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VERA L. JUNKERS

1977

RACINE'S MITHRIDATE: A STUDY IN THEATRICAL INTERPRETATION

by

VERA L. JUNKERS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in French in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
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1977

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in French in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

5

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The most special thanks go to my mother, to whom this work is dedicated.

PREFACE

Racine's Mithridate is just over three centuries old. While numerous volumes have been written on the plays of this unique dramatist, analyzing them from a great many perspectives, and references to some mises en scène through the centuries are far from few, most of the stagings are judged from a literary point of view which is, all too often, outside of the actual play. To produce a play it is necessary to be able to find its very essence, to formulate a conception that is true to the author's intent (as closely as it is possible to divine it), and to have décor and costume designs that will at the same time illustrate the play, reflect principles of stage design, allow the director's and the designer's creative originality to be realized. To evaluate or discuss stagings in depth from an inner perspective, it is necessary to understand the components of production. Much has been written about Mithridate in terms of its historical foundation, its dramatic construction, its poetry, its characters, its "action," some of its famous interpreters; all of this is very interesting, but there are no works that in any comprehensive way trace either the development of the costumes and décor used for this play since Racine's time, or the dramatic interpretations which were given. This present study has been written to attempt to interpret the play more completely. While concerned chiefly with Mithridate, it is not entirely limited to it, but is set in the larger context of the theatre and its development and its evolution.

In his recent book, Lectures de Racine (Paris: Armand Colin, 1971), p. 309, Jean-Jacques Roubine states: "On l'a dit, une

histoire de l'interprétation théâtrale de Racine reste à écrire. Il est à souhaiter qu'elle révèle les influences et les interférences qui ont pu circuler entre la scène et les exégètes. . . . En dépit d'une littérature abondante, mais souvent anecdotique, notre connaissance du milieu théâtral reste fort lacunaire." His remarks were not the genesis of this study, but they do give evidence of the need for it.

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CHAPTER I

THE CURTAIN RISES

In the course of the first five centuries of its development there evolved, in the French theatre, a number of traditions which came to be closely adhered to on the pre-classical, pre-Racinian stage. In presenting a summary of the history of the French theatre, of its growth and development, an account of the development and establishment of these traditions or styles, in stage décor, costuming and acting will be included. This introduction is essential to an understanding of the further development of the French theatre, in a general sense, as it extended into Racine's time and, indeed, well beyond. In particular, knowledge of the traditions extant in pre-classical times is important, as they formed the basis for that theatre, the background against which productions of Racine's Mithridate were first set. It is in the light of these traditions, which serve as a point of departure, that the early productions will be studied. Subsequent development and evolution in the theatre and its traditions will be discussed and will constitute the framework in which the theatrical interpretations of Mithridate that were later developed will be explored.

* * *

The French theatre had its origins in the Church, some time in the twelfth century. Dramatizations of Biblical passages, at first part of the liturgy, and enactment of scenes from the life of Christ, the Virgin and saints, soon developed into somewhat more complex forms and necessitated a move from inside the church out to the steps. Here a natural stage was to be found with an appropriate

and permanent décor: the carved and sculpted façade of the church. Where necessary, this "stage" was divided into sections, or "mansions," each representing a different place, such as Earth, Heaven and Hell, or various cities. Between these settings was neutral territory. Already at this early point in its development, the theatre had acquired one of its main features, one that would be made use of for a long time: the simultaneous stage setting. From the relatively simple liturgical drama developed the miracles and the mystères in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The latter form became particularly elaborate. Aside from the great length these works often assumed, various types of stage machinery were devised and most effectively put to use. The early dramas, written in Latin, were performed by members of the clergy, but as the presentations of the plays expanded, Latin gave way to French, and the rôles were taken over by lay persons. Costuming was largely symbolic, the colors particularly so, and identification of characters was thus facilitated. In addition, the obvious symbolism served to underscore the inspirational message the work intended to convey as well as to heighten the effect with which it was conveyed. Eventually these performances were moved away from the church steps to public squares. The ecclesiastical drama was not, however, the only early form of the theatre, for a popular, secular theatre was developing in France at the same time. Although its origins are indistinct, it is known that by the fifteenth century three basic types of secular drama existed, the moralités, the soties and the farces. These three types of theatre were quite different from one another in their structure and specific purpose, yet they each basically

sought to entertain and sometimes to edify or moralize. Many of the early works were, however, as little refined as their audiences. Although the farce, as a dramatic form, advanced somewhat in its development in the first half of the fifteenth century, in the latter half it was less capable of sustaining the interest of those whose attention was increasingly turning to the emerging Italian Renaissance. While the farce had been one of the main forms of theatre in France, sacred plays as well as the comedies by the Commedia dell'arte were being presented in Italy. The Italians then turned to the classics of antiquity for inspiration in the theatre. Latin comedies were produced, then used as models for Italian comedies. Later some Latin tragedies were performed, but the imitations did not follow immediately. Interest having next turned to works of Greek writers, it was mainly the latter who furnished sources for the tragic theatre in Italy. A parallel turn to the past did not occur in France, yet the flowering of the Renaissance in Italy brought greatly to bear on life in France. Intellectual, artistic, literary and social life were all influenced by the movement.

