

# The Memory Man: Jacques Offenbach, *Le Bonhomme Jadis* and the Origin of an *air connu*

Richard Sherr   
Smith College, USA  
Email: [rsherr@smith.edu](mailto:rsherr@smith.edu)

*This article is in essence a study of intertextuality in two musico-dramatic genres in Paris of the 1850s: the comédie-vaudeville and straight plays with incidental music. The ‘texts’ that are considered here are interpolated songs in the comédie-vaudeville and purely instrumental interpolations in plays. Their intertextuality depends on the age-old process of contrafactum. Yet a problem arises when the listener cannot recognize the original source of the contrafactum and cannot perceive the intertext.*

*The article traces such an intertextual problem. It illustrates how the attempt to answer what would appear to be a minor question regarding music in a comédie-vaudeville led to consideration of an aspect of Jacques Offenbach’s output that has received very little attention and which in turn poses some problems of its own. I begin by discussing how intertextuality and musical memory were exploited in the nineteenth-century Parisian comédie-vaudeville. I then discuss how my inability to identify a ‘text’, in this case a particular tune used in a production in a Parisian theatre was so bothersome that it caused it to stick in my memory, which in turn allowed me to recognize it in a work by Offenbach. This in turn led to consideration of a short story and a play in which intertextual musical memory plays a large role, and to the music that Offenbach composed for the performance of that play which surprisingly led to the solution of the problem, the identification of the tune. I end with further comments.*

This article is in essence an exercise in intertextuality, a concept borrowed from literary criticism, defined in a recent article as: ‘the idea that every text is an intertext: everything we read or hear, we understand in relationship to other texts, and it is the relationship between texts that gives each text its meaning’.<sup>1</sup> This concept has many different aspects and been applied to all sorts of music, from plainchant to Hip-Hop.<sup>2</sup> Here, the object of study is musical intertextuality in two musico-

---

I would like to thank Ralph P. Locke and the anonymous readers for this Journal for many helpful comments.

<sup>1</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, ‘Making Old Music New: Performance, Arranging, Borrowing, Schemas, Topics, Intertextuality’, in *Intertextuality in Music: Dialogic Composition*, ed. Violetta Kostka, Paulo F. de Castro and William A. Everett (New York: Routledge, 2021): 68–84, with appended bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> See the bibliography mentioned in Note 1 and J. Peter Burkholder, ‘Musical Borrowing and Reworking: An Annotated Bibliography’, <https://chmtl.indiana.edu/borrowing/>.

dramatic genres in the Paris of the 1850s: the *comédie-vaudeville* and plays with incidental music. The ‘texts’ that are considered here are interpolated songs (the combination of lyrics and music) in the *comédie-vaudeville* and purely instrumental interpolations in plays. Their intertextuality depends on the common, if not universal, ability of human beings to remember tunes, to associated them with words, to recognize those tunes no matter what words are sung to them, to recognize them even when there are no words, and to associate tunes with the memory of specific events. This ability gives rise to what is perhaps the oldest and most straightforward example of musical intertextuality, the *contrafactum*, where a melody and a lyric or just a melody which originated in a specific context is wrenched out of that context by being associated with a new lyric, yet somehow retains the original context, thereby becoming an intertext. The fun for the listener is realizing that this has happened, which means that the listener is aware of the original context or contexts of the melody.<sup>3</sup> Yet a problem arises when the listener knows only the new context, and not the original one. Without that knowledge the intertext cannot be perceived.

This article traces such an intertextual problem. It illustrates how the attempt to answer what would appear to be a minor question regarding an interpolated song led to consideration of an aspect of Jacques Offenbach’s output (the incidental instrumental music that he composed or arranged during his stint as music director of the Comédie-Française, 1850–55) that has received very little attention and which in turn poses some problems of its own. I begin by discussing how intertextuality and musical memory were exploited in the Nineteenth-century Parisian *comédie-vaudeville*. I will then discuss how my inability to identify a ‘text’ – in this case a particular tune used in a production in a Parisian theatre – was so bothersome that it caused it to stick in my memory, which in turn allowed me to recognize it in a work by Offenbach. This in turn led to consideration of a short story and a play in which intertextual musical memory plays a large role, and to the music that Offenbach provided for the performance of that play which surprisingly led to the solution of the problem, the identification of the tune.

## Introduction

### Intertextuality and Musical Memory in the Parisian *comédie-vaudeville*<sup>4</sup>

Every evening in the nineteenth century, the theatres of Paris were filled with the sound of music. But it was not the theatre music that musicologists tend to be interested in: grand opera, *opéra comique* (lighter opera with spoken dialogue), Italian opera, performed in theatres devoted to those genres. Instead it was incidental orchestral music accompanying plays, pantomimes and melodramas, and songs (called *couplets*) interpolated into short comedies and farces called *comédies-vaudevilles* or *vaudevilles* (I will use *comédie-vaudeville* to designate this genre) and into elaborate productions called *féeries* and *revues de fin d’année* that

<sup>3</sup> The comic effects of *contrafacta* depend on this awareness, as anyone who has laughed at seeing Elmer Fudd serenading Bugs Bunny to the music of the Pilgrim’s Chorus of Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* will attest; ‘What’s Opera, Doc?’, Warner Brothers, 1957.

<sup>4</sup> Much of what follows was first presented in Richard Sherr, ‘Parisian *comédie-vaudeville* and Musical Memory: *Où peut-on être mieux* at the Théâtre des Variétés’, paper read at the annual conference of France: Musiques, Cultures, Venice, Palazzetto Bru-Zane, 11–13 July 2022.

formed the basis of the repertoires of the popular boulevard theatres where most of the Parisian theatrical audience congregated.<sup>5</sup>

It has been only fairly recently that musicologists have begun seriously to consider the music of nineteenth-century *comédies-vaudevilles* and have begun to consult the extant musical sources of the theatres where they were performed with the aim of recreating the musical experience of the audiences that regularly attended these productions.<sup>6</sup> This experience was quite different from the experiences of audiences at the Opéra, Opéra-Comique and other such theatres. There, audiences heard classically trained singers accompanied by large orchestras with lush orchestrations in large-scale works with entirely new music, usually by one composer. In the boulevard theatres, audiences heard singer-actors accompanied by small orchestras with sparse orchestrations, who occasionally in the course of the work sang a song or ensemble with new lyrics (the *couplets*), set to music that was not new and not by one composer. For the music of the *couplets* was predominantly made up of *airs connus* (well-known tunes), almost always identified in the printed texts by their title or *timbre*. Hence, the *couplets* were contrafacta (the melody is out of context) and intertextual (the listener/reader is informed of the original context). This intertextuality was in fact the defining feature of the *comédie-vaudeville* in the nineteenth century; it was even codified into law.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, lyrics published in collections of popular verse called *chansonniers* (writers of popular verse were also called *chansonniers*) were also always headed by the *timbre* of the *air* to which they were to be sung (the music is rarely included). To judge from these publications, it could be assumed that ordinary Parisians had a large library of *airs* in their memories or had access to publications like the *Clé du caveau*, a compendium of thousands of melodies all identified by *timbre* in various indexes.<sup>8</sup> That the music was *not* new – that it was ‘well-known’ was the point.

<sup>5</sup> In 1807, Napoleonic legislation divided the theatres of Paris into two groups, *grands théâtres* and *théâtres secondaires*, and codified the repertoires they could produce. Classic French drama, opera and *opéra comique* were to be the sole purview of the *grands théâtres*, all other types of theatrical entertainment were assigned to the *théâtres secondaires* (the boulevard theatres, originally five, including the Théâtre du Vaudeville and the Théâtre des Variétés, but the number expanded as the nineteenth century progressed). See M. Viven and M. Edmond Blanc, *Traité de la législation des théâtres ou exposé complet et méthodique des lois et de la jurisprudence relativement aux théâtres et spectacles publics*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1830): 362–9. In 1864 this legislation was abrogated by Napoleon III.

<sup>6</sup> There are a number of studies dealing with the music of the *comédie-vaudeville* and related genres in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some recent studies concentrating on the nineteenth century include Olivier Barra, ‘La revue de fin d’année à Paris au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: *chambre d’écho* de la culture musicale’, in *Musical Theatre in Europe 1830–1945*, ed. Michaela Niccolai and Clair Rowden (Turnout: Brepols, 2017): 3–21; Richard Sherr, ‘Comets, *Calembours*, Chorus Girls. The Music of the revue de fin d’année for the Year 1858 at the Théâtre des Variétés: A Preliminary Evaluation’, in *Musical Theatre in Europe 1830–1945*, 23–48; Clair Rowden, *Opera and Parody in Paris, 1860–1900* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020); Tommaso Sabbatini, ‘Music, the Market, and the Marvelous: Parisian Féerie and the Emergence of Mass Culture’ (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> The theatrical legislation of 1807 required the music used in the secondary theatres to be *airs connus*. This type of musical intertextuality was also the defining feature of a host of other genres: ballad opera and burlesque in England, the Singspiel in German speaking areas, and the earliest manifestations of what became the *opéra comique* in France.

<sup>8</sup> There are many editions of the *Clé du caveau*. For this article, I consulted Pierre Capelle, ed., *La clé du caveau: à l’usage des chansonniers français et étrangers, des amateurs, auteurs, acteurs*,

For while *comédies-vaudevilles*, churned out by the hundreds, were intended to be forgotten, the music they incorporated, which recycled the same *airs connus* over and over, depended on being remembered. I have found the *air* called 'Le beau Lycas aimait Thémire' (Caveau 1778) in over 50 *comédies-vaudevilles* produced between 1817 and 1867. Similar statistics could be created for other favourite *airs*. It was certainly in the interest of such recycling that the Théâtre des Variétés preserved the musical sources of its *comédies-vaudevilles*, creating a library of *airs* already harmonized and orchestrated, which could be inserted into any new *comédie-vaudeville* in the theatre.<sup>9</sup> And the creators of *comédies-vaudevilles* (there was almost always more than one) had to include a person who was able to suggest the *air connu* that would be appropriate for any *couplet*, a person that Honoré de Balzac dubbed 'the Memory Man'.

### The Memory Man

In Balzac's satire of the bureaucracy of the July Monarchy, *Les Employés* (1837), he points out that most of the people who worked in the government office in which much of the novel is set supplemented their income by doing other things.<sup>10</sup> One of them plays clarinet in the orchestra of the Opéra; another is a *vaudevilliste*. In discussing this character's other job, Balzac gives a succinct description of how a *comédie-vaudeville* was constructed. It required, he says, three people: *un homme à idées*, who devised the plot and the scenario (called the *charpente* or *carcasse*), *un piocheur*, who wrote the dialogue and presumably the *couplets*, and *un homme-mémoire*, who, according to Balzac, is 'tasked with setting the *couplets* to music, arranging [harmonizing?] the choruses and ensembles, singing them, and inserting them into the situation'.<sup>11</sup> Apparently the term '*homme-mémoire*' is unique to Balzac, but Saint-Agnan Choler, in the article 'Couplets' in the *Encyclopédie moderne* (1857), says much the same thing: that there were people who specialized in coming up with the appropriate *airs* for the *couplets*: 'Certain authors, actors, music directors, etc. possess in this regard marvellous knowledge, and there is a certain well-known *vaudevilliste* whose only contribution as a collaborator in a collective work is to furnish his expertise in this matter'.<sup>12</sup> It would seem that Balzac and Choler are describing someone who had memorized so many *airs*, perhaps most or even all

---

*chefs d'orchestre et de tous les amis du vaudeville et de la chanson*, 4th edn (Paris: Cotelte, [1848]) The first edition was published in 1811. Items from this collection are cited in the article as Caveau 0000.

<sup>9</sup> Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Arts du Spectacle, fonds Théâtre des Variétés.

<sup>10</sup> The work first appeared in instalments in *La Presse*, 1–14 July 1837, with the title *Une Femme supérieure*, then in book form with the same title (Paris: Werdet, 1838), and finally with the title *Les Employés ou La Femme supérieure*, in *La Comédie humaine* (Paris: Furne, 1844), vol. 11, *Études de mœurs, Scènes de la vie parisienne*, 133–335.

