

Crafting Faces and Navigating the Politics of Royal Spectacle: A Mask Maker in Seventeenth-Century Paris¹

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On 12 April 1677, Henri Guichard, an architect and entrepreneur, was permitted to return to his residence in Paris after three years of imprisonment in the Conciergerie. He had been acquitted of the accusation of trying to murder his rival Jean-Baptiste Lully with arsenic in January 1675. Although Guichard, the former *protégé* of the Duke of Orléans, could have lodged a formal complaint against Lully, a naturalized French composer and then the director of the Royal Academy of Music, he soon fled to Spain in 1679, leaving the Florentine as one of the most powerful and wealthy musicians of his time until his death in 1687.

This bitter rivalry between Lully and Guichard, especially the dramatic poisoning plot, is well-known to scholars of early modern French music, theater, and performance culture.² These scholars unanimously choose to focus on Lully and his conflicts with Guichard. It is a reasonable and justifiable choice, given the composer's significant impact

¹ I would like to thank my advisor Clare H. Crowston, who helped me conceptualize this article and refine my arguments. I also want to thank Jeffrey Merrick for his encouragement and insightful comments on the article. I benefited enormously from them.

² In his classic study of seventeenth-century French music, Robert M. Isherwood recounts the animosity between the two figures through a political lens. More recently, Victoria Johnson offers a general account of the conflicts between these two entrepreneurs over the privilege to produce French operas. John S. Powell also analyzes the episode. He suggests that Lully's success in his struggle with Guichard eventually led to the reorganization of the public theaters in Paris and the cooperation, if not without conflicts, between his new Academy and the Comédie-Française founded in 1680, advancing the development of French opera in the late seventeenth century. The most thorough analysis is found in a recent biography of Lully by the French historian and musicologist Jérôme de La Gorce. Drawing on research on early modern French performing arts and newly uncovered archival materials, La Gorce presents a meticulous and detailed account of the conflict between Lully and Guichard and reveals, albeit still briefly, the involvement of an artisan named Jacques Ducreux in the poisoning scheme and the relationship between Lully and Ducreux. See Robert M. Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King: France in the Seventeenth Century* (Cornell University Press, 1973); Victoria Johnson, *Backstage at the Revolution: How the Royal Paris Opera Survived the End of the Old Regime* (The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 113-120; John S. Powell, *Music and Theatre in France, 1600-1680* (Oxford University Press, 2000); and Jérôme de La Gorce, *Jean-Baptiste Lully* (Fayard, 2002).

on French baroque music. However, it inadvertently neglects lesser-known figures, the so-called supporting actors/actresses in the theater industry, whose crucial role in the incident has been overlooked.

This article re-directs the spotlight from Lully and Guichard to Jacques Ducreux, a mask maker who operated his workshop in Paris and whose crucial role in the alleged poisoning plot against Lully has been overshadowed by this focus on political and cultural elites. It investigates why an artisan became entangled in the web of political intrigues at Versailles and was vehemently denounced by Guichard as a “miserable calumniator,” a “wicked maker of silly tales,” an “emissary of Baptiste,” and a “henchman of his debaucheries.”³

By investigating Ducreux’s deep involvement in the conflict between Lully and Guichard, this article also sheds light on mask makers, an artisanal group that has been neglected by scholars of early modern France. In doing so, this article contributes to the existing scholarship on the guild world by Steven L. Kaplan, James Farr, and Clare H. Crowston, which focuses on corporate identities, formal apprenticeship and mastership processes, and efforts to impose guild monopolies. In particular, Kaplan argues that a guild master’s place in the social taxonomy was defined by his mastership and that the social significance of mastership surpassed its economic interests and commercial rights. As Kaplan suggests, once the artisan attained membership in the guild, he was conferred upon a “corporate social identity,” which placed him on a rung, albeit a modest one, on the Great Chain of Being that linked the king to his subjects.⁴ A closer examination of Ducreux’s professional career, however, challenges this understanding of artisanal identities. Unlike many artisans of his time, Ducreux never joined a Parisian guild. Thanks to the privileges endowed by Louis XIV and, more importantly, extended by his direct patron and protector Lully, he also engaged in multiple professions. These activities—ranging from collecting tickets and selling beverages at the Opéra to crafting masks and selling his goods to the troupes of Molière and Lully—transcended typical artisanal work.

