

# The Influence of the Paris Stage on Kane O'Hara's *Midas*

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## Introduction

Kane O'Hara's *Midas* introduced a new operatic genre to the Dublin and London stages: the English burletta.<sup>1</sup> The name of the new genre may owe something to the circumstances of the opera's first public performance; it was staged at Crow Street theatre in 1762 'in opposition to the Italian burletta at Smock-alley'.<sup>2</sup> However, *Midas* led an independent existence before its association with the Italian burlettas, in which intriguing references to the Paris stage are intermingled with allusions to the music popular in Dublin at the time. *Midas* had originally been performed 'at the private theatre attached to the residence of the Right Hon. William Brownlow, at Lurgan, in April, 1760',<sup>3</sup> and existed in a number of different versions over the course of its performance history. No libretto or music survives from the first performance but *The Private Theatre of Kilkenny* reports that *Midas* 'originally consisted of but one Act' and that 'many additions were made to it, before its introduction to the Public'.<sup>4</sup> It was performed as a three-act mainpiece in Crow Street in 1762 and in Covent Garden in 1764, but its most enduring form was the second edition of 1766, which is a two-act afterpiece.

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<sup>1</sup> 'The result was *Midas*, the first English burletta.' Nicholas Temperley, 'Burletta', in Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (eds), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, 29 vols (London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. 4, 634. Although *Midas* has been identified in the twentieth century as the first English burletta, it was not the first English opera to be referred to as a burletta. The subtitle 'An English Burletta' appears on the manuscript of *Robin Hood* (1750), by Moses Mendez and Charles Burney, but not on the printed libretto. The music does not survive.

<sup>2</sup> John O'Keeffe, *Recollections of the Life of John O'Keeffe: Written by Himself*, 2 vols (London: Colburn, 1826), vol. 1, 53.

<sup>3</sup> William H. Grattan Flood, *A History of Irish Music* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1906), 299.

<sup>4</sup> *The Private Theatre of Kilkenny* (Kilkenny: privately printed, 1825), 1–2.

The plot is based on a tale from Book XI of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The opening scene of *Midas*, set on Mount Olympus, corresponds with the prologue of French opera and ballet. Jupiter is enraged at his wife Juno's disapproval of his extra-marital affairs, and banishes Apollo, the sun, to keep his misdemeanours hidden in future. Cast down to earth, Apollo adopts the disguise of a shepherd and is hired by the farmer Sileno. Sileno's daughters are charmed by Apollo's music, provoking the resentment of their suitors, Midas and his associate Damaetas. Midas and Damaetas join forces with Sileno's wife, Mysis, to mount a musical contest between Pol (Apollo) and Pan, the local god of music. Midas, influenced by bribery as well as self-interest, declares Pan the winner and expels Pol. Apollo reveals his identity, awards Midas ass's ears for his bad judgment and transfers his property to Sileno, before returning to Olympus. O'Hara's adaptation of the Midas story into a contemporary setting may have been influenced by Louis de Boissy's *Les Talents à la mode* (1739). Boissy provides a precedent for O'Hara's adoption of a domestic angle. The parallel plot device of an exceptional musician courting two sisters acquires a deeper significance when the cultural context of Boissy's work is considered—it was presented at the time of the *querelle* between the Lullystes and the Ramistes (1733–52). Géronte, father of the two sisters, appears as 'partisan de l'ancienne musique' in the *dramatis personae* and discusses his musical preferences with his daughter Lucinde. Edward Joseph Hollingsworth Greene suggests that Boissy's comedy 'was probably taken as a pleasing commentary, cast up in familiar form on the quarrel of the two musics'.<sup>5</sup> O'Hara's *Midas* similarly acts as a commentary on the quarrel between native and imported music, as a means of exposing corruption in society.

The new genre of English burletta combined many influences, borrowing its airs, in the manner of the *pasticcio* or ballad opera, and connecting them with recitative in the manner of *opera seria*, pantomime and the masque. Six of the airs in *Midas* are set 'to its own tune', but the main sources are folk music, catches, pantomime and English and Italian opera. Two airs from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's opera (or *intermède*) *Le Devin du village* (1752) are perhaps the most surprising choices. *Le Devin* had not been printed in London or Dublin at that stage and was a relatively recent composition. The airs ('Non, non Colette n'est point trompeuse' and 'Quand on sçait aimer et plaire') are

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<sup>5</sup> Edward Joseph Hollingsworth Greene, *Menander to Marivaux: The History of a Comic Structure* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1977), 148. This refers to the first in a series of musical debates—the *querelle* between the Lullystes and the Ramistes (1733–52), which predated the *querelle des bouffons* (1752–4). The *querelle des bouffons* was followed by the *querelle* between the Gluckistes and the Piccinnistes (1775–9).

named in the earliest source for *Midas*.<sup>6</sup> O'Hara's retention of these airs in all subsequent versions of *Midas*, along with the rarity of the airs, points to their having a particular significance in relation to his purposes in writing *Midas*. Does the inclusion of Rousseau's airs in O'Hara's opera reveal a more pervasive influence from the Paris stage than has hitherto been suspected?

This article will explore the awareness of French music and literature in Dublin in the middle of the eighteenth century. O'Hara's settings of Rousseau's airs will be analysed and viewed in relation to Rousseau's writings on music. The original performer of the two borrowed airs, Pierre Jélyotte, was the most celebrated singer at the Paris Opera in the middle of the eighteenth century: the relevance of his other roles in relation to *Midas*, and his association with the operatic *romance*, will be investigated. The influence of the Paris stage on O'Hara's choice of plot and its realization will also be assessed.

### The origins of *Midas* and *Le Devin du village*

*Le Devin du village* and *Midas* both had their inception in sociable music-making. Rousseau had spent the early days of his friendship with Friedrich Melchior, Baron von Grimm, in the period 1749–53, singing Italian arias and attending operas:

He [Grimm] had a harpsichord, which served as our meeting place and around which I spent with him every moment I had free, singing Italian airs and barcaroles without pause or respite from morning until night ...<sup>7</sup>

On his trips out of Paris, for his health or to avoid the distractions of the city, Rousseau also welcomed opportunities to make music. At Marcoussis, Rousseau composed trios which he sang with Grimm and the local curate, but which were subsequently lost.<sup>8</sup> His visits to his Genevan friend and relative François Mussard in Passy were more productive from a musical perspective. Mussard played the cello and two ladies in his household sang—one 'like an angel'.<sup>9</sup> After an evening of sharing his enthusiasm for

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<sup>6</sup> Kane O'Hara, *Songs in the new burletta of Midas. As it is performed at the Theatre-Royal in Crow-Street. 1762* (Dublin: William Sleator, 1762). A copy is preserved in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, HP306/4.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, translated by Angela Scholar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 343. Originally published in twelve books (but not until the 1780s), the *Confessions* were written in the period 1765–70. The passages referred to in the present article are drawn from book 8, written in 1769 and published in 1789.

<sup>8</sup> Rousseau, *Confessions*, 363.

<sup>9</sup> Rousseau, *Confessions*, 364.

Italian music with Mussard and discussing how a drama equal to *opera buffa* could be introduced into French music, Rousseau ‘composed, very rapidly, some verses of a sort and set them to whatever tune came into my head while I was writing them’.<sup>10</sup> Inspired by the praise and encouragement of Mussard and his housekeeper, Rousseau expanded on these three airs to complete the first sketch of *Le Devin du village* in just over a week, probably in 1752.<sup>11</sup>

O’Hara’s *Midas* grew out of similar domestic music-making. John O’Keeffe re-collects that

[he] was at O’Hara’s house in King-street, Stephen’s-green, one morning, at a meeting with Lord Mornington, Mr. Brownlow, M.P. a musical amateur and fine player on the harpsichord, when they were settling the music for *Midas*.<sup>12</sup>

Public acclaim was not a motivating factor in the composition of either opera. Rousseau ‘would have given the world to see it [*Le Devin*] performed exactly as I imagined it, behind closed doors’<sup>13</sup> but was not disappointed to attend its first performance on 18 October 1752 at the royal court at Fontainebleau. In a note sent to Rousseau two days later, the celebrated haute-contre Pierre Jélyotte recorded that ‘His Majesty does nothing but sing, in the least tuneful voice in his whole realm, *I have lost my suitor, I have lost all my joy*’.<sup>14</sup> *Le Devin* was also staged privately at Bellevue, where Mme de Pompadour played the role of Colin. At the first performance of *Midas*, in the private theatre of William Brownlow near Lurgan, ‘the Characters in the Piece were undertaken by the Members of the Family and their Relatives; with the exception of the part of Pan, which was reserved by the Author for himself’.<sup>15</sup>

Rather than collaborating with a librettist or composer, Rousseau and O’Hara chose to create both the libretto and the music of their operas themselves. This practice reflected the changing aesthetic of the time and was also adopted by Jean-Joseph Cas-

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<sup>10</sup> Rousseau, *Confessions*, 365.

