and the Problem of Representation in the Second Empire Paris.” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 54, no. 2, pp. 168.

⁴⁷ Everton, Macduff. Photograph, *Paris Opera House*. 2020. <https://www.macduffeverton.com/stock/results.php>. Accessed 20 February 2020.

The Opéra Garnier facade is a material representation of public opinion concerning music culture, social status, and artistic aesthetic in nineteenth-century Paris. Charles Garnier assumed the role of an architect, “to design the city and its elements with proportional precision to elevate the theatre of social life in each of its aspects to create a unified, urban identity.”⁴⁸ In constructing a facade that presents the Parisian public with a taste of luxurious entertainment, while concurrently reviving Baroque style, Garnier celebrated the distinguished identity of those who appreciated high music culture amidst the rising publicity of nineteenth-century French music criticism and analysis. The representation of monumental composers and record of public engagement with the lowest ranked style of music in Carpeaux’s *Las Danse* articulate the ways in which public art and architecture navigate the relationship between the image of a state and the individuals who are the makeup of that national identity. Today, the Paris Opera House is an architectural gem that highlights the layered social history of art and music culture in Paris, communicated in the “principle of the École des Beaux-Arts that grand public buildings should be... set in a clear hierarchy.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Read, Gray. *Modern Architecture in Theatre: The Experiments of Art et Action*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 6.

⁴⁹ Bergdoll, Barry. “European Architecture 1750-1890”. Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 251-252.

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