³ Guichard’s original words—“misérable calomniateur,” “méchant faiseur de sots contes,” “émisnaire de Baptiste,” and “le supost de ses débauches”—can be found in his reproach against Ducreux. See *Requête d’inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard, Intendant general des Bastimens de Son Altesse Royale, Monsieur, contre Jean-Baptiste Lully, faux accusateur, Sebastien Aubry, Marie Aubry, Jacques du Creux, Pierre Huguenet, faux témoins, & autres complices* (hereafter *Requête d’inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*) (Paris, 1676), part 2, 32-33.

⁴ Steven L. Kaplan, “Social Classification and Representation in the Corporate World of Eighteenth-Century France: Turgot’s Carnival,” in *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice*, eds. Steven L. Kaplan and Cynthia Koepp (Cornell University Press, 1986), 176-228. Other historians hold a different opinion. Simona Cerutti, for example, argues that artisans joined primarily for family-related considerations and economic benefits that guild membership could provide. See Simona Cerutti, *La Ville et les métiers: Naissance d’un langage corporatif (Turin 17^e-18^e siècle)* (Editions de l’Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1990).

By examining Ducreux's professional career as a non-guild, privileged artisan, his self-identification that defied clear categorization, and his professional and personal associations with Lully, this article demonstrates how artisanal identity in Old Regime France could be constructed outside of guild membership, thereby adding a more nuanced dimension to our understanding of the artisanal world.

The Mask Maker

Jacques Ducreux was an artisan, who operated his workshop located on the Pont Notre-Dame in central Paris during the late seventeenth century.⁵ Renowned for its vibrant art market before the demolition of its trading houses in 1786, the bridge was a bustling hub for a multitude of artisans, artists, and art dealers, including notable figures such as Edmé-François Gersaint and Jean-Antoine Watteau.⁶ His name is relatively unknown to modern scholars when compared with figures like Rose Bertin, the *marchande de modes* to Marie Antoinette, and other prominent artisans and merchants in Old Regime France.⁷ To his contemporaries, however, Ducreux was recognized as one of the leading mask makers (*faiseurs de masques* in French) in the capital. For example, in a 1692 tourism manual entitled *Le livre commode des adresses de Paris*, the author Nicolas de Blegny presents his readers with a list of renowned mask makers, with “sieurs du Creux” —Jacques Ducreux and his sons—highlighted at the top.⁸

Apparently an astute and successful entrepreneur, Ducreux must have well understood the interconnections between Paris and Versailles, with the influences of the royal court dictating taste, appearances, and fashion trends. The capital city demanded an

⁵ According to Guillaume Glorieux, Ducreux's family workshop, situated at one end of the Pont Notre-Dame where the king's banner (*la bannière royale*) stood, was apartment number 4, facing north and close to the right bank of the Seine River. See Guillaume Glorieux, *A l'enseigne de Gersaint: Edme-François Gersaint, marchand d'art sur le pont Notre-Dame (1694-1750)* (Champ Vallon, 2002), 68.

⁶ On the Pont Notre-Dame, see, for example, Mickaël Szanto, “The Pont Notre-Dame, Heart of the Picture Trade in France (Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries),” in eds, Neil de Marchi and Sophie Raux, *Moving Pictures: Intra-European Trade in Images, 16th-18th Centuries* (Brepols Publishers n.v., 2014), 77-91. For an interdisciplinary effort to reconstruct the shops on Pont Notre-Dame, see Sophie Raux, “Virtual Explorations of an 18th-Century Art Market Space: Gersaint, Watteau, and the Pont Notre-Dame,” in *Journal18*, no. 5 (2018), accessed 27 March 2022, <https://www.journal18.org/2542>.

⁷ For Rose Bertin and *marchandes de modes*, see Clare H. Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France* (Duke University Press, 2003).

⁸ Nicolas de Blegny (writing under the pseudonym Abraham du Pradel), *Le livre commode des adresses de Paris pour 1692* (Paris, 1692), vol. 1, 271. The travel guide was reprinted in two volumes in 1878. See Nicolas de Blegny, *Le livre commode des adresses de Paris pour 1692*, ed. Édouard Fournier (2 vols; Paul Daffis, 1878). All page references hereafter are to this reprinted edition.

appropriate display of one's social and gender status through a wide array of items and, perhaps more importantly, the proper interactions between those items and the body. Like many other artisans and merchants, Ducreux profited from the opportunities presented by what Norbert Elias terms the "court society," selling masks donned on the stage and during the carnival season to men and women of both upper and lower social ranks who were subject to the rules of social distinction.⁹ A close examination of historical sources, however, complicates our understanding of the mask maker.