<sup>11</sup> Rousseau gives no year or month for his first sketch of *Le Devin* but his account of the preparation for performance at Fontainebleau suggests that only a short amount of time had elapsed. It may be deduced that the work was first sketched in 1752.

<sup>12</sup> O’Keeffe, 53. This meeting may have been in preparation for the public performance in 1762 and not related to the original composition of the opera. O’Keeffe offers no exact date for this meeting but it must have been between 1760 and 1762, as it postdates the arrival of the D’Amici family in Dublin (which O’Keeffe indicates as being in 1760) and predates the Crow Street run of *Midas* in 1762.

<sup>13</sup> Rousseau, *Confessions*, 366.

<sup>14</sup> Rousseau, *Confessions*, 371.

<sup>15</sup> *The Private Theatre of Kilkenny*, 2.

sanéa de Mondonville in his *Daphnis et Alcimadure* (1754). Discussing this work, Pierre Laujon remarks that 'Mondonville is, following Rousseau, the writer [who has displayed] the melodious and intimate union of poetry and music'.<sup>16</sup> O'Hara also achieves an intimate union of poetry and music in *Midas*, allying humorous words with dance rhythms to portray the true nature of the characters. The conception of the two operas differs significantly in relation to their musical originality. O'Hara built on the tradition of ballad opera, setting his libretto to borrowed airs that contributed a level of context and commentary to the opera. A number of French writers in the 1750s alleged that Rousseau had borrowed music from other composers. The anonymous author of *Lettres sur la musique française. En Réponse de celle de Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1754) claims that two or three of the most attractive airs in *Le Devin du village* were plundered from Italian composers and even suggests that the air for 'Quand on sçait aimer et plaire', one of the airs borrowed by O'Hara in *Midas*, is Italian and unsuited to the text of the air.<sup>17</sup> Rousseau, writing in 1769, strenuously opposed these allegations:

If I had been a plagiarist, just imagine how many thefts would have come to light at this time and how diligent certain people would have been in pointing them out! But not a bit of it: try as they might, they could not find in my music the least reminiscence of any other, and all of my songs, when compared with their so-called originals, proved to be as new as the style of the music I had created.<sup>18</sup>

However, he concedes that he had borrowed a *pastourelle* from one obscure source for the *divertissement* which he had composed for the first performance of *Le Devin* at the Paris Opera on 1 March 1753, but declines to name the composer. He protests his reluctance to include any borrowings in his *divertissement* and attributes the inclusion of this *pastourelle* to his wish to oblige the Baron d'Holbach: 'He pressed me so hard, however, that to please him I chose a *pastourelle*, which I abridged and adapted as a trio for the entrance of Colette's companions.'<sup>19</sup> With hindsight, Rousseau viewed this episode as a ploy to discredit him, dwelling on the subsequent circulation of the borrowed air. After a social gathering a few months later, he reflects bitterly that 'I saw

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<sup>16</sup> Pierre Laujon, *Oeuvres choisies* (Paris: Patris, 1811), vol. 4, 490.

<sup>17</sup> 'Deux ou trois airs de son *Devin de Village*, qui sont les plus jolis, sont pillés des Compositeurs Italiens ... Je n'en citerai que cet exemple: Quand on sçait aimer & plaire ... Mais l'admirable Rousseau, qui en sçait bien plus qu'eux, [Lully, Rameau, Mondonville] a trouvé sous sa main un air Italien, vif, gai, saillant, & l'a collé sur des vers qui ne le sont pas.' *Lettres sur la musique française. En réponse a celle de Jean-Jacques Rousseau M.DCC.LIV*, in Denise Launay, *La Querelle des bouffons* (Geneva: Minkoff, 1973), 785.

<sup>18</sup> Rousseau, *Confessions*, 374.

<sup>19</sup> Rousseau, *Confessions*, 373.



this same collection which belonged to Baron d'Holbach lying open at precisely the piece he had urged me to use, assuring me that it would never leave his hands.<sup>20</sup>

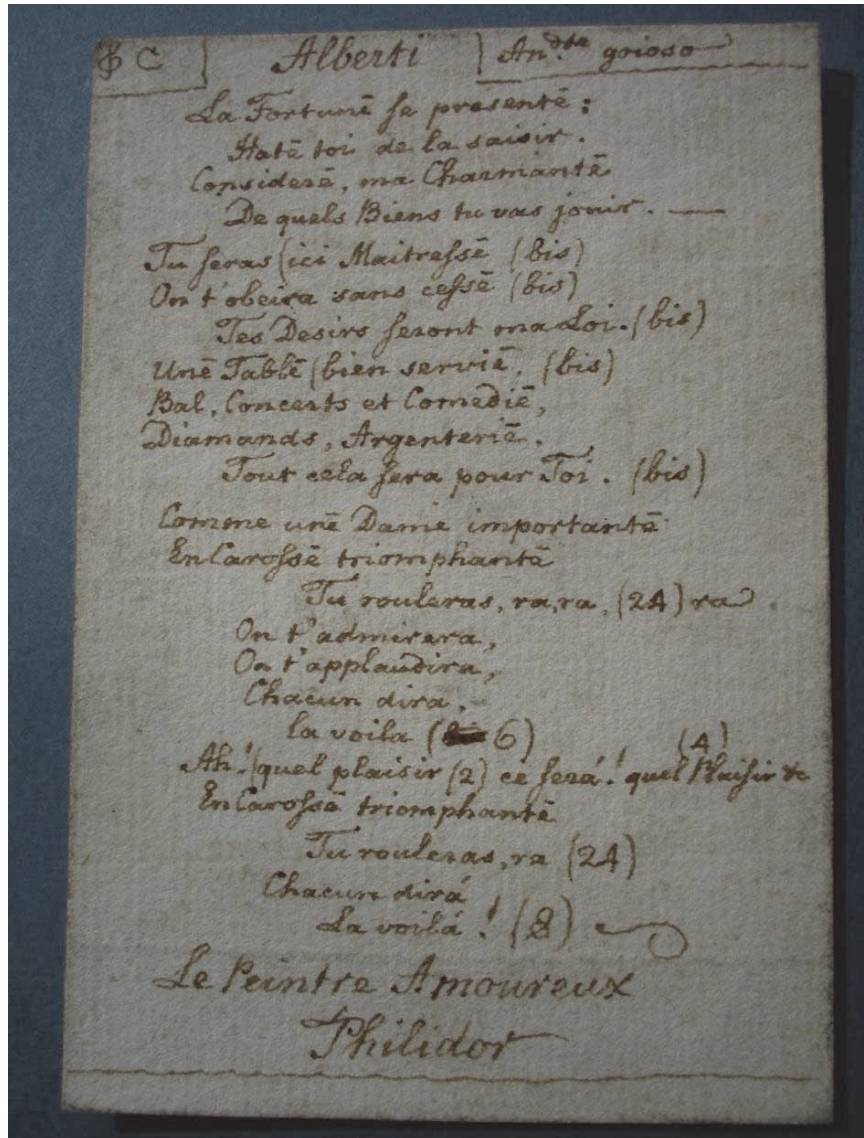


Illustration 1. Egidio Duni, 'La fortune se présente', on a card in the O'Hara Papers, IRL-Dn, 36,471/1. Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

<sup>20</sup> As note 19.

### French music and literature in Dublin

O'Hara's familiarity with French music and theatre is illustrated by references to French airs among his (undated) personal papers. Eight French airs appear in a collection of small cards, the size of playing cards, with the words of the airs ornately handwritten in small writing.<sup>21</sup> There has been an attempt to fit one air to each side of the card. The feminine endings on an 'e' vowel have been given an accent not used in written French but helpful to a singer for the purpose of matching notes to syllables. '(Bis)' is added at the end of a line if it is intended to be repeated with the next musical phrase. The clef and time signature are given in a box on the top left and the tempo is given in a box at the top right (see Illustration 1). On the final card, 'La Fortunè se presentè;/ Hatè toi de la saisir' (see Illustration 1), bracketed numbers seem to suggest long melismas or a series of repeated notes, such as '(24)' after 'rouleras'. The score of Egidio Duni's *Le Peintre amoureux de son modèle*, from which 'La Fortune se presente' is taken, confirms that this is the case: see Illustration 2. It is clear from O'Hara's collection of air texts that he had access to the musical notation of the airs from *Le Peintre amoureux*. However, O'Hara attributes their composition to François-André Danican Philidor rather than Duni, which suggests that they were supplied to him out of their original context. It can be deduced from this collection of cards that music from the latest French operas was being sung in private in Dublin, even before the spread of French-language printing in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

The appendices in *Ireland and the French Enlightenment, 1700–1800* record that thirty-two books and three magazines in the French language were published in Ireland in the eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Literary journals published English translations of French literature in serialized form or as extracts. French publications were reviewed and translations by readers of the journals were occasionally included—'responses by readers reinforce the impression of an educated public eager to engage in scholarly debate'.<sup>23</sup> Voltaire was the most prominent author to be translated from French. Rousseau was also well represented, although interest in his writings only became widespread in the 1760s after the publication of *Émile* and *Du Contrat social*.