<sup>11</sup> 'un homme-mémoire, chargé de mettre en musique les couplets, d'arranger les chœurs et les morceaux d'ensemble, de les chanter, de les superposer à la situation'. *La Presse*, 6 July 1837, 4.

<sup>12</sup> 'Certains auteurs, acteurs, chefs d'orchestre, etc. possèdent à cet égard une science merveilleuse, et il y a tel vaudevilliste bien placé qui fournit uniquement, pour sa part de collaboration dans une oeuvre collective, son expérience en pareille matière'. *Encyclopédie moderne: Dictionnaire abrégé des sciences, des lettres, des arts, de l'industrie, de l'agriculture et du commerce, nouvelle édition*, vol. 11 (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1857): cols. 205–7.

of the *Clé du caveau*, that he was in a position to know immediately what *air* would fit any of the *couplets* in the *comédie-vaudeville*. In fact, the whole point of the *Clé du caveau* was to help memory men find *airs* for *couplets*. In that regard, a comment by Pierre Capelle in the fourth edition (1848) is instructive. It comes in a footnote in the Preface where he cites a statement which he says was made to him, apparently decades earlier, by Marc-Antoine Madeleine Désaugiers (1772–1827), a prolific *vau-devilliste* and *chansonnier*: ‘Before the existence of your *Clé du caveau* I came up with the *couplets* and songs by searching my memory for tunes; now, I can’t do anything without consulting your work, which often presents to my imagination a tune more appropriate to the subject I wish to treat’.<sup>13</sup>

### Intertextuality and Musical Memory in one *Comédie-Vaudeville*

A striking example of the way the creators of *comédies-vaudevilles* exploited the intertextual nature of the genre, and the musical memories of the audience is *Où peut-on être mieux*, *Vaudeville en un acte* by Nicolas Théodore Paulin Deslandes and Charles Joseph Édouard Potier, first performed at the Théâtre des Variétés on 3 July 1853. Intertextuality and musical memory were central to the design of this particular *comédie-vaudeville*. Its authors knew that the audience would silently add to their title *Où peut-on être mieux* the phrase *qu’au sein de sa famille*, that the audience would recognize that the title referred to a piece of music that was so famous as to be ubiquitous, so famous and so ubiquitous in fact that it is not in the *Clé du caveau*: the quartet ‘*Où peut-on être mieux qu’au sein de sa famille*’ (What could be better than to be in the bosom of one’s family) from *Lucile*, *Comédie en un acte mêlée d’ariettes*, libretto by Jean-François Marmontel, music by André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry, first performed at the Comédie-Italienne on 5 January 1769. This quartet was the hit of the *opéra comique* and quickly entered public domain as an *air* which contains the main melodic elements of the *opéra-comique* ensemble (see Ex. 1).



Ex. 1 *Où peut-on être mieux qu’au sein de sa famille*  
What could be better than to be in the bosom of one’s family? There everyone is content in hearts and minds. Let us live and love as our worthy ancestors did.

This *air* was classified by Castil-Blaze in his *Dictionnaire de Musique Moderne* (Paris, 1825) as ‘Proverbe Musical’ which he defines as:

<sup>13</sup> ‘Avant l’existence de ta *Clé du Caveau* je faisais des couplets et des chansons en cherchant des airs dans ma tête; maintenant, je ne puis rien faire sans consulter ton ouvrage, qui présente souvent à mon imagination un air plus approprié au sujet que je veux traiter’; *Clé du caveau*, 4th edn (1848): xiv, note 1.

Tunes or fragments of tunes which recall to the imagination the sly cleverness, the ingenious thought, the quotation, the compliment, the declaration of love, the oath, the invocation, the expression of admiration, of desire, of joy, of sadness, etc. which are contained in the words set to the melody.<sup>14</sup>

He then lists 30 *airs* of which the second is 'Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille'. After the list he continues with what is in essence a description of intertextuality:

These tunes which have been sung for a long time and are engraved in everybody's memory, give rise to ingenious interpretations and the musician who inserts them at the right time in a serenade, a divertissement, a public festival, is always applauded. The clarinet plays the tune and the words issue from everyone's mouth. The use of these 'speaking tunes', of these musical proverbs, is of great help in understanding the pantomime of ballets. They add to the piquancy of certain *couplets* in the *vaudeville*. There is nothing that happens in life, no passion, which does not have its expression in music, and, what is more, a sacrosanct expression. One would have to be entirely ignorant of our lyric theatre [i.e., opera and other forms of theatre that include singing] not to understand what most of these tunes signify.<sup>15</sup>

Yet what was actually called up in people's memories when listening to 'Où peut-on être mieux' is not so clear, because its text was actually open to a myriad of interpretations: It could be taken literally and sentimentally ('how happy to be in the bosom of one's family'). It could be taken ironically (in the midst of your screaming children and your bickering relatives you think 'Oh how *happy* [not!] to be in the bosom of one's family'). It could be taken satirically (about a bunch of crooked politicians: 'how happy they are to be in the bosom of *their* family'). Most importantly, the *air* garnered a political dimension, becoming associated with the Bourbon monarchy (the king is the father of the happy family which is France). This was particularly true during the Restoration (1814/15–1830) when it was played whenever a member of the royal family made a public appearance.<sup>16</sup> In the July monarchy (1830–1848), the *air* was occasionally used in its anthem function now associated with Louis Philippe, but the satiric use

<sup>14</sup> 'Airs ou fragmens des airs qui rappellent à l'imagination le trait malin, la pensée ingénieuse, la sentence, le compliment, la déclaration d'amour, le serment, l'invocation, l'expression d'admiration, de désir, de joie, de tristesse, etc. que renfermaient les paroles jointes à leur mélodie.'

<sup>15</sup> 'Ces airs que l'on a long-temps répétés et qui sont gravés dans la mémoire de tout le monde, donnent lieu à d'ingénieuses allusions et l'on ne manque jamais d'applaudir le musicien, qui les fait exécuter à-propos dans une sérénade, un divertissement, une fête publique. La clarinette fait entendre le motif, et les paroles volent de bouche en bouche. L'emploi de ces airs parlants, de ces proverbes musicaux est d'un grand secours pour l'intelligence de la pantomime des ballets. Ils ajoutent au piquant de certains couplets de vaudeville. Il n'est point d'action dans la vie, point de passion qui n'ait son expression dans la musique, et, qui plus est, son expression consacrée. Il faudrait être tout-à-fait étranger à notre scène lyrique pour ne pas comprendre ce que signifient la plus grande partie de ces airs.'

<sup>16</sup> It was often paired with another royalist anthem, *Vive Henri Quatre* (Caveau 662). For instance, *La Quotidienne*, reporting on 1 November 1814 on the attendance at a performance of Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio segreto* at the Théâtre de l'Odéon by Louis XVIII and the royal family, related that: 'S. M. a été accueillie par les plus vifs transports, et les airs de *Vive Henri Quatre*, et *Où peut-on être mieux*, ont servi cette fois d'ouverture à l'opéra italien'. (His Majesty was welcomed most enthusiastically, and the *airs* of *Vive Henri Quatre*, and



seems to increase, and the same happens during the Second Republic (1848–1852) and the Second Empire (1852–1870). In short, there was an enormous amount of intertextual baggage associated with this particular *air*, baggage that the audience of the Variétés in 1853 certainly was aware of. The question they might have asked themselves before the performance began was which of the interpretations of ‘Où peut-on être mieux’ were they going to see? The answer is given in the overture, composed by Pierre-Julien Nargeot, the music director of the Théâtre des Variétés, which begins with a full-fledged quotation of Grétry’s music (in the original key of A major and mirroring the original orchestration), but immediately thumbs its nose at it (see Ex 2).<sup>17</sup>

There will be no sentiment here, nor will there be any politics (which would not have passed the censors anyway). Indeed, the *comédie-vaudeville* turns out to be cynical satire on the idea of ‘happy families’. It takes place in contemporary Paris with the following cast of characters: Mélinet, a wealthy bachelor; Christophe, his cousin; Anatole, his second cousin; Davrigny, a young dandy; Cornélie, Christophe’s wife; Victorine, their daughter; Madame Grillon, housekeeper.

The plot of the *comédie-vaudeville* is actually a satire of a well-known play, *Le Vieux Célibataire*, by Colin d’Harville, first performed at the Théâtre de la Nation on 24 February 1792, and often revived, the latest revival having been at the Théâtre-Français on 1 October 1851, close enough to the year of the *comédie-vaudeville* that we could assume that the revival was the direct impetus for the *comédie-vaudeville*’s creation. In the play, the main character, M. Dubrillage, a wealthy bachelor, is turned against his worthy nephew (whom he has never met) by the lies of his housekeeper, Madame Évrard, who wishes to marry Dubrillage herself. Unbeknownst to both of them, the nephew has gotten himself hired as a servant in the household, and in the course of the play, manages to thwart Madame Évrard’s schemes and show M. Dubrillage that living with a happy family is far superior to living surrounded by strangers.

The relationship of the *comédie-vaudeville* to the play is made clear in Scene 2, where Mélinet makes his entrance reading and quoting a passage from *Le Vieux Célibataire* (Act I, Scene 8) in which the nephew extolls the advantages of being surrounded by one’s family. Just to make sure that the audience understands this, the title of the play is actually mentioned. But Mélinet then implies that he has been manipulated into reading this play about the virtues of living with one’s family, and it soon becomes clear that the *comédie-vaudeville* is going to demonstrate the exact opposite of the play’s message. Mélinet, like Dubrillage, is an old wealthy bachelor and has, like Dubrillage, a housekeeper, Madame Grillon. Like Dubrillage, he also has distant relations whom he had never met who are in his house when the *comédie-vaudeville* begins. But everything is reversed; the housekeeper is loyal to Mélinet and has no designs on him, and the family is not in disguise and is undisguisedly awful both to Mélinet and to Madame Grillon.<sup>18</sup> In the

---

*Où peut-on être mieux*, served this time as the overture to the Italian opera.) There are many other similar accounts in the press during the Restoration.

<sup>17</sup> The sources of the music of *Où peut-on être mieux* are in Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Arts du Spectacle, fonds Théâtre des Variétés, 4-COL-106 (1758).

<sup>18</sup> They alter his eating habits and give him indigestion, they commandeer his carriages and badger him into riding backwards in a jump seat in bad weather wearing a short coat, they badger him into giving them money and jewellery, they treat Madame Grillon with contempt as a common servant.

Allegro

Flute

Flutes

Oboes

Clarinet in A

Bassoon

Horn in D

Horn in A

Cornet in A

Timpani

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

7

Fl.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bn.

D.Hn.

D.Hn.

Cot.

Timp.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

Cb.

**Ex. 2** Où peut-on être mieux, Overture, beginning

end, it is they who are thwarted: Mélinet gets rid of them by paying them off and Madame Grillon remains to take care of him selflessly, without interfering with his family's inheritance when he dies, for which event she, as Mélinet says in the final line of the *comédie-vaudeville*, 'tachera de vous faire l'attendre le plus longtemps possible' (will attempt to make you wait for it as long as possible).

It is not hard to imagine that when the authors decided to produce this satire of being in the midst of a 'happy family' the signature tune of happy families with its inherent contradictions came to their minds as well. Hence the title of the *comédie-vaudeville*. But they went further than that. The melody of 'Où peut-on être mieux' is used in a unique way in this *comédie-vaudeville*; not as an *air* to be sung to different words and inserted into the text, but as a tune that Mélinet



sings to himself with the original words and whose source he identifies, as he tries to assure himself that he really is in the bosom of a happy family; this makes the song at once diegetic (he knows that he is singing, and we know it, too) and an integral part of the ongoing verbal text. As it becomes more and more obvious to the audience (although not consciously to him) that the exact opposite is the case, Mélinet's increasing distraction and his obsessive refusal to see what is actually happening is manifested by his *forgetting* the original tune and singing the words of 'Où peut-on être mieux' to two other 'well-known tunes' (specified in the text), both of which were extremely old and could have been considered 'folk songs'.