Ducreux's professional status defies clear categorization. When hired by Molière's troupe in 1671, he was categorized in the expense report of King's Household as a merchant.¹⁰ One year later, Ducreux worked under Guichard and Jean de Granouillet de Sablières, then *intendant de la musique* to the Duke of Orléans. According to the notarized contract, Ducreux was recruited as a "merchant to the king (*marchand ordinaire du Roi* in French)," an appointment possibly made by the Bâtiments du Roi—a sub-department of the King's Household.¹¹ This temporary but highly privileged position suggests that he served exclusively for the crown during a specific period, which could extend up to three or even six months.¹² Some fifteen years later, he was hired under the same convenient

⁹ Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Pantheon Books, 1983).

¹⁰ "État des dépenses faites pour monter Psyché en 1671," in BL, Egerton Ms. 916, compte de Pierre Turlin, trésorier général de l'argenterie, fol. 34 et sq. The document is reproduced in Ernest Leroux, ed., *Bulletin historique et philologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques* (Imprimerie nationale, 1891), vol. 1, 75-80. The name of Jacques Ducreux appears on page 78.

¹¹ Archives nationales, MC/ET/CXII/194 (Microfilm Code: MC/RS//628). It is possible that Ducreux was recruited for Sablières and Guichard's pastorale, entitled *Les Amours de Diane et d'Endymion*.

¹² In general, the group of merchants to the king (*marchands ordinaires du roi*) in Old Regime France remains under-explored. According to Pauline Lemaigre-Gaffier, they were merchants (and sometimes artisans) recruited by the sub-departments of the Maison du Roi to serve as regular suppliers of a variety of commodities and services. In return, these merchants, whether guild members or not, received official recognition through honorary titles, which could help enhance their reputation in Paris or the local market. It is unclear, however, whether they were exempt from certain taxes or if they were placed under a different legal jurisdiction than the Châtelet de Paris. Currently available primary and secondary sources suggest that the title "merchant to the king" does not seem to be synonymous with "merchants/artisans following the court (*marchands/artisans suivant la cour*)." See Pauline Lemaigre-Gaffier, *Administrer les menus plaisirs du roi: L'État, la cour et les spectacles dans la France des Lumières* (Champ Vallon, 2016). See also Sophie de Laverny, *Les domestiques commensaux du roi de France au XVIIe siècle* (Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2002), 42-43. For artisans or merchants following the court, see, for example, Emma Delpuech, "Les marchands et artisans suivant la cour," in *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 52, no. 3 (1974): 379-413; Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (University of California Press, 1996), 89-92; Roland Mousnier, *The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy, 1598-1789*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, vol. 2 (The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 119. I would like

but vague title of “merchant” for “entertainments consisting of comedy, music, and dance” at the Château de Marly and *Ballet de la Jeunesse* staged at the Palais-Royal.¹³ In 1688, he was, once again, classified as a “merchant to the king” in a notarized document.¹⁴

In other instances, however, Ducreux was recognized by what he was most famous for, that is, crafting and selling masks.¹⁵ For example, in a factum concerning the poisoning scheme against Lully, he identified himself or was categorized as a “vendor of masks.”¹⁶ Likewise, although he had taken on other occupations, Ducreux was also known as a vendor of carnival and theatrical masks in de Blegny’s guidebook.¹⁷

Despite his expertise in crafting masks, Ducreux, as well as many other mask makers, did not belong to any Parisian guild. One possible explanation is that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, artisans who made masks for the carnival and theatrical performances were not recognized by the corporate world as an independent group. As they formed only a relatively small trade, mask makers had never established their own guild but operated under the guild of master painters and sculptors until all French guilds were abolished in 1791.

Another possible explanation, which is not necessarily mutually exclusive with the one mentioned above, is that Ducreux was an artisan who was allowed to engage in multiple trades. To be sure, it was not uncommon for early modern French workers, incorporated or not, to practice other trades, either legally or illegally.¹⁸ My research on early modern French mask makers, for example, demonstrates that due to the relatively limited demand for masks in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, mask makers, much like workers in other trades living and working in Paris, usually had to rely on diverse sources of income in order to cover their daily expenses.¹⁹ However, what

to thank Pauline Lemaigre-Gaffier and Mathieu Marraud for generously sharing their research with me.

¹³ The original French words are “*divertissements meulez de comédie, de musique et de danse.*” See Auguste Étienne Guillaumot, *Costumes de l’Opéra, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Couanon, 1883), 7.

¹⁴ Archives nationales, Y//31, fol. 256. This document shows that Ducreux and his wife sought to disinherit their younger son.