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<sup>21</sup> The O'Hara Papers, preserved in the National Library of Ireland, Dublin (IRL-Dn): 36,471/1 (78). There are four cards, measuring 7.75 by 11.5 cm, and one piece of paper folded into the same size as the cards. Separated from these cards by a number of loose pages is another small card, exhibiting the words of two short English songs.

<sup>22</sup> Graham Gargett and Geraldine Sheridan (eds), *Ireland and the French Enlightenment, 1700–1800* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 235–84.

<sup>23</sup> Geraldine Sheridan, 'Irish Literary Review Magazines and Enlightenment France: 1730–1790', in Gargett and Sheridan, 21–46: 28.



Illustration 2. Louis Anseaume and Egidio Duni, *Le Peintre amoureux de son modèle* (Paris, 1758), upper part of p. 42: 'La fortune se présente', bars 38–47.<sup>24</sup>

Rousseau's first publication—*Discours qui a remporté le prix à l'Académie de Dijon, en l'année 1750*, issued in English as *The Discourse which carried the præmium at the Academy of Dijon, in MDCCL*—generated some interest in the early 1750s. Four editions of a translation of the *Discours* were published in Dublin in 1751 and 1752. In 1751, Dean Samuel Madden published a *Reply to the Discourse* which was reviewed a year later in the *Compendious Library: or, Literary Journal Revived*.<sup>25</sup> Also in 1752, a translation of Joseph Guatier's *Answer to the Discourse* was published in Dublin, with Rousseau's *Observations on the above Answer* appended.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Image from Gallica: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9067334z>. Source: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, VM5-104; see <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb39783909s>.

<sup>25</sup> Dean [Samuel] Madden, *A Reply to the Discourse which carried the Præmium at the Academy of Dijon, 1750, on this Question proposed by the said Academy. Hath the Re-establishment of Arts and Sciences contributed to purge or corrupt our Manners? In a letter to the author* (Dublin: Peter Wilson, 1751).

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Guatier, *An Answer to the Discourse which carried the Præmium at the Academy of Dijon; on the question, Whether the re-establishment of arts and sciences hath contributed to the Refinement of Manners. By Monsieur Guatier, Professor of Mathematicks and of History, and Fellow of the Royal Academy of Belles*



## The Influence of the Paris Stage on Kane O'Hara's *Midas*

Michael O'Dea suggests that 'the voice of Rousseau's curate [in *Émile*, book IV] may have been relayed in Ireland to offer support to those who opposed the exclusion of Catholics from full rights'.<sup>27</sup> In 1756, the first Catholic Association was set up and attempts were made to word an oath of allegiance which would be acceptable to the Catholic population. The Whiteboys were active in rural areas in the early 1760s and there had been an anti-Union riot in Dublin in 1759.<sup>28</sup>

O'Hara came from an old Irish family who had changed language and religion only a generation or two earlier. Molloy describes him as 'a member of the tribe of O'Hara which descended from Cian or Kane, son of Oliol Olum, king of munster in the third century'.<sup>29</sup> Fitzpatrick adds that he 'came of old Sligo stock famous for their musical taste'.<sup>30</sup> His father, Kean Óg O'Hara, was high sheriff of Sligo in 1703 and was a patron of the harper Turlough O'Carolan, who stayed with the family regularly. Carolan composed the song *Cupán Uí Eaghra* for him. In addition to his heritage, the inclusion of fifteen Irish airs in *Midas* attests to O'Hara's close connection with Irish culture.

*Faulkner's Dublin Journal* suggests that *Midas* essentially has a political meaning, likening it to *The Beggar's Opera* in that respect: 'Of this strange droll thing called *Midas*, we know not what to make, unless, as some thought of the *Beggar's Opera*, it has a political meaning. Ay, ay, it must be so.'<sup>31</sup> It was not unusual for politics to be played out on the operatic stage. In London, *Midas* was called on twice in the 1780s to expose corruption. In 1787, Sir John Oldmixon reanimated most of the characters from *Midas* to create *Apollo turn'd Stroller; or, Thereby hangs a Tale*, 'the music of which was

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*Lettres, at Nancy. To which are added, Observations on the above Answer to that Discourse by John-James Rousseau, Citizen of Geneva, Author of the Discourse* (Dublin: Richard James, 1752).

<sup>27</sup> Michael O'Dea 'Rousseau and Eighteenth-Century Irish Journals "A Wanton and Romantic Imagination"', in Gargett and Sheridan, 90–106: 104.

<sup>28</sup> The 'Whiteboys' was a secret agrarian association that violently defended the rights of tenant farmers. See Eoin Magennis, 'Whiteboys', in Brian Lalor (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2003), 1135.

<sup>29</sup> J. Fitzgerald Molloy, *The Romance of the Irish Stage*, 2 vols (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1897), vol. 2, 152.

<sup>30</sup> W. J. Fitzpatrick, 'O'Hara, Kane', in Sidney Lee (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1895), vol. 42, 63–4: 63.

<sup>31</sup> *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 12–16 January 1762. Quoted in John C. Greene, *Theatre in Dublin, 1745–1820: Calendar of Performances*, 6 vols (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2011), vol. 1, 762.

supplied by his friend, Dr. Arnold',<sup>32</sup> to protest about licence irregularity.<sup>33</sup> In 1789, a parodied or 'improved' version of *Midas* appeared in print (but not on stage), replacing the original characters with politicians, members of the nobility and the Royal family, acting out the events of the Regency crisis. In Paris, there had been earlier parallels. In the early 1750s, rather than reflecting political developments, literary discussion of the Paris Opera actually influenced the political climate. Brenno Boccadoro detects undertones of religious politics in Grimm's reference to the Jesuits on the title page of his inflammatory pamphlet, *Le Petit prophète de Boehmischbroda* (1753):<sup>34</sup>

In January 1753, at the exact moment when the pronouncements of Grimm's little prophet had inspired an avalanche of pamphlets, a sharp break between the Jansenists and the Jesuits shook monarchic absolutism.<sup>35</sup>

Rousseau dismisses the impact of *Le Petit prophète* as a 'joke' which 'caused its author no trouble', but claims that his own *Lettre sur la musique française* (1753) caused a significant distraction during 'the great quarrel with the *parlement* and the clergy', and even claims that it 'averted a revolution within the state'.<sup>36</sup>

### O'Hara's settings of Rousseau

There appears to have been no discussion in Dublin of Rousseau's musical compositions or writings on music, either in the 1750s or later. Nothing in Dublin print culture accounts for O'Hara's familiarity with airs from Rousseau's *Le Devin du village*. Sheridan points to 'a European awareness in segments of the Irish reading public which had the confidence to look far beyond London for sources of information, and unmediated access to "le bon ton"'.<sup>37</sup> Although O'Hara never travelled out of Ireland, members of his circle clearly did, sharing the latest literature and music with an active community of amateur performers. The similarity of O'Hara's setting of 'He's as tight a lad to see to' in *Midas* (Illustration 4) to 'Quand on sçait aimer et plaire' in *Le Devin* (Illustration 3) strongly suggests that O'Hara had seen the score or a close copy of this air.

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<sup>32</sup> 'Biographical Register of Eminent Persons Recently Deceased', in *European Magazine, and London Review*, 74, ed. J. Fielding (London: 1818), 148.

<sup>33</sup> First performed at the Royalty Theatre in Wellclose Square on 3 December 1787.

<sup>34</sup> This pamphlet was presented as a parable, recounting the vision of a bohemian boy who is transported to the Paris Opera and forms an unfavourable impression of it.

<sup>35</sup> Brenno Boccadoro, 'Bouffons, Quarrel of the', in Michel Delon (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 2013), 194–7: 197.