The first is the 'Carillon de Dunkerque' (Caveau 739).<sup>19</sup> In Scene 13, Mélinet sings 'Où peut-on être mieux' to this *air* (see Ex. 3). To which Madame Grillon responds, 'Tenez, voyez-vous, vous ne savez même plus l'air' (Look, you no longer even remember the *air*), speaking for the audience which undoubtedly knew both tunes. The second tune is 'Va-t'en voir s'ils viennent, Jean' (Caveau 613), sung to 'Où peut-on être mieux' in Scene 17 as Mélinet insists that he is happy with his family (see Ex. 4).<sup>20</sup> To which Madame Grillon (and the audience) respond: 'Vous le chantez, maintenant, sur l'air: va-t'en voir s'ils viennent, Jean' (Now you are singing it to the *air* of Va-t'en voir s'ils viennent, Jean). Finally, when Mélinet and Madame Grillon have been driven to distraction and at each other's throats by Mélinet's 'happy family' (he threatens to fire her and send her back to her family while he remains with his, and she threatens to quit and do just that), they both sing 'Où peut-on être mieux' but this time to the original tune, which now represents anger and frustration, not peace and contentment. In this way 'Où peut-on être mieux', or rather the audience's memory of the original tune (the intertext), becomes an anti-leitmotif in the *comédie-vaudeville* (that is: unlike a Wagnerian leitmotif, we here notice that the correct tune has *not* recurred, and further, in its final appearance it signifies the opposite of what it signified in its first appearance).<sup>21</sup> Without the audience's musical memory of *airs connus*, and its understanding of how they were supposed to be used in *comédies-vaudevilles* none of this would have worked.



Ex. 3 'Où peut-on être mieux' sung to Caveau 739



Ex. 4 'Où peut-on être mieux' Sung to Caveau 613

<sup>19</sup> The fourth edition of the *Clé du caveau* defines this tune as an 'Air ancien servant à un refrain populaire' (An old tune which serves as a popular refrain).

<sup>20</sup> Defined in the fourth edition of the *Clé du caveau* as 'Vieux refrain populaire employé dans divers vaudevilles, d'après une chanson de Pannard' (Old popular refrain used in various *vaudevilles*, after a chanson by Pannard).

<sup>21</sup> The other *couplets* are sung to standard *airs connus*.

## The Problem

Oui, le prin-temps re - pa - rait, La na-tu - re re - nait, L'hom-me se ré-jou - it, Et, pe-tit à pe - tit, Le co-teau re-ver-dit, Et, dès son ré - veil, Le d-vin so - leil Cou-vre l'u-ni - vers De pam-pre

vers. Pour-tant nous remlons en co-re Que d'é-preu-ve à su-bi! Sou-vent le so - leil dé-vo-re Le cep qu'il a fait mû-rir. Nous do-veus crain-dre et la grê-se et l'o ra - ge,

Tout doit é-tre ap - pré-ben-dé. Mon Dieu! le ciel se... cou - vre d'un ru-sa - ge, Et le ton-ner-re à gron-dé. Non, non, non, non, non, non, Dé-ja sur le voi-lon, A l'af-freux tour-bil-

lon Suc-cède un doux ra-yon; Al-lons! gai vi-gne-ron, Songe à ta pres - soir, Va, fais ton de - voir, Mon-tre ton sa - voir. Et bon es - poir!

Mais, juin, juil - let sont pas-

sés: Nos vœux sont ex-au - cés, Et les rai-sins pres - sés, Sur leur grappe en-tas - sés, Aux é-cha-las dres-sés Se tien-nent de - bout, Et bien-tôt, par-tout, Le so leil... d'aôit Va do-rer tout.

<sup>24</sup> The *air* was also employed under the same title but with different words in the *revue de fin d'année* 1855 at the Variétés, *Le Royaume de Caembour*, number 94.

This is a very long melody with a clear structure, A (11 bars)–B (4 bars)–B (4 bars)–C (2+2 bars)–C (2+2 bars)–A (11 bars)–A (11 bars), and a very simple harmonization consisting of I and V in F Major. When I tried to find the source of this air, I drew a complete blank. There is no *air* titled ‘Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon’ in the *Clé du caveau*, looking at the music of each of the 2,350 *airs* in that publication in the off chance that I could find it was out of the question and Google searches of various combinations of ‘air’ and ‘bon bon bon’ only turned up references to *Ohé! les p’tits agneaux!* or to chocolate candies (Bonbons), so eventually I gave up and listed the *air* as ‘Unidentified’ in the Critical Report.<sup>25</sup> But as a result of obsessing about it, I also memorized it.

### A Surprise

Among the very useful bits of information to be found on the Home Page of the indefatigable Offenbach scholar, performer and editor Jean-Christophe Keck is a list of Offenbach overtures that he had conducted with links to YouTube recordings of those overtures.<sup>26</sup> One that caught my eye because of its uniqueness, was the recording of the Overture to *Le Bonhomme Jadis*. This is not an Offenbach operetta, but is instead part of the incidental music Offenbach provided, as music director of the Comédie-Française, for the 1852 production of the play *Le Bonhomme Jadis* by Henri Murger, known to opera lovers as the author of *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* on which Puccini’s opera *La Bohème* is based.<sup>27</sup> Since there are no editions and almost no recordings of any of the incidental music that Offenbach composed during his stint at the Comédie-Française (1850–55), my curiosity was aroused and I followed the link to the YouTube recording.<sup>28</sup>

You may imagine my astonishment when I heard that this overture began with a full-fledged rendition of the *air*: ‘Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon’ that I had been searching for in vain for years! Further, the autograph of the overture had come up for auction at Sotheby’s in 2017 and they posted on their website an image of the first page which confirmed what my ears had told me. The *air* is used in its entirety at the beginning of the overture.<sup>29</sup> This was astounding, but it did not solve my problem since the *air* is not identified in the autograph. In fact, it left open the possibility that Offenbach had actually composed it.

One of the reviews of the first performance of *Le Bonhomme Jadis* appears to mention this overture and this *air*. In his review in the *Gazette de France* of 26 April 1852, M.-J. Brisset (Mathurin-Joseph Brisset) seems to refer to this *air* and identifies it as the air ‘Pon pon’ (very close to ‘Bon bon’), Number 99 of the *Clé du caveau*. He mentions it because the music, to him, emphasizes that the setting of the play

<sup>25</sup> The number of ‘bons’ is important. There are *airs* called ‘Bon bon bon’ or ‘Bon bon’ which are not this tune.

<sup>26</sup> Jean Christophe Keck, musicien: Le site officiel, [www.jean-christophekeck.com/1/offenbach\\_symphonique\\_1457314\\_0.html#pr\\_3227465](http://www.jean-christophekeck.com/1/offenbach_symphonique_1457314_0.html#pr_3227465). Keck is the editor of the Offenbach Edition published by Boosey and Hawkes.

<sup>27</sup> In 1852, the Comédie-Française was called the Théâtre-Français, but I will use Comédie-Française in what follows.

<sup>28</sup> Offenbach : Le Bonhomme Jadis (1852), ouverture, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuaaHGXi2rk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuaaHGXi2rk).

<sup>29</sup> See [www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2017/musical-manuscripts-l17406/lot.51.html](http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2017/musical-manuscripts-l17406/lot.51.html).

(a contemporary Parisian attic apartment) and the characters, an old pensioner, a penniless young student, and a *grisette* (young working-class woman), were radically different from the settings and characters of most of the productions of the Comédie-Française (the classics of French drama). In fact, he even suggests that the venerable Comédie-Française had lowered itself to the level of the boulevard theatres.

The orchestra led us to this new step backward in the decline of drama: Fluff has been installed there without shame; and at the rise of the curtain, after the most droll variations on the air *Pon, pon*, number 99 of the *Clé du caveau* – we were not in the least surprised to see the palace of Phèdre and the salon of the Misanthrope reduced to the dimensions of an attic apartment of [productions of] the [Théâtre du] Vaudeville or the [Théâtre des] Variétés, and to hear in the wings a *grisette* singing a song that is accompanied by an orchestra playing a polka for the regular customers of a suburban dance hall on the ground floor.<sup>30</sup>

Near the end of his review, Brisset refers to this tune again and definitely states that it was played in the overture. It had made such an impression that he considers the entire play to have been a prose *couplet* set to this tune: ‘This is the play *Le Bonhomme Jadis*, which is nothing more than a *couplet* in prose set to the tune of which we have spoken, which is the basis of the overture’.<sup>31</sup>

Problem solved, I thought. Unfortunately, Number 99 of the *Clé du caveau* does not correspond to ‘Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon’ or to any of the melodies used in Offenbach’s overture, nor did Numbers 66, 69 or 96 (numbers of which 99 might be a typo). Problem not solved. But this made me curious about *Le Bonhomme Jadis*, and the rest of the incidental music that Offenbach had provided for its production at the Comédie-Française. Since overtures to plays with music are often made up of melodies that will be heard later in the production, there was a good chance that the tune which began the overture would appear in the actual incidental music to *Le Bonhomme Jadis*. Perhaps the context of its use in the play could give a clue to its origins. It turns out that music in *Le Bonhomme Jadis* is anything but incidental.

### The Context: Music, Intertextuality and Memory in *Le Bonhomme Jadis*, Story and Play

*Le Bonhomme Jadis* was originally published as a *feuilleton* in *Le Corsaire* on 15, 17 and 22 January 1849, and later in Henri Murger, *Scènes de la vie de jeunesse* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1851). The title refers to the main character (we never learn his real name)

<sup>30</sup> ‘L’orchestre nous a initiés à ce nouveau pas en arrière de la dégringolade dramatique: le flon-flon s’y est installé sans façon; et au lever du rideau, après les variations les plus drôlatiques sur l’air: *Pon, pon*, -- n° 99 de la *Clé du Caveau*, -- nous n’avons été nullement surpris d’apercevoir le palais de Phèdre et le salon du Misanthrope rapetissés à la dimension d’une mansarde du Vaudeville ou des Variétés, et d’entendre à la cantonnade un refrain de grisette qui s’unit du haut et bas avec les sons d’un orchestre faisant polker au rez-de-chaussée les habitués d’un bal de barrière’. M.-J. Brisset (Mathurin-Joseph Brisset) in *Gazette de France* 26 April 1852.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Telle est la pièce du *Bonhomme Jadis*, qui n’a rien de bien neuf qu’un couplet en prose dit sur l’air dont nous avons parlé, et qui fait le fond de l’ouverture’. M.-J. Brisset (Mathurin-Joseph Brisset) in *Gazette de France* 26 April 1852.

and might be translated as 'The Gentleman Who Lives in the Past', or even 'The Old Codger'. In the story, he is 65 years old, certainly an age that qualified as 'old' in 1849. But in his mind, he is still in his twenties. And he certainly has a more youthful outlook on life than his neighbour Octave, who actually is 20 years old, but lives like an old solitary bachelor, doesn't smoke, doesn't dance and doesn't have a mistress. The story specifies that they live in facing attic apartments (*mansardes*) on the top floor of an apartment building on located at the end of the rue de la Tour d'Auvergne where it intersects with the rue Rochechouart, just below Montmartre. This address was not chosen at random; in the early 1840s Murger had himself lived in a *mansarde* in the rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, as does Rodolphe in *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*.<sup>32</sup> In 1849, Montmartre had not been incorporated into the city of Paris and was separated from Paris proper by a customs barrier called the *mur d'octroi* or *mur des fermiers généraux* which surrounded what were in 1849 the 12 arrondissements of Paris.<sup>33</sup> The *mur d'octroi* was pierced by a number of entry points called *barrières* where taxes were collected on all goods that entered the city.<sup>34</sup> Specifically, the rue de la Tour d'Auvergne is just below the Barrière des Martyrs at the beginning of the Boulevard des Martyrs (see Fig. 1). In the early nineteenth century many open-air taverns with dancing venues, called *guinguettes* were established near the *barrières* and two famous ones, L'Ermitage and L'Élysée, were near the Barrière des Martyrs.<sup>35</sup> This turns out to be of importance to the plot of the story.