¹⁵ Archival evidence suggests that many, if not all, of the masks sold by Ducreux may have been crafted by the mask maker himself and the skilled workers in his workshop. Jérôme de La Gorce shares the same opinion, writing that Jacques Ducreux “confectionnait des ‘masques et ustensiles,’ c’est-à-dire aussi des accessoires chargés de caractériser les différents personnages.” See Jérôme de La Gorce, *Jean-Baptiste Lully*, 227.

¹⁶ *Requête d’inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 1, 2 and part 2, 71. The original French words are “*vendeur de masques.*”

¹⁷ Nicolas de Blegny, *Le livre commode des adresses de Paris pour 1692*, vol. 1, 271.

¹⁸ On the ties between guild members and non-guild laborers, see, for example, Steven L. Kaplan, “Les Corporations, Les « Faux Ouvriers » et Le Faubourg Saint-Antoine au XVIIIe Siècle,” in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 43, Issue 2 (1988): 353-378.

¹⁹ Following the decision of the late Louis XIV, the Duke of Orléans, then the regent, initiated the first series of public balls (*bals publics*), in which guests were expected to wear masks,

distinguished Ducreux from his colleagues in the trade of mask-making and from many other laborers of his time, incorporated or not, was his professional and personal associations with Lully. Thanks to the privileges endowed by the crown, Ducreux was able to work beyond the restrictions imposed by the guild system on its members, the skilled workers and apprentices they hired, and other non-guild laborers in the faubourgs. Such a privileged position allowed him to gain considerable profit in a market full of risks and uncertainties. Most significantly, some of Ducreux's privileges—his position as usher (*receveur à la porte*) at the Opéra, for example—did not directly come from the crown but were extended by Lully. As will be demonstrated in the following sections, the associations with his direct patron and protector brought Ducreux from the margins of court politics to the center of the life-and-death situation at Versailles for the Florentine.

Lully and the Poisoning Plot

Son of a Florentine miller, the teenaged Lully was brought to France, serving as *valet de chambre* and Italian tutor of the duchess de Montpensier, daughter of the duke of Orléans and cousin of Louis XIV. Having demonstrated his musical talents while in the princess's employ and, more significantly, switching sides during the *Fronde*, Lully quickly caught the young king's attention and soon entered his service.

During his rise from obscurity to becoming a court composer and then the director of the Academy, Lully was ruthless to those who posed threats to his ambitions. An infamous example was his bitter rivalry with Henri Guichard, then *intendant des bâtiments et jardins* to the duke of Orléans. The origins of the animosity between Lully and Guichard can be traced back to as early as 28 June 1669 when Pierre Perrin, a poet and a librettist, obtained letters patent, signed by the king and Colbert, which granted him the exclusive right to establish the Academy of Opera.²⁰ His operatic enterprise was joined by the marquis Alexandre de Rieux de Sourdéac, an amateur machinist, and his associate Laurent Bersac, known as sieur de Champeron. These two men offered financial support to Perrin's company in return for a share in the profits of the Academy.

Although the company managed to produce two operas—Robert Cambert's *Pomone* (the first French opera) and *Les Peines et les plaisirs de l'amour*—and enjoyed

in Paris in January 1716. As a result, the demand for masks, particularly those of better quality crafted by artisans in Paris, likely witnessed an increase. However, my dissertation research shows that in a time of relative prosperity, renowned mask makers still had to diversify their sources of income through legal and illegal means. For more information on mask makers, please refer to my upcoming dissertation, the first full-length study of masks and masking practices in early modern France. On the public balls, see Richard T. Semmens, *The Bals Publics at the Paris Opéra in the Eighteenth Century* (Pendragon Press, 2004).

²⁰ The letters patent were reproduced in Jacques-Bernard Durey de Noinville and Louis Travenol, *Histoire du théâtre de l'académie royale de musique en France* (Chez Joseph Barbou, 1753), vol. 1, 77-81.

enormous success in the next two years, it was plagued with mismanagement and embezzlement.²¹ Imprisoned twice because of his debts, Perrin had to sell his privilege to Lully, his team's primary rival, in March 1672.²² And as soon as Lully took over Perrin's company—perhaps not without chicanery—he renamed it the Royal Academy of Music. However, soon after he acquired the monopoly over the production of French opera for public consumption, Lully met another obstacle in August 1674, when Louis XIV issued new letters patent to Guichard, which granted the architect the right to supervise “the production of carrousels, tournaments, games, matches, and fireworks,” without the use of musicians, through his new company the Academy of Spectacles.²³ Not surprisingly, Lully considered this to be yet another infringement of his privileges and a threat to the success of his enterprise.