<sup>36</sup> Rousseau, *Confessions*, 375.

<sup>37</sup> Sheridan, 23.

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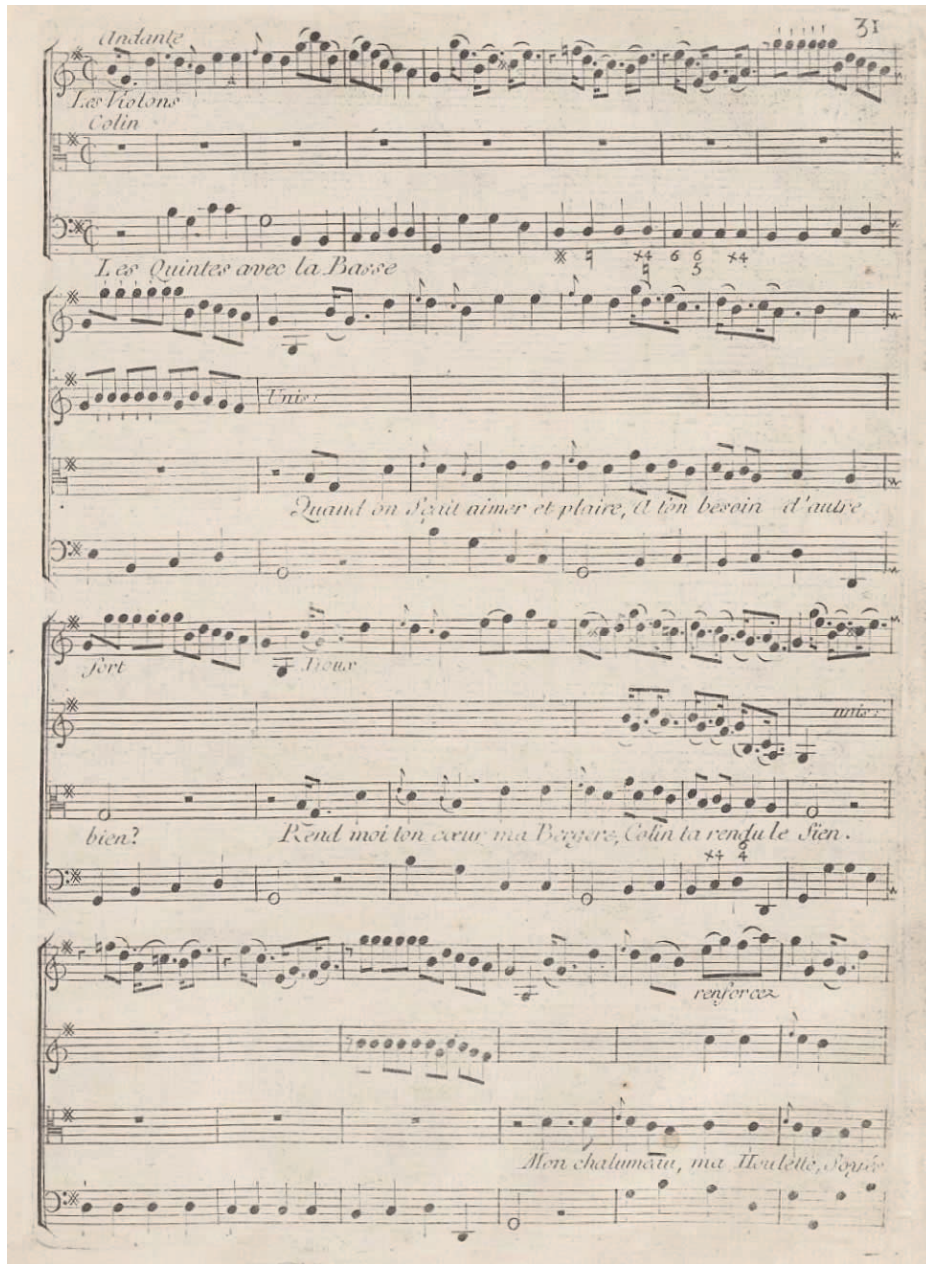


Illustration 3. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Quand on sçait aimer et plaire', pp. 31–34 in *Le Devin du village: intermède représenté à Fontainebleau devant leurs majestés les 18 et 24 octobre 1752, et à Paris par l'Académie royale de musique le 1er mars 1753 ...* (Paris: Boivin, Le Clerc et al, n.d. [1753?]).<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Images from <http://www.e-rara.ch/doi/10.3931/e-rara-7957>. Source: Bibliothèque de Genève, Ib 928.



32

*fort* *Doux* *renforcés* *Doux*

*mes Seules grandeurs* ..... *Ma pa rure est ma Colette, Mes trésors Sont*

*Ses fa - veurs* - - - *Quand on Sçait aimer et plaire, et l'on bevoit d'autre*

*fort* *Doux*

*bien?* *Rend moi ton cœur ma Bergere Celin ta ren - du le*

x4  $\frac{6}{4}$

33

*fort*

*uniz*

*Sien.*

*Doux*

*Doux*

*ferme* *plus Doux*

Que de Seigneurs d'importance, Voudroient bien avoir sa foi!

*doux* *Doux*

*Doux*

*Soutenu avec emphase* *Doux*

Malgré toute leur puissance . . . ce Ils sont



34

*fort*

*moins heureux que moi Ils sont moins heureux que moi*

*doux fort*

*Quand on s'yait aimer et plaire, il t'on besoin d'autre bien ?*

*doux fin*

*Rend moi ton cœur ma Bergere Colin tu rendu le sien .*

*doux +4 6/4 fort*

*unis*

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The image shows two pages of handwritten musical notation. The top page is numbered (15) and features the title 'Sung by Miss Miller' in cursive. The music is in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics include 'Allò ma non troppo' and 'He's as tight a Lad to see to, as èer step'd in'. The bottom page is numbered 28 and continues the piece with lyrics such as 'leather shoe, and what's better He'll Love me too, and to him I'll prove true blue,' and 'Tho' my sister cast an'. The notation includes various musical symbols like notes, rests, and ornaments, along with figured bass notation in the bass clef.

Illustration 4. Kane O'Hara, 'He's as tight a lad to see to', pp. 27–28 in *Midas, A Comic Opera, As it is perform'd at the Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden. For the Harpsichord, Voice, German Flute, Violin, or Guitar* (London: John Walsh, n.d. [1764?]).<sup>39</sup>

O'Hara retains the metre and key of Rousseau's air but begins the melody on the first beat of the bar, rather than the third beat (which would have been characteristic of the gavotte). This change complements the contour of the melody, with a rising fourth leading to the first beat of the second and third bars. In both settings the instrumental prelude begins with a statement of the vocal theme, incorporating similar elaborations on the second half of the theme. O'Hara also borrows the 'scotch snap' or *sanglot* sequence which follows in Rousseau's setting (bars 5–7) but omits the bass at this point.

<sup>39</sup> Images (for illustrations 4, 5 and 6) from [http://imslp.org/wiki/Midas\\_\(O'Hara%2C\\_Kane\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Midas_(O'Hara%2C_Kane)).



His version substitutes a more sustained melodic line for the repeated-note figure at the end of Rousseau's prelude. There are slight alterations in the vocal melody, representing different ornamental choices. O'Hara does not include the short interlude between the two statements of the opening theme (Rousseau, bars 14–15) or the interlude between the two statements of the theme of the first melodic episode (Rousseau, bars 2–3 on p. 32). He introduces two rising intervals into this episode (Illustration 4, bars 4 and 7 in the third system) which gives the music a more decisive character, reflecting the defiant nature of his text:

Tho' my sister casts a Hawk's eye  
I defy what she can do,  
He o'erlook'd the little doxy,  
I'm the girl he means to woo.

The melody of the second episode is mostly unchanged but the rising minim figure (like the earlier *sanglot* figure) is unaccompanied in the O'Hara setting and the climactic note is shortened (Illustration 4, bars 2–5 in the fifth system). The harmonic structure and detail are similar in both settings but the contour of the bass is completely rewritten in the O'Hara arrangement.