The story takes place on a Sunday evening of the day of the Bonhomme's sixty-fifth birthday, which is the same day as Octave's twentieth birthday, and the Bonhomme invites Octave to share his birthday dinner (which he prepares himself). While they are eating, dance music from the nearby *guinguettes* of Montmartre is occasionally heard through the open windows (Sunday evenings were precisely the times that the *guinguettes* would have been full of dancers, and it is not hard to imagine that Murger is drawing here on the memory of his own aural experiences when he lived in the rue de la Tour d'Auvergne.). The music inspires the Bonhomme to want to go dancing (not Octave, who doesn't know how to dance). One melody in particular has a particular effect on the Bonhomme, calling up memories of his youth.

At this moment, the wind that blew in from the heights of Montmartre brought the sounds of an old popular tune newly arranged as a quadrille, and a neighbouring musician who was practicing the oboe at his open window began repeating the tune played by the orchestra of the *barrière*.

The bonhomme Jadis, who had suddenly fallen silent when he heard the distant sounds of this music, trembled and abruptly stood up when the neighbour oboist repeated the tune, not a note of which was lost.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See Orlo Williams, *Vie de Bohème, A Patch of Romantic Paris* (London: Ballantyne Press, 1913).

<sup>33</sup> The *mur d'octroi* was demolished in 1860.

<sup>34</sup> Like the *Barrière d'Enfer*, the site of Act III of Puccini's opera *La Bohème*.

<sup>35</sup> On *guinguettes*, see Thomas Brennan, 'Beyond the Barriers: Popular Culture and Parisian Guinguettes', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18 (1984–85): 153–69; François Gasnault, *Guinguettes et Lorettes, Bals publics et danse sociale à Paris entre 1830 et 1870* (Paris: Aubier, 1986).

<sup>36</sup> 'En ce moment, le vent qui soufflait des hauteurs de Montmartre secouait à la fenêtre de la salle à manger les lambeaux d'une vieille ronde populaire nouvellement arrangée en quadrille; et un musicien d'alentour, qui faisait à sa croisée des exercices de hautbois, se mit à répéter comme un écho l'air exécuté par l'orchestre de la barrière.



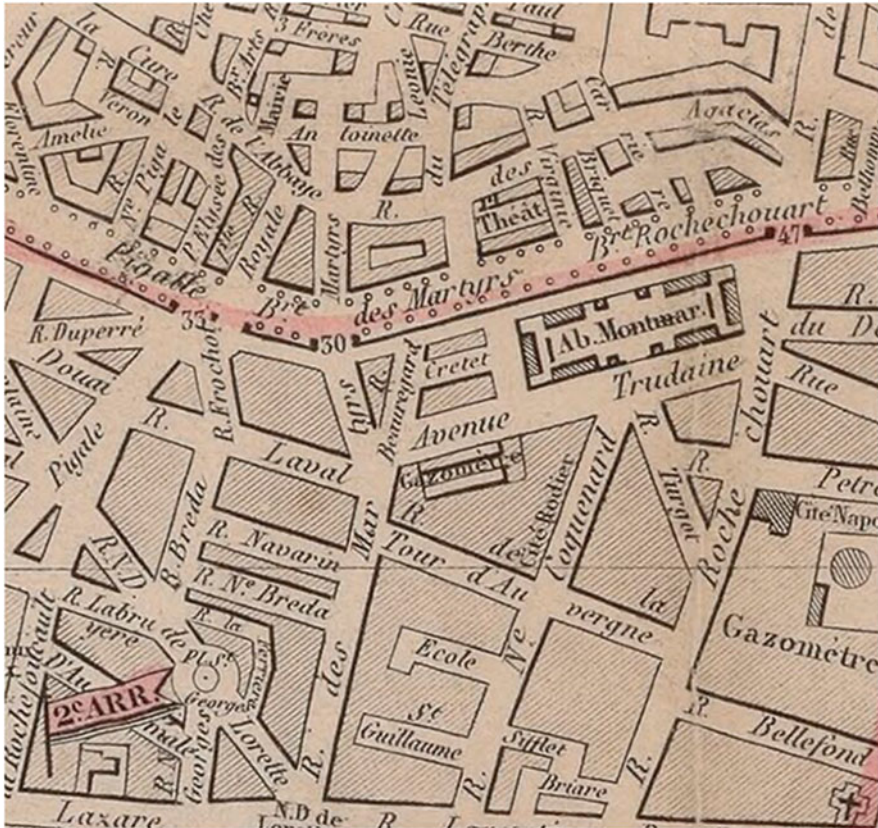


Fig. 1 Detail of *Nouveau plan complet de Paris avec ses fortifications, divisé en 12 Arrondissements et 48 Sections avec les principaux Monuments en Elévation donnant la Distance légale en Mètres des Forts Détachés aux Murs d'Enceinte et aux Murs d'Octroi, indiquant la Population et les Fêtes Patronales des Environs de Paris. Gravé sur Acier par J. N. Henriot* showing the Barrière des Martyrs (Number 30), the rue de la Tour d'Auvergne and the rue Rochechouart Bibliothèque nationale de France

The Bonhomme explains to Octave that this melody had been his favourite when he was a young man in Burgundy, in love with a girl called Jacqueline. On hearing the dance orchestra of the *guinguette* and the neighbour oboist playing the melody, he suddenly decides that he (the 65-year old) has to go dancing, and he drags Octave (the 20-year-old who doesn't know how to dance) out to visit the *guinguettes* of Montmartre. In particular, he wants to dance to the quadrille of his favourite tune and is disappointed when he doesn't hear it. He then tells Octave how the tune affected him when he a soldier.

Le bonhomme Jadis, qui s'était subitement tu quand il avait entendu les sons lointains de cette musique, tressaillit et se leva précipitamment lorsque le hautbois du voisinage répéta l'air, dont pas une note n'était perdue'. Henri Murger, 'Le Bonhomme Jadis', in Murger, *Scènes de la vie de jeunesse* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1851): 102.



'This is very annoying', said the bonhomme to Octave, 'I no longer hear my tune and would really have liked to dance to it'.

'You would dare ... in front of everybody!' said Octave in a worried voice.

'And why not? I dared to do other things when I heard that tune. Listen, when I was a soldier, because of Jacqueline, you know, I was more-or-less your age, and I certainly was not a paragon of valour. Thus, the first time that I found myself facing the Austrians on the plains of Lombardy, I really regretted my native Burgundy and the violin of Big Blaise, and if I had been offered the chance to leave the army, I would have taken it. When I heard the first cannon shot – it was a terrible scene, smoke, death cries! I was not happy. Our commander shouted: Brave soldiers, it is our turn; Charge! ... the charge was directly at the canons. All my comrades ran as if they were going to a party, as for me, I was not enthusiastic ... but lo and behold, the band of the regiment that was already in position decided to play my favourite tune *tra déri déri déra*. Me, so pliant, so peaceful, I had barely heard the refrain when I turned into a lion. I grew a mane, and there I was at the head of my squadron, charging at the Austrian lines. The tip of my sabre raised, thundering away and singing my little tune: *tra déri déri déri* – I charged like the devil. – All of a sudden, I came across a big guy in full uniform carrying a banner. *Tra deri*, that would make a nice dress for Jacqueline, I said to myself, and I fell upon him, *deri dera*, – I cut him in two, – *Tra deri*; – I took his banner from him, *deri dera*, – the general embraced me, my name was placed on the order of the day of the army ... and the Republic awarded me a *sabre d'honneur*. *Tra deri dera, la la deri*'.<sup>37</sup>

The sound of his favourite tune played by a military band and the memories it inspired turned the Bonhomme into a hero. The reference to fighting the Austrians on the 'plains of Lombardy' and to the Republic makes it almost certain that the Bonhomme is referring here to Napoleon's Italian campaigns, most likely to the campaign of 1799–1800, perhaps even to the Battle of Marengo (14 June 1800), which plays such an important role in the opera *Tosca*.

<sup>37</sup> '– C'est bien fâcheux, disait le bonhomme à Octave, je n'entends plus mon air, j'aurais volontiers dansé.

– Vous oseriez ... devant le monde! fit Octave avec inquiétude.

– Et pourquoi non? J'ai bien osé d'autres choses sur cet air-là. Tenez, quand je me suis fait soldat, à cause de Jacqueline, vous savez, j'avais à peu près votre âge, et je n'étais certainement pas la valeur en personne. La première fois que je me suis trouvé en face des Autrichiens, dans les plaines de la Lombardie, j'ai joliment regretté ma Bourgogne et le violon du gros Blaise; et si on m'avait offert mon congé, je l'aurais bien accepté. Quand j'ai entendu le premier coup de canon, – c'était un tapage horrible, de la fumée, des cris de mort! – je n'étais pas à mon aise. Notre commandant nous crie: Braves soldats, c'est notre tour! en avant! en avant! C'était justement du côté des canons. Tous mes camarades partent comme s'ils couraient à la fête; moi, je manquais d'enthousiasme. – Mais voilà que la musique d'un régiment qui était en position s'avise justement de jouer mon air ... *Tra deri dera, deri dera*; moi, si doux et si paisible, j'avais à peine entendu la ritournelle, que je me métamorphosai en héros, je devins un vrai lion, il me poussait une crinière, et me voilà en avant de mon escadron, engagé dans une charge avec les cuirassiers autrichiens. Le sabre au poing, jurant, tapant comme un sourd, et fredonnant mon petit air *Tra deri dera, deri dera, la la*, – j'allais comme le diable. – Tout à coup je rencontre sur mon chemin un grand gaillard tout doré, qui tenait un drapeau. *Tra deri*, ça ferait une jolie robe pour Jacqueline, que je me dis, et je lui tombe dessus, *deri dera*. – Je le coupe en deux, – *Tra deri*; – je lui enlève son drapeau, *deri deri*, – Le général m'embrasse, on met mon nom à l'ordre du jour de l'armée ... et la république me fait cadeau d'un sabre d'honneur. *Tra deri dera, la la deri*'. Henri Murger, 'Le Bonhomme Jadis', in Murger, *Scènes de la vie de jeunesse* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1851): 104–5.

The *guinguette* orchestra then begins to play a quadrille based on this tune, and the Bonhomme looks around for someone to dance with. Dragging Octave along with him, he approaches Clarisse, a young woman who works as a teacher in a girls' school on the rue Rochechouart across from the apartment building where the Bonhomme and Octave live. She doesn't want to dance. Suddenly it begins to rain and the outside dance is over. The Bonhomme, Octave and Clarisse take cover and wait a long time for the rain to stop. When the rain stops, the Bonhomme and Octave escort Clarisse back to her building on the rue Rochechouart and help her to convince the concierge to let her in even though it is very late. Octave in particular is very vocal in her behalf. She is grateful. She sends Octave a note of thanks. One day the Bonhomme hears laughter coming from Octave's apartment. Octave has found a mistress and happiness, all because the Bonhomme was inspired by memories conjured by hearing his favourite tune to take Octave to the *guinguettes* of Montmartre. So ends the story in which the dance music of the *guinguettes* serves a dual function: it advances the plot and is the direct cause of the happy dénouement, and the Bonhomme's reaction to the music reveals that although he is actually 65 years old, he is much more of a 20-year-old than his young neighbour.

It was perhaps the centrality of music to the story that inspired Murger to turn it into a one-act *comédie-vaudeville* where the music could be made manifest (meaning that there would have been interpolated *couplets* sung to *airs connus*, as well as the dance music), which he offered to the boulevard theatres in 1850.<sup>38</sup> It was rejected by all of them, but Murger did not give up and submitted *Le Bonhomme Jadis* as a straight play (no *couplets*) to the Comédie-Française which accepted it by 17 August 1851 and gave it its first performance on 21 April 1852.