The escalating tension and animosity between these two men culminated in a remarkably dramatic incident.²⁴ In March 1675, Marie Aubry, also known as Manon Aubry, an opera singer in Lully's troupe and a mistress of Guichard, warned the director that an attempt had been made in January to assassinate him with snuff mixed with poison. However, she did not disclose the malefactor's identity. It remains unclear whether the singer, who had recently ended her romantic relationship with Guichard, invented the entire story in order to avenge her former lover or she unmasked a genuine plot out of fear that her brother and even herself could be drawn into the affair. What we do know is that the Florentine became convinced that Guichard was responsible for orchestrating this poisoning scheme. He decided to counterattack. After gathering sufficient evidence over the next month, he denounced Guichard before Louis XIV at the Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye on 7 May 1675. Upon learning of Lully's action, Guichard, hoping to gain an advantage over his adversary, lodged a complaint against the Florentine and his allies on 9 May, three days before Lully initiated a counter-complaint against him on 12 May. The intendant also welcomed the king's decision to send the case to *justice ordinaire*, as the charges against him remained unsubstantiated. By 14 May, a large group of witnesses, including Marie Aubry and her brother Sébastien, a

²¹ The marquis de Sourdéac and Champeron's control over the box office led the company to a financial disaster. See Robert M. Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King*, 176-177, and John S. Powell, *Music and Theatre in France, 1600-1680*, 51-52.

²² For more detailed information of Perrin's company and the problems it witnessed before and during Perrin's imprisonment, see Robert M. Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King*, 170-204, and Victoria Johnson, *Backstage at the Revolution*, 113-120.

²³ Robert M. Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King*, 201-202. For Guichard's letters patent, see “Brevet du roi en faveur de Guichard, intendant des bâtiments et jardins du duc d'Orléans,” in Georges B. Depping, ed., *Correspondance administrative sous le règne de Louis XIV* (Imprimerie Nationale, 1855), vol. 4, 595-596.

²⁴ La Gorce presents a detailed account of the story. See Jérôme de La Gorce, *Jean-Baptiste Lully*, 230-231.

junior Parisian police officer and an intimate friend of Guichard,²⁵ Armande Béjart (Molière's widow and the cousin of Marie Aubry), Jean Donneau de Visé (a well-known playwright and founder of the gazette *Mercurie galant*), and Pierre Huguenet (a court violinist) were therefore called upon to provide their deposition in the prolonged lawsuit that followed.²⁶ Perhaps quite surprisingly, Jacques Ducreux, relatively modest in social standing and political influences when compared with the elite figures in cultural production at Versailles or in Paris, was also summoned to offer his testimony. A careful examination of his relationship with Lully and the role he played in the case can help us understand the possible reasons behind it.

“Cet émissaire de Baptiste (This emissary of Baptiste)!”

As a “merchant to the king,” Ducreux began to supply masks and other accessories for the theater since the time of Molière. Although it remains unknown when exactly Ducreux first met Lully, archival evidence indicates that they may have already known each other for several years before the alleged poisoning took place. For example, in 1670, Molière's troupe purchased a large number of costumes, accessories, and different kinds of tools for the première of *Psyché*, a large-scale, five-act *tragédie-ballet* (tragicomedy and ballet) scheduled to be performed before Louis XIV during the 1671 carnival season.²⁷ Ducreux was responsible for furnishing the troupe with “masks, garters, and wigs” and “ballet pumps,” which brought him an income of 2,621 livres 10 sols.²⁸ He also received a large payment of 7,498 livres and 6 sols for providing a wide array of commodities more commonly associated with an innkeeper or a food vendor, including “bread, wine, glasses, bottles, wood, and charcoal.”²⁹ Lully, already a renowned court composer, was

²⁵ *Requête d'inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 1, 2. The title of Sébastien Aubry is “*Exempt du lieutenant criminel de robe courte*” in French.

²⁶ Apart from Lully and Guichard, a minimum of eighteen individuals were summoned to the law court as primary witnesses. For a list of the witnesses' names, see *Requête d'inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 1, 2-3.

²⁷ “État des dépenses faites pour monter Psyché en 1671,” in BL, Egerton Ms. 916, compte de Pierre Turlin, trésorier général de l'argenterie, fol. 34 et sq.; the document is reproduced in Ernest Leroux, ed., *Bulletin historique et philologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*, vol. 1, 75-80. The name of Jacques Ducreux appears on page 78.