Whether O'Hara was aware of Rousseau's *Lettre sur la musique française* or not, he set Rousseau's second air 'Non, non Colette n'est point trompeuse' (as the ensemble 'Mama, how can you be so ill-natur'd') exactly according to Rousseau's principle of the 'Unity of Melody'.<sup>40</sup> This principle required that 'the whole ensemble must convey only one melody to the ear and only one idea to the mind'.<sup>41</sup> The structure of Rousseau's melody is AABCAA: see Example 1. O'Hara arranges it for four characters, creating an introduction from an elaboration of the 'A' phrase and allocating the first statement of the 'A' phrase (bar 8) to Nysa and the reprise to her sister Daphne (bar 13). A four-bar interlude is inserted at this point—a repetition of the last four bars of the introduction with a lighter texture in the accompaniment. The 'B' phrase (bar 24) is in the dominant key and is sung by Mysis, opposing the accusations of her daughters. Sileno sings phrase 'C' (bar 28), which sits naturally in a lower tessitura. The two bars of exclamations—'Non, non' (bars 32–3)—are sung alternately by Nysa and Daphne, leading back to the tonic, where the sisters join to sing the second statement of the 'A' phrase in parallel thirds (bar 34), the countermelody weaving around the contours of the melody.

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<sup>40</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre sur la musique française* (1753), translated in John T. Scott (ed.), *Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings related to Music*, Collected Writings of Rousseau, 7 (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998), 159.

<sup>41</sup> Rousseau, *Lettre*, 155.

The Influence of the Paris Stage on Kane O'Hara's *Midas*

Example 1: Kane O'Hara, 'Mama, how can you be so ill-natur'd'.<sup>42</sup>

**Allegro**

Sy.  
6 7 6 6 5 3 6

7 Nysa  
Ma - ma, how can you be so ill - na - tur'd, To the gen - tle,  
6 6 6 6 7

12 Daphne  
hand - some swain? Ah! Ah! to a lad, so limb'd, so fea - tur'd, Sure 'tis cru - el  
6 6 7 6 6 6

17 Sy.  
to give pain, Sure 'tis cru-el to give pain.  
6 6 5 3 6 6 6

23 Mysis  
Girls for you my fears per-plex me, I'm al-arm'd on your ac-count:  
8 7 6 5 6 8 7 6 5 6

<sup>42</sup> Examples 1–3 are transcriptions made by the present writer from *Midas, A Comic Opera, As it is perform'd at the Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden. For the Harpsichord, Voice, German Flute, Violin, or Guitar* (London: John Walsh, n.d. [1764?]).

Example 1 continued.

28

Nysa

Sileno

Ah! Ah! Daphne

Wife, in vain you teize and vex me, I will rule de-pend up-on't. Ma - ma!

6/5 4/2 6 6 6/4 6/4 6 5/6 6 6/4 5/4

34

Ma - ma, how can you be so ill - na - tur'd, To the gen - tle, hand - some swain,

Ah! Ah! to a lad so limb'd and fea - tur'd? Sure 'tis cru - el to give pain,

6/5 6 7 6/5 6/5

39

Sure 'tis cru - el to give pain. Sy.

To the gen - tle, hand - some swain.

4/5 7 6/5 6/4 7/5

44

Mysis

Girls for you my fears per - plex me, I'm al - arm'd on your ac - count:

8/6 7/5 6/4 5/3 6 6 8/6 7/5 6/4 5/3 6 6



The Influence of the Paris Stage on Kane O'Hara's *Midas*

Example 1 continued.

49

Nysa  
Ma - ma. Daphne  
Mysis Pa - pa.  
Sileno Psha! pshaw! Sileno  
Wife, in vain you teize and vex me, I will rule de-pend up-on't. Ah! Ah!

6 5 4 2 6 6 6 4 6 4 6 5 6 6 6 4 5

55

Ah! Ah! to a lad so limb'd, so fea-tur'd, Sure 'tis cru-el to give pain,  
Ma - ma, how can you be so ill - na - tur'd, To a gen-tle, handsome swain,  
'Tis my plea-sure to give pain,  
Psha! psha! you must not be so ill - na - tur'd, He's a gen-tle, handsome swain,

6 6 5 6 6 5 7 6 5

## Example 1 continued.

60

To the gen - tle hand - some swain.

Sure 'tis cru - el to give pain.

To your od - ious fav - 'rite swain.

He's a gen - tle hand - some swain. Sy.

Exeunt

65

6 7 6 8 7 6

7 6 7

The O'Hara arrangement does not end at this point but returns, after another interlude built on the last four bars of the introduction, to repeat phrases 'B' and 'C' (bars 45–53). The two bars of exclamations are now sung by all four characters, the first bar taken by Nysa and Mysis and the second by Daphne and Sileno. The first four bars of the final statement of 'A' (bar 55) are sung in three-part harmony by Nysa, Daphne and Sileno. Mysis joins them for the following four bars with a countermelody that emphasizes the rancour of her text, "Tis my pleasure to give pain, To your odious fav'rite swain'.

O'Hara's choice of melody is perfectly suited to this dramatic situation. Although there are four characters, the dynamic of the scene is three-sided. The two sisters express one sentiment so that it is appropriate that one sister repeats the other's phrase. When they sing together in harmony, they sing different words at the same time, but the sentiment is the same and the rhyming scheme provides for the same vowels in each part at the ends of lines. Their mother Mysis, who opposes their wishes, presents her perspective in the dominant key before their father Sileno appeases her as the melody modulates back to the tonic. Whether this ensemble was arranged in homage

to Rousseau or not, O'Hara's methods echoed Rousseau's recommendations in the *Lettre*. He was clearly successful in finding

a song suited to the subject and distributed in such a fashion that, each of the interlocutors speaking alternately the whole series of the Dialogue forms only one melody, which, without changing subject or at least without spoiling the movement, passes in its course from one part to another without ceasing to be a unity and without going out of its path.<sup>43</sup>

His choice of Rousseau's melody also fulfilled the requirement of being 'susceptible to a progression in thirds, or sixths, in which the second part produces its effect without distracting the ear from the first'.<sup>44</sup>

### Jélyotte and the operatic romance

The inclusion of two airs from *Le Devin du village* in *Midas* may in fact be a reference to the original performer of the airs rather than, or in addition to, a reference to Rousseau. Both airs were sung by the character Colin, performed by Jélyotte, the most celebrated singer of the era. In his *Encyclopédie* article on 'Chanteur', Louis de Cahusac considered Pierre Jélyotte and Marie Fel the apogee of accomplished singing, carrying 'taste, precision, expression, and lightness of singing to a point of perfection that would not earlier have been foreseen or believed'.<sup>45</sup> Although chiefly valued as a singer, Jélyotte also played harpsichord, guitar and cello. He was appointed *maître de guitare* to Louis XV in 1745 and his association with that instrument is attested to in contemporary representations such as 'Le Thé à l'anglaise' (1766) by Michel-Barthélémy Ollivier, where he is seen accompanying the young Mozart on the guitar.<sup>46</sup> Daniel Hartz suggests that Jélyotte may have been responsible for introducing the *romance* to the operatic stage, giving Rousseau's *Le Devin du village* and Mondonville's *Titon et l'Aurore* (1753) as the earliest examples of operas to feature *romances*.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Rousseau, *Lettre*, 158–9.

<sup>44</sup> Rousseau, *Lettre*, 159.

<sup>45</sup> 'Nous jouissons de nos jours d'un chanteur & d'une chanteuse qui ont porté le goût, la précision, l'expression, & la légèreté du chant, à un point de perfection qu'avant eux on n'avait ni prévu ni crû possible. Louis de Cahusac, 'Chanteur', in vol. 3 (1751) of Denis Diderot et al (eds), *Encyclopédie* (Paris, 1751–72), 145.

<sup>46</sup> Jules Marie Joseph Guiffrey, *Collection des livrets des anciennes expositions depuis 1673 jusqu'en 1800. XXIX. Exposition de 1777* (Paris: Liepmannssohn and Dufour, 1870), 28. Mozart was in Paris during the winter of 1763–4.

<sup>47</sup> Daniel Hartz, 'Beginnings of the Operatic Romance: Rousseau, Sedaine, and Monsigny', in John A. Rice (ed.), *From Garrick to Gluck* (New York: Pendragon Press, 2004), 188–209: 198.