In turning the story into a play, Murger changed a number of things. There are still three characters. The Bonhomme (who is now 60, not 65) and Octave (who is still 20) remain more or less as they were in the story, but Murger fleshed out the character of the young woman, Clarisse, now a *grisette* called Jacqueline (the name of the Bonhomme's old girlfriend) and given a major role.<sup>39</sup> Murger also changed the plot of the story in which a chance meeting leads to Octave's finding a mistress into the kind of intrigue that was common in *comédies* of this sort: Octave is now secretly in love with Jacqueline, something the Bonhomme learns and manoeuvres to bring the two young people together by inviting them both to his birthday dinner and pretending to seduce Jacqueline himself, rousing Octave's jealousy to the point that he declares his love for Jacqueline. The Bonhomme then facilitates the eventual marriage of Octave and Jacqueline by using his savings to provide her dowry. The setting was still the Bonhomme's apartment, and it is specified that the action takes place in the year 1840 on a Sunday between the hours of 6 p.m. struck by a clock at the beginning, and 8 p.m. struck by a clock at the end. As in the story, this is a time when the *guinguettes* of Montmartre would have been full of dancers, but in the play there could be no visiting the *guinguettes*, since that would have required a change of set. Nor could there be a rainstorm on stage, so the entire act takes place in one set.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Murger offered the play to three boulevard theatres, the Théâtre des Variétés, the Théâtre du Vaudeville, and the Théâtre du Gymnase Dramatique.

<sup>39</sup> The original actors were Jean-Baptiste Provost (1798–1865): Le Bonhomme; Louis-Arsène Delaunay (1826–1903): Octave; Delphine-Éléonore Fix (1831–1864): Jacqueline. Provost would have been 54 years old in 1852. Delaunay was 26 and Fix was 21. The actors were therefore just about the same ages as their characters (60, 20, and 18).

<sup>40</sup> Henri Murger, *Le Bonhomme Jadis* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1852).

But, since hearing dance music was so central to the plot, it is specified that a *guinguette de barrière* is below the apartment building in which the Bonhomme, Octave and Jacqueline all live (the exact location of the building is not given, but the *guinguette* is said to be *en bas*). So instead of music wafting in the windows from the heights of Montmartre, it is now heard from below, and is therefore clear, distinct and diegetic, heard and commented on by the characters a number of times, particularly at the beginning (when the curtain rises) and at the end (when the clock strikes 8 and Octave announces that he is now 20 years old).<sup>41</sup> So although Murger's play for the Comédie-Française could not have the interpolated *couplets* of the *comédie-vaudeville*, it still depended on music heard by the characters and the audience. And it is here that Offenbach enters the picture.

### Offenbach's Incidental Music for *Le Bonhomme Jadis*

Offenbach had been engaged at the music director of the Comédie-Française in October 1850. His duties including supplying overtures, entr'actes, and incidental music when needed for the productions, but also, and more importantly, in reviving the moribund orchestra of the Comédie-Française by expanding its membership and insuring the competence of its musicians and also paying them out of his own salary.<sup>42</sup> Offenbach succeeded in this last task, as was noted in the Press, which marvelled at the new sound of the orchestra.<sup>43</sup>

Since music, in particular orchestral dance music, plays such an important part in *Le Bonhomme Jadis*, it would have fallen to Offenbach to provide the musical numbers. He clearly had composed an overture. By his own admission, he also composed other music for the play.<sup>44</sup> Consultation of the online catalogue of the library of the Comédie-Française, confirmed that the library contained the performing parts for the incidental music to the play.<sup>45</sup>

There are actually two sets of performing parts for *Le Bonhomme Jadis*, both of them in the hands of copyists. They are both titled 'Le Bonhomme Jadis', and contain the same music as regards melody and harmony, but they differ radically in

<sup>41</sup> For instance, Scene 2: 'JADIS. Depuis ce matin, comme tous les jours, il est là à sa croisée, le nez sur sur son papier, et ne levant pas seulement les yeux. (*On entend l'orchestre de la guinguette*). Tiens, on danse là bas. C'est étonnant, je ne peux pas entendre les violons sans sentir des fourmis dans mes jambes'. (Since this morning, as every day, he [Octave] is at his open window, his nose buried in his papers, and never raising his eyes. (*the guinguette orchestra is heard*). Hey, they are dancing down there. It's amazing, I can't listen to those violins without feeling my legs twitch.)

<sup>42</sup> Offenbach's contract required him to hire an orchestra of 20 musicians: 4 first violins, 3 second violins, 1 viola, 1 cello, 2 contrabasses, 1 flute, 2 clarinets, 1 oboe, 1 bassoon, 2 horns, 1 cornet, and to pay any extra musicians that might be needed out his own pocket; see Peter Lamothe, 'Theatre Music in France 1864–1914' (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2008): 24–5, 41–2. For a general discussion of music at the Comédie-Française in the nineteenth century, see Lamothe, 'Theatre Music': 19–58. All Offenbach biographies mention that he provided or composed music for productions at the Comédie-Française, but there has been little discussion of the music itself.

<sup>43</sup> Jean-Claude Yon, *Jacques Offenbach* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000): 100–101.

<sup>44</sup> 'J'écrivis aussi de la musique pour le *Bonhomme Jadis* de Murger' (I also wrote music for *Le Bonhomme Jadis* by Murger), quoted in André Martinet, *Offenbach, sa vie & son oeuvre* (Paris: Dentu, 1887): 13.

<sup>45</sup> Base La Grange <https://comedie-francaise.bibli.fr/>.

orchestration and organization. They also both contain the 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon' *air* that is so prominent in the overture. One (Comédie-Française (CF), Partitions, 6 P4 100) is described in the catalogue as: 'Musique de Jacques Offenbach pour la création à la Comédie-Française du "Bonhomme jadis" de Henri Murger, le 21 avril 1852: 14 parties séparées (cinq sections musicales)' (Music by Jacques Offenbach for the first performance at the Comédie-Française of *Le Bonhomme Jadis* by Henri Murger, 21 April 1852: 14 separate parts (five musical sections)). It contains music for an orchestra consisting of piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet in B-flat, bassoon, horn in F, two trumpets in C, strings, piano and many percussion instruments, requiring two players (*tambour de basque*, triangle, bass drum, cymbals, wood block, timpani, *grelots* [sleighbells] castanets, *caisse claire* [snare drum]), labelled 'Le Bonhomme Jadis, Offenbach' on the cover pages of all the parts. There are five numbers, labelled I–V along with performance directions (rehearsal letters, articulation marks and up-bow and down-bow signs added in pencil in the strings), but no cue lines relating the music to the play. Number V of this set is a full rendition of the 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon' *air*.

Another set of parts (CF, Partitions, 6 P4 101) is described in the catalogue as: 'Musique de [compositeur non identifié] pour une reprise à la Comédie-Française du "Bonhomme jadis" de Henri Murger: 4 parties séparées' (Music by [unidentified composer] for a revival at the Comédie-Française of *Le Bonhomme Jadis* by Henri Murger: four separate parts). It contains seven numbers, 1–7, which reproduce the music of the numbers of 6 P4 100 in a different order with repetitions, scored for a string ensemble (violin 1, violin 2, viola, cello, contrabass).<sup>46</sup> No composer is mentioned. Number 6 of this set, is a full rendition of the 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon' *air*. Neither set of parts contains the overture that Keck recorded.

Of these sources, only 6 P4 101 can plausibly be historically associated with Offenbach and with performances of the play at the Comédie-Française during his lifetime. It is copied in a nineteenth-century hand and contains cue lines (lines which are said either immediately before or close to a stage direction indicating that music from the downstairs *guinguette* is heard) and is therefore directly related to a performance of the play in the nineteenth century. And even though it lacks a composer attribution, Offenbach's authorship is confirmed by his own admission and by the overture that Keck recorded, since the overture is comprised almost entirely of two of the musical numbers in 6 P4 101: the 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon' theme (Number 6) followed by the theme of Number 1.

6 P4 100, on the other hand, in spite of the catalogue entry which suggests that it was created for the first performance of *Le Bonhomme Jadis*, dates from late twentieth century, as Roxane Martin has already observed.<sup>47</sup> In fact, these parts are connected to and probably were prepared for *La Comédie des musiciens: trois siècles de musiques au Théâtre-Français*, first performed at the Comédie-Française on 22 December 1987. This event, the brainchild of Michel Frantz, then the music director of the Comédie-Française, and Philippe Rondest, presented music that had been

<sup>46</sup> Number 1=Number I, Number 2=Number III, Number 3=Number II, Number 4=reprise of Number I, Number 5=Number IV, Number 6=Number V, Number 7=reprise of Number I.

<sup>47</sup> Roxane Martin, 'Offenbach à la Comédie-Française', in *Offenbach, musicien européen*, ed. Jean-Claude Yon, Arnold Jacobshagen and Ralf-Olivier Schwarz (Arles : Actes Sud, 2022): 41–54.

composed for the theatre over three centuries. Twenty-four excerpts of incidental music by composers ranging from Lully to Frantz himself were performed by an orchestra assembled and conducted by Frantz. The programme can be found in Frantz's memoirs and also in a CD of the performance.<sup>48</sup> Offenbach's incidental music for *Le Bonhomme Jadis* ended the first part of the concert. The performance on the CD confirms that the parts in 6 P4 100 were used for this event (numbers I–V were played without interruption in the concert). Further, the extant score for the items from *Le Bonhomme Jadis* in this concert is in the same hand that copied the parts.<sup>49</sup> The score and the parts attribute the music to 'Offenbach' but they seem clearly to reflect a modern orchestration of the music found in 6 P4 101 (the nineteenth-century source), including instruments (piano, wood block, sleigh bells) that never appear in any authentic Offenbach orchestration that I know of. The music is 'by' Offenbach in the same way that *Pictures at an Exhibition* in Ravel's orchestration is 'by' Mussorgsky.<sup>50</sup>

As mentioned above, 6 P4 101 contains the music that accompanied performances of *Le Bonhomme Jadis* in the Nineteenth century. But since the play remained in the repertory of the Comédie-Française for a very long time, it cannot be automatically assumed that 6 P4 101 was used at the first performance in 1852.<sup>51</sup> There is, however, some evidence that it was.

Two of the reviews of *Le Bonhomme Jadis* refer specifically to the music at the point in the play where the Bonhomme, inspired by a melody played by the *guinguette* orchestra, recites his military memory (the text in the play repeats almost verbatim the speech in the story). Théophile Gautier, writing in *La Presse* on 3 May 1852, in praising the actors particularly Provost, refers to the staging of this moment:

Provost, Delaunay and Mlle Fix acted to perfection in this pretty skit, which is worth more, even though it lasts barely three-quarters of an hour, than many dramas and comedies in five acts. One can't find an old gent more amiable than Provost: he makes one long to have white hair. What youthful heartfulness, and what vivid communication, when he hears in the distance the violins of the *guinguette* play a tune from his youth, he hums along joyously remembering his love for Jacqueline and his soldierly prowess, because in love and in war it was with this favourite tune that he triumphed.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Bonnafet Tarbouriech and Olivier Bernard, *Michel Frantz, 30 ans de musique à la Comédie-Française* (Paris: Riveneuve éditions, 2015): 159–61. *Trois siècles de Musiques à la Comédie-Française ou 'La Comédie des Musiciens'*, CD: Sofrassion, Paris, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> The score and other materials are preserved in CF, Partitions 6 P4 162. I am very grateful to Jesse Rodin for having examined this for me.

<sup>50</sup> Neither Frantz's memoirs nor the material for the concert mention who produced the orchestration.

<sup>51</sup> I can trace performances of the play in almost every year from 1852 to 1944.

<sup>52</sup> 'Provost, Delaunay et Mlle Fix ont joué en perfection cette jolie bluette qui vaut mieux, bien qu'elle dure à peine trois quarts d'heure, que bien des drames et des comédies en cinq actes. On n'est pas un vieillard plus aimable que Provost: il ferait souhaiter d'avoir des cheveux blancs. Quelle juvénile chaleur de cœur et quelle verve communicative, lorsqu'entendant dans le lointain les violons de la guinguette jouer un air de sa jeunesse, il se fredonne joyeusement en rappelant ses amours avec Jacaqueline et ses prouesses de soldat, car en amour et en guerre c'est sur set air favori qu'il a tromphé'. Théophile Gautier, in *La Presse*, 3 May 1852.