²⁸ Jacques Ducreux was not the only mask supplier. According to the King's Household expense report, a merchant named Jean Dufour and a “veuve Vagnard,” whose late husband was likely a merchant as well, also furnished masks. See “État des dépenses faites pour monter Psyché en 1671,” in BL, Egerton Ms. 916, compte de Pierre Turlin, trésorier général de l'argenterie, fol. 34 et sq.; the document is reproduced in Ernest Leroux, ed., *Bulletin historique et philologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*, vol. 1, 75-80. Their names appear on page 77.

²⁹ “État des dépenses faites pour monter Psyché en 1671,” in BL, Egerton Ms. 916, compte de Pierre Turlin, trésorier général de l'argenterie, fol. 34 et sq.; the document is reproduced in

responsible for the play's music. It seems reasonable to assume that Ducreux would seize the opportunity to establish his networks with Lully and other figures in cultural production. In other words, it is likely that Ducreux had forged at least some business connections with Lully several years before 1671.

We know little about Ducreux's relationship with Lully before the latter acquired Perrin's monopoly in March 1672.³⁰ However, by his company's impending opening in November 1672, Lully must have placed his complete trust and confidence in Ducreux: When Lully decided to lease the Jeu de Paume de Béquet (also known as "le Bel-Air") as a temporary site for his Royal Academy of Music, Ducreux, a rather modest artisan, signed his name on the lease as the only guarantor for the director.³¹ Moreover, the Florentine also allowed Ducreux to collect tickets as an usher in the recently renovated theater, and granted him the privilege to work as a soft drink manufacturer and vendor, selling lemonade and other refreshing beverages during the intervals between acts.³² Surrounded by numerous enemies, Lully could not have entrusted his troupe's theater, a large portion of his company's revenues and its administrative information (the organization of the troupe and the costs of rehearsals and performances), and many of his secrets to Ducreux, unless the mask maker proved loyal, reliable, and, as Guichard claimed, "the most devoted of all emissaries."³³ These tasks appointed to Ducreux suggest that the mask maker had become a *protégé* of Lully no later than 1672.

According to Guichard's *factum*, the mask maker had profited considerably from these multiple occupations. Of course, we should never take Guichard's words at face

Ernest Leroux, ed., *Bulletin historique et philologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*, vol. 1, 78. Ducreux was paid 150 livres for some "*peines et recompences*" that he had generated while working for *Psyché*'s première.

³⁰ In his *factum*, Guichard wrote that Ducreux had begun to serve Lully after Perrin's privilege was transferred to Lully in 1671. See *Requête d'inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 2, 32.

³¹ Jérôme de La Gorce, *Jean-Baptiste Lully*, 227, footnote 14. Unwilling to have dealings with Sourdéac and Champeron, who still held the lease of the Jeu de Paume de la Bouteille, Lully first requested the king's permission to use the Great Hall in the Louvre Palace. As his request was denied, he soon turned to the Jeu de Paume de Béquet, the first home of Perrin's company, leasing the playhouse for the remainder of the 1672-73 season. See John S. Powell, *Music and Theatre in France, 1600-1680*, 57-58.

³² *Requête d'inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 2, 32. Although Ducreux was permitted to sell drinks to the audience, he never acquired the professional status as a "*limonadier*." While Guichard's *factum* should always be examined critically, this particular information is likely trustworthy because Ducreux's presence at the Jeu de Paume de Béquet must be widely acknowledged by the audiences. An outright lie on this matter would significantly damage Guichard's credibility.

³³ *Requête d'inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 1, 3. The original French sentence writes that "*Henry Paillet amy intime depuis vingt-cinq ans de Jacques du Creux le plus dévoué de tous les Emissaires de Baptiste Lully*."

value. The *factum*, also known as *mémoires judiciaires*, was initially considered a collection of “facts” and thus escaped official censorship.³⁴ However, by the late seventeenth century, it had already become a genre both factual and fictional in nature and a platform where lawyers of the parties involved in a dispute expressed their resentments and disparaged their opponents. Moreover, the lawyers, aware that their arguments would be published, bought, and read by both professional (including the judge) and general audiences, sought to use the *factum* to provoke a debate and manipulate public emotions before the final judgment.³⁵ In the face of possible legal prosecution, Guichard, as well as his lawyer, would make every effort to discredit Ducreux and his patron, Lully. However, the intendant’s words were entirely unfounded. For example, he noted that in addition to his workshop on the Pont de Notre-Dame, Ducreux could also afford a summerhouse in Bagneux, the southern suburb of Paris.³⁶ The possession of such a valuable property not only indicates that Ducreux lived a much better-off life than most artisans of his time but, as Guichard implied, the mask maker might have improper financial dealings with Lully. While the genre of *factum* blurs the lines between law and literature, this particular allegation from Guichard should be credible: fabricating such a detail could only offer Lully and his allies an easy rebuttal, thus risking undermining the credibility of Guichard’s other potentially more critical assertions, some of which could be exaggerated and even fictitious.³⁷