A guitar is part of Apollo's pastoral disguise in *Midas*. For his contest song ('Ah happy hours'), the stage directions read: 'Advances gracefully, preluding on the Guittar' and the air is sung 'To its own Tune. (Accompanied by Guittars.)'<sup>48</sup> By the early 1760s it had become conventional to accompany operatic *romances* with pizzicato strings, in imitation of the guitar. The undated Walsh score of *Midas* (from 1764 or later) indicates that 'Ah happy hours' was accompanied in this way, with descending quaver arpeggios (see Illustration 5).<sup>49</sup>



Illustration 5. O'Hara, 'Ah happy hours', part of p. 64 in *Midas, A Comic Opera ...* (London: John Walsh, n.d. [1764?]).<sup>50</sup>

'Ah happy hours' contains a number of the characteristics of the *romance tendre*. The metre is *alla breve*, with the rhythm of a slow gavotte or *gavotte tendre* (as defined by Rousseau in his *Encyclopédie* article on the gavotte).<sup>51</sup> The first four bars of the melody are accompanied by a sustained G, the tonic, creating the drone effect of the *musette*. It shares these two features with the air 'Votre coeur aimable Aurore', the much-admired *romance* in *Titon et l'Aurore*. It is surely not coincidental that the stage directions preceding 'Ah happy hours' echo Duni's direction 'le son d'un Guitarre, ou d'un Instrument qui l'imite' in the *romance* in *Nina et Lindor* (1758).<sup>52</sup>

In this, Apollo's contest song, the performer is afforded the opportunity to display his expressive and technical abilities, which is a central characteristic of the *romance*. Jélyotte was an *haute-contre*, a high tenor voice type that disappeared from the operatic stage later in the century. The beauty and strength of his voice were remarked on, as were his sense of style, ornamentation and good nature. There is debate as to the nature of vocal production of the *haute-contre* voice. Some suggest that the higher notes

<sup>48</sup> IRL-Dn, MS 9250, 87.

<sup>49</sup> Kane O'Hara, *Midas*, (Walsh), 64.

<sup>50</sup> As note 39.

<sup>51</sup> Hertz, 197.

<sup>52</sup> Hertz, 200.

were sung in falsetto,<sup>53</sup> but Rousseau, with his characteristically anti-French attitude, describes the *haute-contre* voice as harsh and forced, which would suggest an extension of chest voice.<sup>54</sup> Berlioz insists that the 'old masters of the French school' sang in chest voice at the top of the tenor register.<sup>55</sup> The performers of the role of Apollo in the first Dublin and London performances of *Midas* were accomplished tenors and actors. Greene remarks that Joseph Vernon 'came to Crow Street at the highest salary ever given up to a singer in Ireland'.<sup>56</sup> George Mattocks, the first Apollo at Covent Garden, was considered his equal and inspired the following verse in *Thespis*:

Whose tender strain, so delicately clear,  
Steals, ever honied, on the heaviest ear;  
With sweet-toned softness exquisitely warms,  
Fires without force, and without vigour charms.<sup>57</sup>

Less appreciative commentators referred to him as 'Miss Molly Mattocks',<sup>58</sup> leading Roger Fiske to surmise that he sang mostly in falsetto.<sup>59</sup>

Heartz concludes that 'Rousseau established the *romance tendre* on the operatic stage as an outpouring of lyrical emotion, an intense and show-stopping strophic hymn of love'.<sup>60</sup> O'Hara adopted Rousseau's innovation, without borrowing the air ('Dans ma cabane obscure') itself. The narrative concept of *Midas* appears to rely on this climactic musical moment, which corresponds exactly with the nature of the operatic *romance*. Because of his unique voice and sensitivity, Jélyotte was hailed as a god and remembered as such by later commentators.<sup>61</sup> Early in his career, Jélyotte was

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<sup>53</sup> This issue is discussed in detail by Mary Cyr in 'On Performing 18th-century Haute-Contre Roles', *The Musical Times*, 118 (April 1977), 291–5.

<sup>54</sup> Cyr, 293.

<sup>55</sup> Hector Berlioz, *Grand Traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration moderne* (1844), quoted in Cyr, 294.

<sup>56</sup> Greene, *Calendar*, 559.

<sup>57</sup> Hugh Kelly, *Thespis: or, a critical examination into the merits of all the principal performers belonging to Drury-Lane Theatre* (London: G. Kearsly, 1766). Quoted in Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 634.

<sup>58</sup> *The Smithfield Rosciad*, quoted in Lawrence Goldman (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), vol. 37, 379.

<sup>59</sup> Fiske, 634.

<sup>60</sup> Heartz, 209.

<sup>61</sup> The author of some verses on Jélyotte's performance in *Les Indes galantes*, included in Jean Marie Bernard Clément and Joseph de la Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, 3 vols (Paris: La veuve Duchesne, 1775), vol. 1, 445, exclaims 'Ah! it is a god that sings'. Quoted in Jacques-Gabriel Prod'homme, 'Pierre



considered to be best suited to the role of a shepherd.<sup>62</sup> In 1749 he played Apollo, disguised as a shepherd, in Mondonville's burlesque *ballet héroïque, Le Carnaval du Parnasse*.<sup>63</sup> In creating a plot which presents Apollo, god of music and 'prince of song', as a guitar-playing shepherd with a high voice, O'Hara appears to have taken Jélyotte as a defining model for his central character.

### Jélyotte's other operatic associations

Jélyotte's relevance to the creation of *Midas* is further illustrated by his association with other works on the Paris stage. He and Marie Fel created the title roles of Mondonville's pastoral operas *Titon et l'Aurore* (performed at the Paris Opera on 7 January 1753, two months before the first Paris performance of *Le Devin du village*) and *Daphnis et Alcimadure* (1754). The form of *Midas* corresponds more closely to these two operas by Mondonville than to *Le Devin du village*. Like Mondonville's operas, *Midas* was first presented in three acts, with a prologue.

Jélyotte and Marie Fel were so closely associated with Rameau's operas that Cahusac declared that 'The talents of Rameau, Jéliote and FéL, are well worthy of being united together. It appears that posterity will scarcely ever discuss the first, without speaking of the other two.'<sup>64</sup> Comparison with Rameau's *Platée*, his first comic opera, sheds an interesting light on the less pastoral aspects of *Midas*. *Platée* is also in three acts with a prologue and, like *Midas*, is based on a classical subject—a story from the third chapter of the *Boeotica* by Pausanias (a second-century Greek author). The plots of both *Midas* and *Platée* are precipitated by Juno's implacable jealousy. In *Platée*, Jupiter adopts a strategy to convince Juno that her suspicions of his infidelity are unfounded. In *Midas*, Jupiter attempts to hide his future misdemeanours from Juno by expelling Apollo, god of the sun. The subject matter and general characteristics of both operas were unprecedented in their immediate contexts. *Platée* resembles the 'tradi-

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de Jélyotte (1713–1797)', *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, 4 (August 1902), 686–717: 690.

<sup>62</sup> In his *Journal et mémoires* (1749), Collé writes that 'Jéliotte est un chanteur unique, mais il n'a ni figure ni action; il n'est bon que dans les rôles de berger, ... ceci soit dit sans faire tort à l'étendue et à la beauté de sa voix, surtout au goût divin du chant qu'il possède, et que personne n'a possédé aussi loin que lui'. Quoted in Prod'homme, 701.

<sup>63</sup> For further discussion of Mondonville's works see David Charlton, *Opera in the Age of Rousseau: Music, Confrontation, Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 350ff.

<sup>64</sup> 'Les talens des Rameau, des Jéliote & des FéL, sont bien dignes en effet d'être unis ensemble. Il y a apparence que la postérité ne s'entretiendra guère du premier, sans parler des deux autres'. Quoted in Prod'homme, 686.

tional French *tragédie en musique*, with its story of gods who resolve their problems through, and often at the expense of, mortal beings',<sup>65</sup> but the comic nature of the plot, the colloquial language and burlesque musical effects were foreign to the Paris Opera.

Both *Platée* and *Midas* were directly compared with *opera buffa*, recently arrived from Italy, but both preceded the Italian comic operas. Jean-Baptiste le Rond d'Alembert suggests that the public's exposure to the innovations in *Platée* predisposed them to give the *opera buffa* troupe a warm reception three years later: 'Perhaps *La Serva Padrona* would not have enjoyed so much appreciation if *Platée* had not already accustomed us to music of that kind.'<sup>66</sup> *Platée* and *Midas* constituted syntheses of a variety of theatrical practices and genres. Rameau and his librettist, Le Valois d'Orville, drew from the broader cultural milieu of the *comédie italien*, ballet, vaudeville comedies and the operatic parodies shown at the fairs of Saint-Laurent and Saint-Germain. O'Hara drew on ballad opera, *pasticcio*, pantomime, masque and burlesque, and also developments on the Paris stage. The new genres that these two operas heralded both reflected and anticipated social and theatrical change.