In the *Revue de Paris* Mme A. R. de Beauvoir (Léocadie-Aimée de Beauvoir) refers, as did Gautier, to this point in the play, but in a different context. Like Brisset in the passage quoted earlier, Beauvoir notes that the setting and the action of the play were more fitting for a vaudeville theatre than for the Comédie-Française. She then adds another detail: that it was obvious that at this place in the text a vaudevillian *couplet* set to an *air connu* was intended. But since that could not happen at the Comédie-Française, the problem was finessed by having the actor hum the tune 'while the violins played the tune in the wings' instead.<sup>53</sup>

The point is that both of these reviewers refer specifically to *violins* in the wings playing the tune, with Provost humming along, in other words, they describe the music preserved in 6 P4 101. In fact, a string ensemble (perhaps only one player to a part) hidden in the wings and playing softly (they are often instructed to use mutes), fits the idea of an unseen *guinguette* orchestra which interrupts (or accompanies?) a text which often mentions hearing the violins of that orchestra.

The Appendix to this article presents the melodic lines of the incidental music, taken from the violin 1 of 6 P4 101. The first numbers are the type that could have been heard in a *guinguette*. Number 1 is clearly a waltz and is so labelled. Numbers 2–5 are in standard dance meters (6/8, 2/4). The dances are not easily identified, although Number 5 could be a Polka or a Galop. Number 6 is the 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon' *air*. As 6 P4 101 makes clear, this was to be played at the point where the Bonhomme relates his military memory. 6 P4 101 is also very specific about the way the music is coordinated with the text. The first phrase was apparently played twice, first loudly, then softly: the first time, the Bonhomme listens to the beginning of the melody, the second time, he sings along as the tune continues to the end. Then as he relates the details of his military triumph, short phrases of the piece were to be repeated at specific points in the speech. This makes Number 6 the most extended musical interlude in the play (See Fig. 2. The Appendix reproduces the speech and its music following the directions of 6 P4 101).

The music is marked 'Allegro marziale' and has the 'march' time signature of cut C. This differentiates it from the other numbers, all of which are clearly dances. Anyone who recognized this as a march would also know that marches are not things one dances to. The intertextual meaning of Number 6 (not a dance but a march) connects it with the meaning of the text (Jadis's military memory), but paradoxically not with what he is actually *supposed* to be hearing, which is a dance played by a *guinguette* orchestra.<sup>54</sup>

Whoever created the modern orchestration of 6 P4 100 also recognized that Number 6 was a march, since it is orchestrated for what is essentially a military band: winds, brass, timpani and snare drum, with the contrabass reinforcing the

<sup>53</sup> 'Outre la difficulté de la mansarde, il y en avait encore une plus grave : Provost, chargé de représenter le bonhomme Jadis, devait chanter un couplet ... ô profanation ! – le couplet n'a pas été chanté, mais déclamé, fredonné, mimé avec un art incomparable par cet habile comédien, tandis que les violons disaient le chant dans la coulisse ... ' (Besides the difficulty caused by the attic apartment, there was a more serious one: Provost, tasked with playing the Bonhomme Jadis, was supposed to sing a *couplet* ... O Profanation! – the *couplet* was not sung, but was declaimed, hummed, mimed with incomparable art by this able actor, while the violins played the tune in the wings.) *Revue de Paris*, May 1852, 172–3.

<sup>54</sup> It also contradicts the printed stage directions which state that the air is played by a solo oboe. But the audience would not know that.



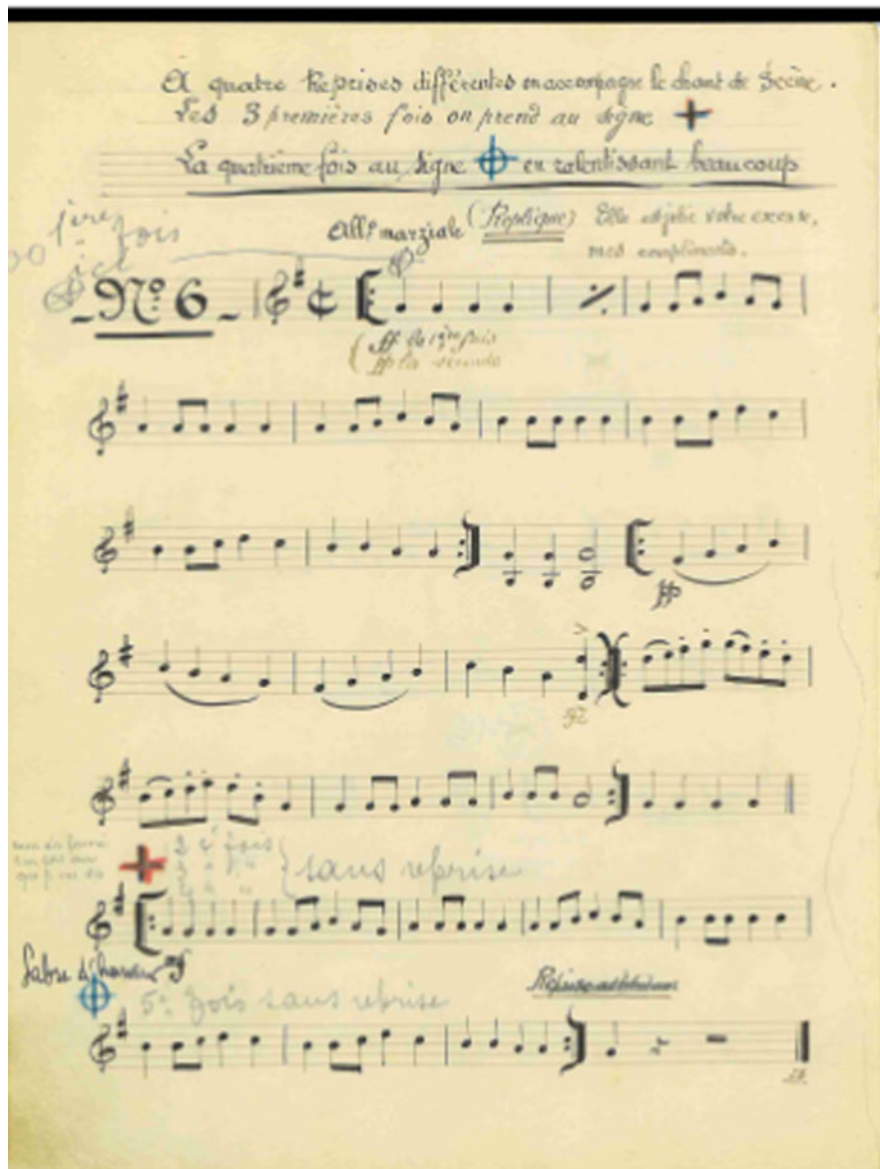


Fig. 2 6 P4 101, Number 6, Violin 1 ©Coll. Comédie-Française

bass line (no other strings or piano). Further, the key in 6 P4 100 is A-flat major while the key in 6 P4 101 is G major (band music tends to be in flat keys).<sup>55</sup> And this, the tune presented in the context of a military memory in the play and represented as a military march in 6 P4 101 and 6 P4 100, gave me the answer to my

<sup>55</sup> In fact, Number V is connected directly to the preceding Number IV. Number IV is in G major and ends on the pitch G. Number V, although in A-flat major, begins with repeated g's which modulate suddenly to A-flat.

de la Marche des Bostangis. . . . .	4039
de la Marche des deux Avars, ou la garde passe, il est minuit. . . . .	925
de la Marche des Fêtes d'Eleusis, ou marcher au plaisir. . . . .	4474
de la Marche des Mariages samnites, ou Dieu d'amour. . . . .	944
de la Marche du Calife de Bagdad. . . . .	4472
de la Marche de Fernand Cortez. . . . .	4963
de la Marche d'Aline. . . . .	4533
de la Marche du roi de Prusse, ou à pied comme à cheval. . . . .	687
de la Marche nouvelle des Gardes-du-corps. . . . .	4110
de la Marche nouvelle des Mousquetaires. . . . .	4104
de la Marche suisse. . . . .	4740
de la Marche villageoise du Maçon (roy. Quelle belle journée). . . . .	
de la Maréchale (contredanse), ou pourquoi cet air sévère?. . . . .	467
du Mariage de l'Amour, ou Cupidon, las de ses folies. . . . .	751
de Marianne (roy. Suzon sortait de son village). . . . .	
de la Marseillaise (roy. allons, enfants de la patrie). . . . .	
de Ma tante Urlurette (roy. si j'avais autant d'écus). . . . .	
des Matines de Cythère (roy. chantons les matines de Cythère). . . . .	
des Matines du frère Jacques, ou frère Jacques, dormez-vous?. . . . .	726

Fig. 3 Index of the fourth edition of the *Clé du caveau* containing airs named after marches Bibliothèque nationale de France

intertextual question about the origin of 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon'. In fact, in a true instance of a characteristic of intertextuality described by Burkholder as existing 'outside of history', where a listener 'may notice intertextual relationships between pieces whose composers were unaware of each other, or may hear pieces as in conversation with each other and derive meaning and fresh insights from that dialogue irrespective of chronology or influence', it was the non-Offenbach twentieth-century orchestration for military band that made me recognize the tune as a military march and really gave me my answer.<sup>56</sup>

### Offenbach the Memory Man: Problem Solved

Did Offenbach *compose* the 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon' *air* as a military march or was it instead a *real* military march, not a new composition? It turns out that the *Clé du caveau* has a number of *airs* that are identified as marches. They are all listed in one of the indexes of the fourth edition. One of the marches is titled *La Marche suisse* (Caveau 1740; see Fig. 3).

Caveau 1740 turns out to be the melody I knew as 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon', the melody used by Offenbach, presented here in the same key (F Major) as Number 21 of *Ohé, les p'tits agneaux!* (See Ex. 5 and Fig. 4). 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon' was actually the *Marche suisse*. It was a *real air connu*. Offenbach did not compose it, but merely harmonized and orchestrated it. He was in effect acting here as the 'memory man' of Balzac's trio of *comédie-vaudeville* authors, finding an appropriate *air connu* to be 'inserted into the situation', the situation being one which required an 'old tune' which also could serve as a march played by a military band, in what Mme de Beauvoir recognized as a place that called for an intertextual vaudevillian *couplet*. In fact, Offenbach might very well have done exactly

<sup>56</sup> Burkholder, 'Making Old Music New', 79.

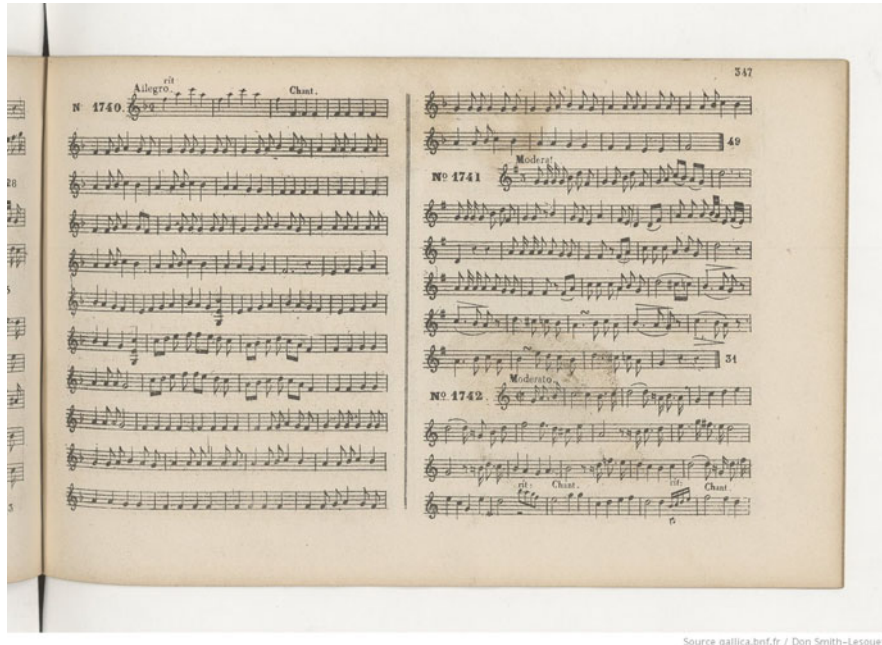


Fig. 4 Number 1740 of the *Clé du caveau* Bibliothèque nationale de France

what I did: consulted the *Clé du caveau*, looked in the index for marches and picked one that he liked, Caveau 1740. Along with Balzac, he knew how *comédies-vaudevilles* were created.<sup>57</sup> And because he did, he solved my problem of identification; the nineteenth century spoke directly to the twenty-first.