In March 1675, upon receiving Marie Aubry’s cautionary message, it is likely that Lully summoned Ducreux to evaluate the credibility of Aubry’s warning and, should her words prove trustworthy, help determine the director’s most appropriate response to the imminent threat of assassination. We do not know exactly what advice Ducreux might have given, but Lully shortly thereafter began to gather evidence and testimonies from relevant individuals that could be used to build convincing charges against Guichard. In Lully’s eyes, it was a perfect opportunity to get rid of his adversary, regardless of whether Guichard was actually responsible for the failed assassination attempt.

³⁴ Sarah Maza has established that the *factum* and *mémoires judiciaires* were one and the same in Old Regime France. See Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (University of California Press, 1993).

³⁵ Christian Biet presents a useful discussion of the genre’s nature. See Christian Biet, “Judicial Fiction and Literary Fiction: The Example of the *Factum*,” in *Law & Literature* 20, issue 3 (2008): 403-422.

³⁶ *Requête d’inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 2, 59. As I will demonstrate later, Ducreux’s summerhouse played a key role in the case.

³⁷ For example, Guichard accused Ducreux of murdering a coachman *en plein jour* with his accomplice Sébastien Aubry in the rue Saint-Honoré, near the intersection with the rue des Prouvaires. Despite Guichard’s claim that it was “beyond any dispute (*hors de toute contestation*),” this allegation lacked any supporting evidence. See *Requête d’inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 2, 32.

In order to gather the most compelling evidence, Lully assigned a critical and daring task to the mask maker: Ducreux was to approach Sébastien Aubry, Marie Aubry's brother and one of Guichard's intimate and most trusted friends. On 29 April, Sébastien Aubry, having assessed the circumstances, finally agreed to meet Ducreux near the Palais-Royal, suggesting that "he had something of consequence to share with him [i.e. Ducreux]."³⁸ Ducreux then invited Sébastien Aubry to his summerhouse in Bagneux so that they could have a more private and secure conversation. It was during their journey to Bagneux that Ducreux, after persistently questioning Aubry, eventually learned that Guichard was responsible for the failed attempt to poison Lully earlier in January.³⁹

Upon returning to Paris, Ducreux, without any delay, traveled to Versailles and delivered the updated information to the Florentine. Lully then successfully convinced Sébastien Aubry to arrange a meeting with Guichard at his own house, aiming to elicit a "confession" from Guichard of his crimes.⁴⁰ This set the stage for the most incredible scene in the story. On the morning of 6 May, Ducreux and the court violinist named Pierre Huguenet discreetly hid behind the door of a cabinet in Aubry's house, seeking to eavesdrop on the conversation between Aubry and Guichard regarding the plot to murder Lully. However, as Ducreux admitted to the judge, Guichard, who arrived around seven o'clock, spoke in such a low voice that neither he nor Huguenet could hear clearly anything related to the plot. What these two covert agents of Lully were able to learn, at least as they professed, was that Guichard did have a secret plan in mind. They also claimed that François Jacquin was an assassin masquerading as a sculptor and that he had been instructed to ambush Lully at the door of the Palais-Royal had he survived the attempt to poison him through tobacco.⁴¹

Space constraints preclude a comprehensive analysis of the investigation and the trial, which dragged on for almost three years, or the evidence presented by both parties. Instead, this article will conclude with a discussion of Ducreux's actions as described in Guichard's *factum* before the intendant was convicted in September 1676.

Lully attempted to stall the trial in the first few months after the investigation started. He probably sought to prolong it until 20 October 1675, when Jacques Deffitat and Armand-Jean de Ryans, believed to be more favorable towards the Florentine, would

³⁸ The original French words are "*il avoit quelque chose de consequence à luy dire.*" Lully's company moved out from the Jeu de Paume de Béquet by the end of the 1673 theater season.

³⁹ "Article premier de la deposition de Pierre du Creux," in *Requete d'inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 2, 59-60. It should be noted that the first name of Ducreux is misspelled.

⁴⁰ "Article troisième de la deposition de Jacques du Creux," in *Requete d'inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 2, 67-68.