The libretto of *Platée* was criticized for 'its popular expressions, animal noises, comic alliterations and other literary devices'.<sup>67</sup> D'Orville and Rameau exploited aspects of the French language for comic effect and social commentary. Among the literary devices employed were the repetition of monosyllabic words, alliteration and the displacement of stresses within a word. The mute 'e' (*'e muet'*) at the ends of words was a controversial issue; it was, and is, often sung (without stress) but is rarely pronounced in speech. Rousseau cites it as one of the elements of the French language that makes it unsuitable for musical setting,<sup>68</sup> but Rameau seizes this syllable's dramatic potential for characterizing *Platée*, accenting it and ornamenting it as a manifestation of the nymph's lack of taste and elegance. Another vowel sound identified by Le Valois D'Orville and Rameau as having dramatic potential is the /*wa*/ or /*wai*/ sound which is found, for example, in 'pourquoi'. The diphthong /*wai*/ pronunciation of the syllable is associated with the aristocracy whereas the /*wa*/ pronunciation has bour-

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<sup>65</sup> Downing A. Thomas, 'Rameau's "Platée" Returns: A Case of Double Identity in the "Querelle des bouffons"', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 18 (March 2006), 1–19: 5.

<sup>66</sup> Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, *Oeuvres et correspondances inédites* (Paris: 1887), 178. ('Peut-être *La Serva Padrona* auroit-elle été moins goûtée si *Platée* ne nous avait accoutumés à cette musique'.)

<sup>67</sup> Nicholas Anderson, 'Rameau's "Platée": Burlesque or Grotesque?', *Early Music*, 11 (October 1983), 505–8: 507.

<sup>68</sup> Rousseau discusses vowels in a musical context in the *Lettre sur la musique française*. Rousseau, *Lettre*, 144.

geois associations.<sup>69</sup> The syllable's frequent use for rhyme and emphasis in act 1 scene 4 makes the social implications of its pronunciation inescapable. The onomatopoeic potential of the syllable to evoke ambient sounds (suggesting croaking in a marsh) are revealed as her unseen followers echo Platée's urgent questioning of Cithéron:

Platée: Dis donc, dis donc pourquoi?  
 Quoi? Quoi?  
 Choeur: Quoi? Quoi?<sup>70</sup>

O'Hara, with less finesse, also derives burlesque humour from the manipulation of the sounds of words. In the air 'The wolf that slaughter'd finds her whelps', from the three-act version of *Midas*, O'Hara explores the onomatopoeic possibilities of the word 'howling', reiterating the first syllable on a monotone in the first section of the air. This is reminiscent of Duni's setting of the word 'rouleras' in Illustration 2. In the second section, 'howl' is set to a five-bar unaccompanied melisma on repetitions of the syllable 'wow'. Perhaps the most evocative setting is in the third section, where the monotone reiterations leap up an octave: see Example 2.

Example 2: O'Hara, *Midas*, 'The wolf that slaughter'd finds her whelps', bars 40–72.

40

finds her whelps, With how wow wow wow wow wow wow wow wow wow wow

6 5/3 9/4 #3

45

wow wow wow with howling fills the for-est, the murth-erer tracks with

<sup>69</sup> See Thomas, 10–1.

<sup>70</sup> Le Valois d'Orville, *Platée* (Paris: Ballard, 1745), 25.

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Example 2 continued.

50  
 shril-lest yelps, ne-glec-ting, ne - glec - ting food or rest, With howl-ing and  
 7 6 5 3 6 6 6 6

56  
 yelp ing, with howling and yelp-ing, With how how howhow how howhow how how  
 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 7 6 5 3 8 7 6 5 3 8 7 6 4 5 8 7 6 4

63  
 how how how how - ling fills the fo - rest, fills the fo-rest. Sy.  
 5 8 7 6 6 7 6 5 6 7 6 5 4

69  
 6 4 6 6 5

O'Hara specifies that Midas is 'braying behind the scene' in the stage directions for the finale, but the most interesting musical effect is the transfer of the stress in Midas's name from the first syllable to the second. Once Apollo (reverting to his real identity) rewards Midas's bad judgment with ass's ears, his name is metamorphosed into 'Midaaas', the musical stress consistently landing on the second syllable. The effect is heightened by extending the short melisma on the second syllable (as if laughing) as Apollo sings 'Make all the Gods laugh at Mida-a-a-as':

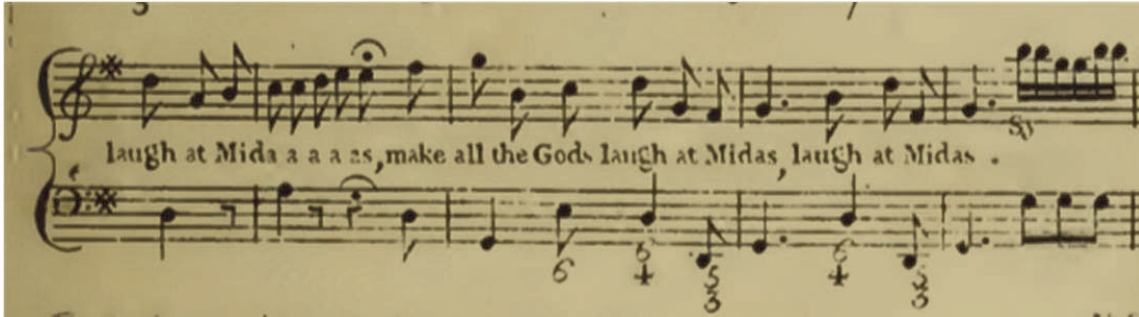


Illustration 6. O'Hara, bars 70–74 in 'Dunce, I did but sham', part of p. 67 in *Midas, A Comic Opera* ... (London: John Walsh, n.d. [1764?]).<sup>71</sup>

Kane O'Hara's most successful literary device was what Patrick J. Smith terms 'word music'.<sup>72</sup> The rhyming schemes and line lengths are dictated by the shape of the borrowed melodies. In 'All around the maypole', with a tune borrowed from the pantomime *Fortunatus*, the three detached notes in the middle of the opening phrase are set to monosyllabic words with an identical vowel and final consonant—'trot, Hot, Pot' in the first phrase, and 'mad Lad Glad' when the phrase is repeated.<sup>73</sup> 'Strip him, whip him', also from *Fortunatus*, consistently sets the detached scotch snap rhythm that recurs through the melody on 'i' vowels. The lyrics of the other phrases are also structured by distinctive musical idioms. The triple rhyme 'dapper', 'snapper' and 'strapper' corresponds to the falling leap at the end of each bar in the second phrase.<sup>74</sup> The third phrase matches the melodic contour with bisyllabic feminine rhymes. The sentence structure of the last phrase is adjusted to create short rhymes while carrying the narrative: see Example 3.

<sup>71</sup> As note 39.

<sup>72</sup> Patrick J. Smith, *The Tenth Muse: A Historical Study of the Opera Libretto* (London: Gollancz, 1971), 112: 'Goldoni realized that the spark for comedic writing lay in outrageous ideas coupled with amusing word music'.

<sup>73</sup> O'Hara, *Midas* (Walsh), 21. This may be an allusion to the clown's song in act 4 scene 2 of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: 'Cries ah ha! to the devil: / Like a mad lad, / Pare thy nails, dad; / Adieu, goodman devil'.

<sup>74</sup> O'Hara, *Midas* (Walsh), 37.



The Influence of the Paris Stage on Kane O'Hara's *Midas*

Example 3: O'Hara, *Midas*, 'Strip him, whip him'.

**Vivace**

Sy.

6<sup>b</sup> 7 5<sup>b</sup> 6 6 <sup>b</sup> 6<sup>5</sup> 6

8 Midas Sy. Strip him, Whip him. Let his shoul-der feel your lash on it,

13 Sy. Sy. Clip him, Rip him, Fol-ly now to be com-pass-ion-ate. If such a lit-tle dap-per,

18 Sy. Pert, sau-cy whip-per snap-per, Sil-e-no's un-der-strap-per Sli ly;

22

27 Sy. Sy. Sy. Simp-'ring, Whimp-'ring, Of your dear Ny sa be guile ye;

6 6 6

Example 3 continued.