### The air called *La Marche suisse*

In the fourth edition of the *Clé du caveau*, Pierre Capelle, the editor, attempts to identify the original sources of the 2,350 *airs* in the publication.<sup>58</sup> He often succeeds in identifying the actual composers of the *airs*, but sometimes he only refers to a *comédie-vaudeville* where the *air* appears, perhaps for the first time. This is what happens for Caveau 1740 which is identified as 'Air d'une marche suisse employé dans *L'Intrigue impromptu vaudeville*'. This is a reference to the appearance of Caveau 1740 in *L'Intrigue impromptu ou l'n'y a plus d'enfants, Comédie-Vaudeville en un acte* by Joseph Marie Armand, Michel Dieulafoy and Nicolas Gersin, first performed at the Théâtre du Vaudeville on 4 November 1809, Scène V: *Air d'une marche suisse*. The context is a description of a horse race, and the long and irregular lyric (65 lines), which must have been set to the already existing melody of the *Marche suisse* evokes the excitement of the occasion,

<sup>57</sup> In 1839 Offenbach had collaborated on the *comédie-vaudeville*, *Pascal et Chambord*, first performed at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal on 3 February 1839, but the music he provided was all new.

<sup>58</sup> *Table pour connaître les noms des compositeurs dont les airs sont classés dans ce recueil, et celui des ouvrages auxquels ils appartiennent*, 270–95.

**Table 1** Instances of the *marche suisse* in *comédies-vaudevilles*, 1809–1843

Year	Title
1809	<i>L'Intrigue impromptu ou l' n'y a plus d'enfants</i> , <i>Comédie-Vaudeville en un acte</i> by Joseph Marie Armand, Michel Dieulafoy and Nicolas Gersin, first performed at the Théâtre du Vaudeville on 4 November 1809. Scène V: Air d'une marche suisse ('Tran, tran, tran, tran')
1819	<i>La Fée des arts ou le sultan de Cachemire</i> , <i>Folie féerie, Vaudeville en un acte</i> , by Gabriel de Lurieu and Armand d'Artois, first performed at the Théâtre du Vaudeville on 2 November 1819. Scène XII: Air: Marche suisse ('Chût! chût, chût, chût!')
1819	<i>Le Mariage à la Hussarde ou une nuit de printemps</i> , <i>Comédie en un acte et en prose, mêlée de vaudevilles</i> , by Armand d'Artois, W. Lafontaine and Emmanuel Théaulon, first performed at the Théâtre des Variétés on 7 June 1819. Scène VI: Air: Une marche suisse ('Tron, tron, tron, tron')
1821	<i>Le Baptême de village ou le parrain de circonstance</i> , <i>Vaudeville en un acte à l'occasion du baptême de S. A. R. Monseigneur le Duc de Bordeaux</i> , by Michel Joseph Gentil de Chavignac, Fulgence [J. D. F. de Bury], Paul Ledoux and Ramond de la Croisette, first performed at the Théâtre du Vaudeville on 30 April 1821. Scène IX: Air: Marche suisse ('La, la, la, la!')
1821	<i>Fifi Jobard, à la représentation d'Ismaïl et Maryam</i> , <i>Pot-pourri: refers to Ismaïl et Maryam, ou l'arabe et la chrétienne, pièce en trois actes à grand spectacle</i> by Frédéric Dupetit-Méré and **** [Isadore Justin Séverin Taylor], music by Alexandre Piccini, divertissement by Reynauzi, first performed at the opening of the Théâtre du Panorama Dramatique on 14 April 1821. Air: Marche suisse ('Crim! crim! crim! crim!')
1822	<i>Le Comédien de Paris ou l'assaut de travestissements</i> , <i>Vaudeville en un acte</i> , by Armand d'Artois and Eugène de la Merlière, first performed at the Théâtre des Variétés on 12 January 1822: Scène X: Air connu [the structure of the lyric makes it clear that the <i>air connu</i> is <i>La Marche suisse</i> ] ('Écoutez bien ça')
1822	<i>Adieu la Chaussée-d'Antin</i> , <i>Comédie en un acte, mêlée de couplets</i> , by Hypolite Magnien and E. F. Varez, first performed at the Théâtre de L'Ambigu-Comique on 17 October 1822. Scène VI: Air: Marche suisse ('Din, din, din, din, din, din, din')
1823	<i>La Caserne ou le changement de garnison</i> , <i>Tableau militaire en un acte, mêlé de couplets</i> , by Paul Ledoux and Gabriel Alexandre Belle, first performed at the Théâtre du Vaudeville on 3 March 1823. Scène XI: Air: Marche suisse ('Plan, plan, plan, plan')
1823	<i>Stanislas ou la suite de Michel et Christine</i> , <i>Comédie-Vaudeville en un acte</i> , by Auguste le Poitevin de Saint-Alme and Etienne Arago, first performed at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique on 5 June 1823. Scène XVII: Air de la Marche Suisse ('Tran, tran, tran')
1824	<i>Le Retour du régiment ou La Saint-Louis</i> , <i>Comédie en un acte, mêlée de couplets</i> , by Paul Ledoux, first performed at the Théâtre du Gymnase-Dramatique on 24 August 1824. Scène VII: Air: Marche suisse ('Plan, plan, plan, plan')
1828	<i>Le Remplaçant ou l'orphelin</i> , <i>Tableau militaire en deux parties et à grand spectacle, mêlé de chant, combats, marches, évolutions, etc.</i> by *** and A.-R. Domergue, first performed at the Théâtre des jeunes acteurs de M. Comte on 30 April 1828. Deuxième Tableau/ Scène XXI: Air d'une marche suisse ('Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon!')
1836	<i>La Belle Écaillère</i> , <i>Drame-Vaudeville en trois actes</i> , by Gabriel de Lurieu and Emmanuel Théaulon, first performed at the Théâtre de la Gaîté on 27 September 1836. Acte II/ Scène V: XI: Air d'une Marche suisse ('Gai, gai, gai, gai, gai, gai, gai')
1837	<i>La Partie des ânes, ou une journée à Montmorency</i> , <i>Tableau-Vaudeville en un acte</i> , by Gabriel de Lurieu, first performed at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Antoine on 6 July 1837. Scène XII: Air de la marche suisse ('Tron, tron, tron')

(Continued)



Table 1 Continued

Year	Title
1837	<i>Mathieu Laensberg est un menteur, Revue, en un acte, mêlée de couplets</i> , by Clairville [Louis François Nicolae], first performed at the Théâtre de L'Ambigu-Comique on 26 December 1837. Scène XII: Air de la marche suisse ('La victoire étant le prix')
1843	<i>Le Cadet de Famille ou l'intrigue impromptu, Comédie-Vaudeville en un acte</i> , by Édouard Lemaitre, first performed at the Théâtre du Gymnase-Dramatique on 30 December 1843. Scène IV: Air d'une marche suisse (Mariage à la Hussard) ('Tran, tran, tran, tran'=lyrics of <i>L'Intrigue impromptu</i> )

through the use of nonsense syllables ('tran, tran', 'flon, flon', etc.); the similarity of a wild horse race to a cavalry charge may have been what inspired the choice of an *air* with military associations. This lyric appears in the fourth edition of the *Clé du caveau* as the model for lyrics to be set to Caveau 1740 and is clearly the model for the lyric for 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon' in *Ohé! les p'tits agneaux!*<sup>59</sup>

Searching for 'Air: marche suisse' on Google and other search engines turned up a number of other *comédies-vaudevilles* produced between 1809 and 1843 that employ the *air*, the lyrics in each occasion clearly modelled on the lyric of *L'Intrigue impromptu*, most beginning with nonsense syllables (see Table 1).

This list is not exhaustive, but it certainly points to the popularity of the *air*. It clearly had become current by 1809, although in fact it is not in the first edition of the *Clé du caveau* (1811) which only lists 891 *airs*, nor is it in the second edition of 1816 which expands the number to 1500. The first appearance of the *air* in the *Clé* occurs in the third edition of 1827 which expands the number of *airs* to 2,050, and it is in all subsequent editions. The list also shows that the *air* had been used at the Théâtre des Variétés as early as 1819 and may also provide the answer to the question of why the Variétés productions of the 1850s refer to the *Marche suisse* as 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon'. Those words are the first words of the lyric set to the *Marche suisse* in *Le Remplaçant, ou l'orphelin*, first performed in 1828. It is possible that the first time the *air* was given the 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon' title at the Variétés the authors of that *comédie-vaudeville* were referring to the first words of the lyric in the 1828 *Tableau militaire*. The *air* is always associated with a long descriptive lyric, what was known as a *couplet de facture*. Further, the lyric usually describes something exciting (hence, the use of nonsense syllables). This is certainly the case of the horse race related in *L'Intrigue impromptu*, and also in *Ohé! Les p'tits agneaux!* where the lyric of Number 21 describes the passage of time in wine production, from the awakening of the vines in the spring to the potentially destructive storms of the summer to the joyous harvest (*vendange*) in the fall (see Ex. 5). So even if the actual source of the *air* remains a mystery, its intertextual meaning established by its first appearance in a *comédie-vaudeville* (something exciting is happening and it will take a long time to relate it) seems to have been recognized by the creators of other *comédies-vaudevilles*. And that is what Offenbach also recognized when he chose Caveau 1740 to accompany the description of an infantry charge (see Appendix). This is what the discovery of the true *timbre* of the *air* reveals.

<sup>59</sup> *Clé du caveau*, fourth edition, 241.

*Airs connus and Offenbach's Incidental Music for Le Bonhomme Jadis*

Since Offenbach, acting as the memory man, employed a known *air* for Number 6 of 6 P4 101, did he similarly use *airs* for the other musical interpolations? This is another one of those questions that are not easy to answer, but there is some evidence to suggest that the waltz of Number 1, the music that according to 6 P4 101 both opens and closes the play (and is repeated during the play as well – see Appendix), was in fact an original composition. Not that I could find it among the waltzes that Offenbach published. The evidence is of a different nature: that the melody turns up in a work Offenbach composed a year after the first performance of *Le Bonhomme Jadis*.

On 28 October 1853, Offenbach's *opéra comique* *Pépito* was premiered at the Théâtre des Variétés. I have dealt with the historical circumstances of this production elsewhere.<sup>60</sup> In a recent study, I point to places in the score where Offenbach reused or originally intended to reuse music that he had previously composed.<sup>61</sup> Considering that, it may be more than a coincidence that the opening phrase of Number 1 of 6 P4 101 seems to appear in a section of the long ensemble which is Number 5 of the *Pépito* score (see Ex. 6).

bonhomme jadis, Number 1/1

*p*

Pépito, Number 5 beginning at bar 101, transposed from E major to D major

*pp*

Ex. 6 Comparison of 6 P4 101, Number 1 and an excerpt from Number 5 of *Pépito*

Since *airs connus* were not a part of the music of *Pépito*, this may be another self-quotation, although whether it is deliberate or accidental is not clear. If so, it would suggest that the Numbers 1–5 of 6 P4 101 are original compositions, Offenbach employing an *air connu* only where the text of the play called for an *air connu*.