⁴¹ *Requete d'inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 2, 69-72. On François Jacquin, see "Article premier, deux, trois, quatre & dernier du recollement de Jacques du Creux," in *Requete d'inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 2, 79-82.

replace the current Châtelet magistrates responsible for the case.⁴² Meanwhile, Guichard tried to establish his own advantage by discrediting Ducreux, who served as the second witness in the trial on the behalf of Lully. For example, one of the nine major accusations the intendant brought against Ducreux was that the mask maker sought to unjustly influence the investigation. The intendant asserted in his factum that Ducreux, after giving his deposition, frequently visited the *greffe du Châtelet*, seeking to pressure the *Procureur du Roi* who oversaw the case and to solicit updates on the investigation from the *greffier*, the officer responsible for the registration of official documents. Additionally, Guichard suspected that the mask maker might have lobbied for an expedited interrogation of himself once Deffitat and de Ryans began their service at the Châtelet.⁴³

Due to the absence of evidence beyond Guichard's factum, it is difficult to assess with precision the extent to which Guichard's allegations against Ducreux and his counterarguments to Ducreux's deposition were trustworthy. One might reasonably wonder, for example, whether an artisan could compel a king's procurator into disclosing the sensitive details about an ongoing investigation of an assassination case in which multiple notable figures at Versailles and even the duke of Orléans might be involved. What remains certain, however, is the considerable effort Guichard and his lawyer undertook to discredit Ducreux and thus undermine Lully's case—fifty pages, that is, more than twenty percent of the factum, were devoted to directly rebutting the mask maker. Trustworthy or exaggerated, Guichard's accusation hints at Ducreux's crucial role in the alleged poisoning scheme.

At any rate, the case took a favorable turn for Lully in late 1676, even though the proof presented by Lully and his faction was, in fact, "difficult to establish."⁴⁴ On 17 September, Guichard was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment in the Conciergerie, where Perrin had been incarcerated several times before his death in 1675. As mentioned earlier, although Guichard was exonerated on 12 April 1677, he nevertheless decided to leave France for Spain.⁴⁵ Of course, Lully needed to pay a large sum of money, no less than 60,000 livres, to Jacquin for the false accusations he made against the sculptor, who had been imprisoned since July 1676.⁴⁶ Eventually, the director got rid of his challenger and one of the greatest threats to his enterprise.

⁴² Jérôme de La Gorce, *Jean-Baptiste Lully*, 232.

⁴³ *Requête d'inscription de faux en forme de factum, pour le sieur Guichard*, part 2, 33. It should be noted that the factum was probably published after September 1675.

⁴⁴ Jérôme de La Gorce, *Jean-Baptiste Lully*, 232.

⁴⁵ Guichard was living around the quai de Bourbon on the Island Notre-Dame. See Archives nationales, MC/ET/CVI/51, cited in Jérôme de La Gorce, *Jean-Baptiste Lully*, 234, footnote 34.

⁴⁶ Jérôme de La Gorce, *Jean-Baptiste Lully*, 233.

Conclusion

By 1692, Jacques Ducreux had already become one of the most esteemed mask makers in Paris, as de Blegny's tourism manual suggests. To many of his colleagues in the trade of mask-making and perhaps to modern historians as well, Ducreux might seem exceptional. Of course, privileged artisans and merchants working beyond traditional corporate restrictions were not uncommon in late seventeenth-century France. Thanks to royal privileges, Ducreux was able to practice multiple professions. However, it was his professional and personal associations with Lully that helped the mask maker forge a lucrative career outside the corporate framework and, perhaps unexpectedly, placed him at the very center of the controversial poisoning scheme against his Florentine patron.

Ducreux's case complicates our understanding of working people in Old Regime France and challenges our current understanding of the construction of artisanal identity. In addition to his professional expertise, Ducreux's career was largely defined by royal privileges and, more significantly, Lully's patronage. Moreover, Ducreux did not primarily identify himself with his craft, even if he was one of the most renowned mask makers in late seventeenth-century Paris. Instead, his professional identities were fluid and multi-faceted, changing as he took on different tasks. Nor did his identities conform to any specific social role within the guild world, thus defying clear categorization based on the dichotomy between guild members and non-guild laborers.

Because of his associations with Lully, Ducreux was deeply entangled in the poisoning scheme allegedly committed by Guichard against the director of the Royal Academy of Music. We might never know how, exactly, Ducreux may have influenced the trajectory of the lawsuit. However, Guichard's effort to discredit Ducreux offers a valuable glimpse into the significance of the mask maker in the trial. In this sense, Ducreux influenced the life courses of Lully and Guichard, which, in turn, left a lasting impact on the development of French opera in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. His crucial role in the poisoning plot shows how an artisan, though relatively humble in social status, political influence, and wealth when compared with the prominent figures involved, could navigate political intricacies thanks to patronage, factional relations, and, no less importantly, his own agency.

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