32

Sniv-ling, Driv-ling

6 6 4 6 4

37

Will but dis-grace and de-file ye. Vig-our, Rig-our, Hur-ry, Flur-ry,

6 4 5

40

Are the mea-sures fit-est for ye. My plots pri-vate You'll con-nive at;

6 5

42

Thus we gain the point we drive at Or by co-vert Prac-ti-ces, or o-vert. Exeunt

6 4 6 4 5 6 7 6 4 6

46

6 5 6 6 4 5 3

### Changes in aesthetics, genre and society

It was suggested by some commentators that *Le Devin du village* and *Platée* contained vaudeville airs and dances from the fair theatres.<sup>75</sup> *Midas* shares this characteristic in a more pronounced way, closely parodying the words of some of the borrowed airs. This reflected the gradual realignment of musical entertainments taking place in Paris in the middle of the eighteenth century:

Louis XV had just ceded to the city of Paris the exclusive rights to the Opéra. Lyric theatre left its home at the court. Armed with financial autonomy and faced with a different audience, the Opéra took on a new look.<sup>76</sup>

By 1752, *opera buffa* was coexisting with *tragédie en musique* at the Paris Opera. Throughout the 1750s the *Théâtre Italien* competed for audiences with the fairs of Saint-Germain and Saint-Laurent, eventually amalgamating with them in February 1762, with the result that Monsigny and Philidor's *opéra-comiques* rose in status and took up residence at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. The ability to please a broader or layered audience became desirable in the new atmosphere of reflecting, correcting and entertaining society. The review of *Le Peintre amoureux de son modèle* in Fréron's *L'année littéraire* praises Duni's air 'Chère Laurette'<sup>77</sup> for succeeding in 'charming connoisseurs with its harmony and modulation, and those who are not connoisseurs with the facility of the singing'.<sup>78</sup>

Realism and criticism, set in familiar scenes with regional dialects, were central to the emerging aesthetic of comic opera. To embrace this new aesthetic, opera was presented in the language of its audience, with its own familiar music. In Paris, attention was drawn to differences in dialect. To acknowledge the Paris Opera's debt to the Languedoc region, Mondonville composed *Daphnis et Alcimadure* (1754) in the languedocien dialect, celebrating not only his own origins but also those of the two

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<sup>75</sup> *Seconde Lettre du Correcteur des Bouffons a L'Ecolier de Prague. Contenant quelques observations sur l'Opera de Titon, le Jaloux corrigé, & le Devin du Village*, in Launay, 582; Pierre Jean-Baptiste Nougaret, *De l'art du théâtre en general, où il est parlé des spectacles de l'Europe, de ce qui concerne ... l'opéra sérieux, l'opéra-bouffon et la comédie-mêlée-d'ariettes*, 2 vols (Paris: Cailleau, 1769), vol. 1, 85.

<sup>76</sup> Boccadoro, 194.

<sup>77</sup> The words of this air can be found on a card in the O'Hara Papers: IRL-Dn, 36,471/1 (78).

<sup>78</sup> 'Chère Laurette, charme à la fois les connoisseurs & ceux qui ne le sont pas; les premiers, par l'harmonie & la modulation des tons; les derniers, par la facilité du chant ...'. Élie-Catherine Fréron, *L'Année littéraire ou Suite des lettres sur quelques écrits*, 37 vols (1754–90), vol. 2 (Paris: Lambert, 1758), 107.

principal performers, Jélyotte and Fel. The *romance*, introduced to the operatic stage by Rousseau and Jélyotte, also originated in the Languedoc.<sup>79</sup>

For O'Hara and his audience, the issue of national identity involved an element of ambiguity. The inclusion of fifteen airs from *Midas* in Aloys Fleischmann's *Sources of Irish Traditional Music*<sup>80</sup> identifies *Midas* as an Irish opera but O'Hara's use of the English language led his fellow Irish librettist, Thomas Hales, to refer to it as 'the English Midas' in the 'avertissement' to his libretto of *Le Jugement de Midas*.<sup>81</sup> While the prologue to the 1764 Covent Garden performances of *Midas* emphasizes that O'Hara is a 'foreign bard' and 'stranger Poet', O'Hara's letter to the audience, included in the prologue, identifies the music of *Midas* as English rather than Irish:

A stranger Poet offers a Burletta;  
And hopes to please—(he owns it for 'tis true)  
With English musick, English humour too.<sup>82</sup>

However, 'English' in this context appears to refer to the English language rather than nationality. The native musician, Pan, is portrayed as an Irish musician and is the only character consistently to sing Irish music.<sup>83</sup> In the 1764 three-act version of *Midas*, Pan sings five airs, set to the tunes 'Sheelagh na Guig', 'My wife's a galloping young thing', 'Planxty Johnson', 'Ligurum Cuss' and 'Paddy O'Doody'. However, his role is side-lined to include just the first and last of these airs in the 1766 two-act version of *Midas*—the version most often performed outside Ireland. *Midas* was the only English burletta to be performed regularly as a three-act mainpiece (rather than a two-act afterpiece) in Dublin.<sup>84</sup> The retention of this Irish element for an Irish audience allowed the audience to see a familiar character represented on stage. The regional aspect of

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<sup>79</sup> The poet credited with reviving the *romance* was Paradis de Moncrif, whose 'most famous romance, "Les constants amours d'Alix et d'Alexis," had already appeared in print, with its music "sur un air Languedocien," many years earlier'. Hertz, 189.

<sup>80</sup> Aloys Fleischmann, *Sources of Irish Traditional Music c.1600–1855: An Annotated Catalogue of Prints and Manuscripts* (New York and London: Garland, 1998).

<sup>81</sup> Thomas d'Hèle, *Le Jugement de Midas, Comédie en trois actes en prose, Mêlée d'ariette* (Paris: La veuve Duchesne, 1778), 3.

<sup>82</sup> Kane O'Hara, *Midas, US-SM*, Larpent Collection, 235.

<sup>83</sup> One of Pan's airs, 'Do you sign his mittimus', which is only found in *Songs*, 33, is an exception, as it appears to be set to the English folk song 'One long Whitsun holiday'.

<sup>84</sup> 'In Dublin *Midas* was the only English burletta to be performed as a mainpiece in a theatre, all others being staged as interludes or afterpieces.' John C. Greene, *Theatre in Dublin, 1745-1820, A History*, 2 vols (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2011), vol. 1, 337.

the opera was only relevant to its native audience; for a wider audience, the universal appeal of the opera outlived its local colour.

### **Apollo returns to Paris**

In 1778 the Irish librettist Thomas Hales (known in Paris as Thomas d'Hèle) brought O'Hara's *Midas* to the Paris stage in the form of *Le Jugement de Midas*, an *opéra-comique* set by Grétry.<sup>85</sup> It is clear from the 'Avertissement' to Hales's libretto that some members of the Paris audience were familiar with O'Hara's English burletta, and Hales is at pains to distance himself from this 'English Midas':

Some Persons, as well-informed as well-meaning, have taken the trouble to publicise that this work is nothing but a translation of the English *Midas*, a burlesque opera in one act. Those who have a knowledge of both languages, and have leisure and patience enough to compare the two works, will see to what extent this assertion has foundation.<sup>86</sup>

Having studied both operas, David Charlton confirms the foundation of these assertions, observing that 'few critics seem to have seen for themselves how extensively the outline of the model was retained'.<sup>87</sup> O'Hara cannot be credited, however, with introducing Apollo's pastoral disguise to the Paris Opera. In the vision of *Le Petit prophète*, Grimm presents Apollo's disguise as a shepherd as a defining feature of the French Opera:

And I saw a shepherd arrive, and a cry went up: oh! oh! here is the God of Song, here he is. And I saw that I was at the French Opera.<sup>88</sup>

The implementation of Rousseau's principle of the Unity of Melody in the ensembles in *Midas* indicates a wish to emulate the developments of the Paris Opera. By presenting Apollo as a high tenor who wears the disguise of a shepherd and sings a *romance* to the accompaniment of a guitar, O'Hara makes a more obvious reference to the 'God of Song' of the Paris stage. The inclusion of two of Jélyotte's airs from

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<sup>85</sup> David Charlton, *Grétry and the Growth of Opéra-comique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986), 153.

<sup>86</sup> Thomas d'Hèle, 3. Translated from the original: 'Quelques Personnes aussi bien instruites que bien intentionnées, ont eu soin de publier que cette Pièce n'étoit qu'une Traduction du MIDAS Anglois, opera burlesque en un Acte, ceux qui sçavent les deux Langues, & qui ont assez de loisir & de patience pour comparer les deux Ouvrages, verront jusqu'à quel point cette assertion est fondée.'

<sup>87</sup> Charlton, *Grétry and the Growth of Opéra-comique*, 157.

<sup>88</sup> Friedrich Melchior, Baron von Grimm, *Le Petit prophète de Boehmischbroda* (Paris: 1753), 11. Translated from the original: 'Et je vis arriver un Berger, & l'on cria: oh! oh! voilà le Dieu du Chant, le voilà. Et je vis que j'étois à l'Opéra François.'



Rousseau's *Le Devin du village*, sung by other characters while referring to Apollo, further establishes this link. Although other allusions, such as those to *The Beggar's Opera*, were more conspicuous for the audience, the pastoral disguise and borrowings from Rousseau in O'Hara's *Midas* reveal an implicit influence from the Paris stage.

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