### Conclusion

In a recent article about intertextuality, Paulo F. de Castro writes that the word text: 'derives from the Latin *textus* (or the verb *texere*, meaning 'to weave'), thus pointing us back to the image of the network, the web and the tissue (the *textile*) rather than the inscription'.<sup>62</sup> I suggest that this article discusses such an intertextual web or

<sup>60</sup> Richard Sherr, 'Offenbach, *Pépito* and the Théâtre des Variétés: Politics and Genre in the First Year of the Second Empire', *The Cambridge Opera Journal* 32 (2020): 154–86.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Sherr, 'Allusions musicales dissimulées et supprimées dans *Pépito*', in *Offenbach, musicien européen*, 69–93.

<sup>62</sup> Paulo F. de Castro, 'Transtextuality According to Gérard Genette – and Beyond', in *Intertextuality in Music*, 131–44 at 131.



network whose disparate strands (*couplets* in *comédie-vaudevilles*, instrumental incidental music for a play) are knit together by the thread of musical memory. Musical memory was intrinsic to the way audiences experienced the *airs connus* in *comédies-vaudevilles*. The satire of *Où peut-on être mieux* depended on the audience remembering the words and context of the source *air*. My memory of 'Bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon, bon' allowed me to recognize its quotation in the Overture to *Le Bonhomme Jadis*. In the story and play, the Bonhomme Jadis's memory of a particular tune inspires him to relate a military anecdote. Offenbach, the 'memory man' chose the *Marche suisse* to accompany the Bonhomme's military memory and thus solved my problem. And this in turn was the result of Murger's decision, inspired by his memories of hearing the music of the *guinguettes* of Montmartre, to include that music in his story and play. The theatrical world of Paris in the nineteenth century was truly an intertextual *lieu de mémoire*.<sup>63</sup>

### A Note on the Overture to *Le Bonhomme Jadis*

The score of the overture to *Le Bonhomme Jadis* is the only source of the music for the play that is in Offenbach's hand, yet the overture is not in the music sources preserved in the library of the Comédie-Française (6 P4 101 and its derivative 6 P4 100). This lacuna could be explained in a number of ways. First, if the parts of 6 P4 101 were really used by an off-stage ensemble, then perhaps the players were already in place when the performance began and did not participate in the overture. Second, Offenbach could have removed the material for the overture when he left the Comédie-Française in 1855. It is also possible that the overture was created for another occasion in which *Le Bonhomme Jadis* was performed. On 25 April 1852 (four days after the premiere of *Le Bonhomme Jadis*), Offenbach presented his annual benefit concert in the Salle Herz. The advertisement announcing this concert that appeared in *Le Ménestrel* on 18 April 1852 reported that it would include among other things, a new play written expressly for the occasion by Henri Murger, to be performed by actresses from the Comédie-Française. On 23 April 1852, *Le Siècle* reported that *Le Bonhomme Jadis* had replaced the new play by Murger. The complete programme is not given in the Press reports but it is mentioned that along with *Le Bonhomme Jadis* performed by the original cast: Jean-Baptiste Provost, Louis-Arsène Delaunay and Delphine Fix, the audience would hear Offenbach's work for six cellos and contrabass (*Reminiscences à 'Robert le Diable' de Giacomo Meyerbeer*), comic songs performed by Pierre-Thomas Levassor from the troupe of the Théâtre du Palais-Royal and a recitation of Arsène Houssaye's *Les Larmes de Jacqueline* by Delphine Fix. The reviews of the actual concert are not very informative, but they do mention the novelty of the performance of *Le Bonhomme Jadis* and Fix's recitation.

Neither the announcements of the concerts nor the reviews mention the presence of an orchestra. Yet it would have been impossible to perform *Le Bonhomme Jadis* without the music which was so central to the action. That means at the very least a string ensemble to perform the music in 6 P4 101. But Offenbach may also have recruited the full orchestra of the Comédie-Française, which he not only led but also paid, to take part in his benefit. Perhaps this was also when he composed the overture that Keck recorded. On the other hand, we

<sup>63</sup> See Pierre Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de mémoire, sous la direction de Pierre Nora* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–92).

know from Brisset's review quoted at the beginning of this essay, that there was an overture played at the first performance. The problem is that his description of it as consisting of variations on Caveau 99 does not fit the music of the overture we have. Again, there could be a simple explanation: Brisset recognized an *air connu* in the overture but could not remember its real Caveau number and chose one at random. On the other hand, maybe he really did hear Caveau 99, which would mean that an overture different from the one we have which has left no trace in the sources was performed.

## Appendix

The Music of *Le Bonhomme Jadis* as presented in CF, 6 P4 101

### Number 1

Time signature: 3/4

Designation in 6 P4 101: Valse

Key: D major

Cue line in 6 P4 101: Il ne lève seulement pas les yeux



Appendix Ex. 1 Melody of Number 1 taken from the Vn1 of P 64 101

### Number 2

Time signature: 6/8

Designation in 6 P4 101: Allegro

Key: D major

Cue line in 6 P4 101: Voici un dossier que je dois porter ce soir même



Appendix Ex. 2 Melody of Number 2 taken from Vn1 of 6 P4 101

### Number 3

Time signature: 6/8

Designation in 6 P4 101: Allegro

Key: G major

Cue line in 6 P4 101: La raison, La raison



Appendix Ex. 3 Melody of Number 3 taken from Vn1 of 6 P4 101

### Number 4

Time signature: 3/4

Designation in 6 P4 101: Valse

Key: D major

Cue line in 6 P4 101: Ton amoureux te ferait un scène

Appendix Ex. 1 is repeated

### Number 5

Time signature: 2/4

Designation in 6 P4 101: Allegro vivo

Key: G major

Cue line in 6 P4 101: A nos vingt ans, à nos vingt ans, Ah! bon vin de mon pays



Appendix Ex. 4 Melody of Number 5 taken from Vn1 of 6 P4 101

### Number 6

Designation in 6 P4 101: Allegro marziale. A quatre Reprises différentes on accompagne le chant de scène. Les 3 premières fois on prend au signe + La quatrième fois au signe ⊕ en ralentissant beaucoup. (Four different repeats accompany the singing on stage. For the first three, go to the sign +. For the fourth, go to the sign ⊕, really slowing down). See Figure 2.

Key: G major

Time signature:  $\phi$

Cue lines in 6 P4 101: Elle est jolie votre excuse, mes compliments; Mon air favori; Mon petit air; Que je me dis; Sabre d'honneur

Context: Scene XIV

JADIS, *Elle est jolie votre excuse, mes compliments (L'orchestre se tait pour laisser entendre un solo de haut-bois qui joue un vieil air. Le Bonhomme Jadis lève la tête et dresse l'oreille. Octave et Jacqueline vont se parler mais le bonhomme Jadis les separe).* Chut, chut. Taisez-vous, laissez-moi entendre. LES DEUX JEUNES GENS, Qu'y a-t-il donc?<sup>64</sup>



#### Appendix Ex. 5 Beginning of the Melody of Number 6 from the Vn1 of 6 P4 101

JADIS, *suivant le measure de l'air en inclinant la tête à droit et à gauche. Tra déri, déra*<sup>65</sup>

#### Appendix Ex. 5a The Entire Melody of Number 6 from the Vn1 of 6 P4 101

<sup>64</sup> JADIS, Your excuse is a pretty one, my compliments (*The orchestra pauses to allow an oboe solo playing an old tune. The Bonhomme Jadis raises his head and listens. Octave and Jacqueline want to talk to each other, but the Bonhomme Jadis separates them.*) Shh, shh. Be quiet, let me listen. THE TWO YOUNG PEOPLE, What is the matter?

<sup>65</sup> JADIS, *singing along and moving his head from right to left. Tra déri, déra*

JADIS, *Tra déri déri dera* ... Ah! le bon musicien, *tradéri*. Je vais vous dire, mes enfants, j'ai beaucoup aimé sur cet air-là, autrefois—et rien que de l'entendre, ça me donne des envies de vous planter là et d'aller danser avec les autres. JACQUELINE, Quoi! monsieur Jadis—vous oseriez sortir avec cet habit là? OCTAVE, Devant tout le monde? JADIS, J'ai osé bien d'autres choses sur cet air-là. Tenez, quand je me suis fait soldat, (*A Octave. En montrant Jacqueline*) pas celle là ... l'autre, ma Jacqueline à moi (*Il indique le portrait.*) j'avais à peu près votre âge, et je n'étais certainement pas la valeur en personne ... Aussi la première fois que je me suis trouvé en face des Autrichiennes, dans les plaines de Lombardie, j'ai joliment regretté ma Bourgogne et le violon du gros Blaise ... Tout à coup, notre commandant nous crie: Braves soldats, c'est notre tour; en avant! ... En avant, c'était du côté des canons. Moi, je manquais d'enthousiasme ... mais, voilà que la musique d'un régiment qui était en position s'avise de jouer mon air favori,<sup>66</sup>



Appendix Ex. 5b Ending of Ex. 5a

Moi, si doux, si paisible, il me semble que je reçois un coup de fouet. Je me métamorphose en lion. Les camarades partent au galop en criant: Vive la République! Je les suis en criant: Vive Jacqueline! Et nous entrons dans les rangs ennemis comme des boulets vivants..Moi, j'allais le diable, le sabre au point tapant comme un sourd et fredonnant mon petit air: *tra déri déri dera*<sup>67</sup>

Appendix Ex. 5b is repeated

Tout à coup je rencontre sur mon chemin un grand gaillard tout doré, qui tenait un drapeau. Ça ferait une belle robe pour Jacqueline, que je me dis, et *tra déri*<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> JADIS, *Tra déri déri dera* ... Ah! such a good performer, *tradéri* ... I tell you, my children, I really liked that tune in the past – and just hearing it makes my want to abandon you and go dancing with the others. JACQUELINE, What! monsieur Jadis ... you would dare to show yourself in that outfit? OCTAVE, In front of everybody? JADIS, I dared to do other things when I heard that tune. Listen, when I was a soldier, because of Jacqueline, (*to Octave, pointing to Jacqueline.*) not that one ... the other, my Jacqueline (*He points to the portrait*), I was more-or-less your age, and I certainly was not a paragon of valour. Thus, the first time that I found myself facing the Austrians on the plains of Lombardy, I really regretted my native Burgundy and the violin of Big Blaise. Suddenly our commander shouted: Brave soldiers, it is our turn; Charge! ... the charge was directly at the canons, as for me, I was not enthusiastic ... but lo and behold, the band of the regiment that was already in position decided to play my favourite tune *tra déri déri dera*.

<sup>67</sup> Me, so pliant, so peaceful, I felt as if I had received the lash of a whip. I turned into a lion. My comrades charged at full speed shouting: Long Live the Republic! I followed them shouting: Long Live Jacqueline! And we struck our enemies like living bullets. Me, I charged like the devil, my sabre raised, thundering away and singing my little tune: *tra déri dera dera*.

<sup>68</sup> JADIS, All of sudden I come across a big guy in full uniform carrying a banner. That would make a pretty dress for Jacqueline, I said to myself, and *tra déri*.

Appendix Ex. 5b is repeated

Je tombe sur l'Autrichien *déri déra*, je le coupe en deux,—*tra déri déri* ... je lui enlève son drapeau, *deri déra*. Le général m'embrasse, on met mon nom à l'ordre du jour de l'armée... et la République me fait cadeau d'un sabre d'honneur, *tra déri déra*, *la la*.<sup>69</sup>



Appendix Ex. 5c Final Bars of Ex. 5a

### Number 7

Time signature: 3/4

Designation in 6 P4 101: Valse

Key: D major

Cue line in 6 P4 101: J'ai vingt ans (Au son de la cloche)

Appendix Ex. 1 is repeated

<sup>69</sup> I fell upon the Austrian *déri déra*, I cut him in two *tra déri déri* ... I took his banner from him, *déri déra*. The general embraced me, my name was entered in the army's order of the day, and the Republic awarded me a sabre d'honneur *tra déri déra*, *la la*.