The beginning of the sixteenth century still saw the moralités, mystères and farces being produced in France, but interest in this type of theatre was waning. By mid-century the way was clear for expansion into new directions in the theatre. The intellectual atmosphere of the Renaissance, coupled with artistic advances, fostered the creation of a theatre whose forms were to be different from its predecessors. It was in Italy that the prototype of the modern tragedy, Sophonisbe of Gian Giorgio Trissino, composed in 1514-15,

appeared.¹ This tragedy, besides being translated into French in the sixteenth century, later also inspired a number of other plays through its subject matter. It was based on history, not on mythology, and thus constituted a step in a new direction as far as sources of inspiration in the theatre were concerned. Another step, albeit a less-noticed one, was taken toward change in the dramatic structure with Giovanni Rucellai's Rosmunda of 1516, wherein the idea of division of plays into acts was introduced. Finally, Giraldi Cinthio's Orbecche, produced in 1541, brought to the stage a bloody and horrifying ending to the plot. Cinthio's influence was strongly felt in the Italian theatre and, eventually, was reflected in the French theatre.²

The influence of Latin and Greek tragedies having been felt in France somewhat later than in Italy, it did not leave its deepest impression until the middle 1500's. George Buchanan, a native of Scotland who lived for many years in France, and Marc-antoine Muret, a teacher, were the most important names in the early French humanist theatre.³ The former both translated Latin tragedies and wrote his own tragedy, Jephté. This play had a biblical subject--setting an example that reaped many imitative works--and was composed of seven episodes, rather than acts, divided by choruses. Muret also composed a Latin tragedy, Julius Caesar. While Buchanan's play form

¹ Raoul Morçay and Armand Miller, La Renaissance (Paris: Editions Mondiales - Del Duca, 1960), p. 41.

² These plays, their authors, and influence are discussed at greater length by Morçay and Miller in La Renaissance, pp. 41-43, and are mentioned here for their importance in leading up to the developments in the French theatre in the sixteenth century.

³ Pierre Sage (and Raoul Morçay), Le Préclassicisme (Paris: Editions Mondiales - Del Duca, 1962), p. 71.

had been essentially Greek, Muret's was decidedly Latin: choruses separated five acts, but did not form part of the action.⁴ This division in types of tragedy was clearly seen and followed throughout the century; plays were in either one form or the other.

The first French tragedy--i.e., one written in French--was the Cléopâtre of Etienne Jodelle, first performed in the winter of 1552-53.⁵ It appears that the Italians Trissino and Giraldi Cinthio can be counted among the writers who influenced Jodelle.⁶ awkward in style and lacking suspenseful tension, Cléopâtre was nevertheless a play based on an imposing subject, and did constitute an important first step.

The publication of Jules-César Scaliger's Art de la Tragédie twenty years after Cléopâtre was an initial attempt to establish a theory concerning the domain of tragedy. This work was printed together with some works by Jean de La Taille. The latter's theory provided a basis for action: "Il faut toujours représenter l'histoire ou le jeu en un même jour, en un même temps et en un même lieu."⁷ He adds: "Ne pas commencer à déduire par le commencement mais vers le milieu ou la fin, ce qui est un des principaux secrets de l'art."⁸ according to La Taille, the three unities were to be strictly observed, and a tragedy was to have five clearly-defined acts separated by choruses. Certainly this theory was an indicator of future developments in the theatre.

⁴ Sage, p. 73.

⁵ Ibid., p. 74.

⁶ Ibid., p. 75.

⁷ Ibid., p. 79.

⁸ Ibid.

Many of the tragedies written in French in the third quarter of the sixteenth century were of a religious nature, but plays on secular subjects existed as well. The name of Robert Garnier was most prominent among the dramatists of this period. He felt that tragedy should present bloody, horrifying, and pathetic subjects,⁹ but ones which would moralize at the same time. He also introduced a new genre to the stage: that of the tragi-comedy. By mid-century the force of the Italian theatre influence was being felt, particularly in the French comic theatre, and continued to increase in strength as the century wore on.

First in Italy, and then in France, new sources, new themes, new subjects all necessitated changes in the actual production of plays. Not only did new stage settings have to be designed to suit play content and to give adequate support to the visual aspects of the play, but the physical stage as well had to undergo change so as to be able to accommodate these scenic developments. The importance of staging plays according to the emerging ideas regarding stage and set design, costuming, and acting was growing, and theories to govern the various aspects of the theatrical art were gradually being formulated.

It was the Italian artists who discovered perspective in the sixteenth century and applied it to the stage settings they designed. The stages were not as large as might have been thought, but due in great part to the flat backdrops that were painted in perspective, the spectators' eyes were cleverly tricked. The stage floor was often tilted slightly, raised at the back. This factor,

⁹ Sage, p. 82.

along with the backdrop, and use of stage wings (an innovation at the time) served to create the desired illusion of depth and general spaciousness on the stage. The changeover to this "Italian Renaissance stage" did not occur suddenly in France. Unfortunately, comparatively little is known regarding the stagings of French plays in the early sixteenth century. However, a clearer picture can be drawn for a later period.

To get an excellent idea of theatre architecture and actual technical details involved in theatrical productions in Italy in the sixteenth century (and, by virtue of imitation, somewhat later in France), one must refer to Nicola Sabbattini's Pratique pour fabriquer scènes et machines de théâtre (first published in 1637 in Pesaro, and again with some additions, in 1638 in Ravenna). "Although previous publications on architecture and perspective drawing included sections on theatre architecture, stage design, and some aspects of stagecraft, the Pratica, which is devoted entirely to the stage, must be regarded as the first comprehensive technical manual in the literature of the theatre."¹⁰ Although Sabbattini's account centers around the design and construction of the stage and auditorium of a court theatre, the underlying principles he illustrates were also applied in the public theatre. He describes "the design and arrangement of settings according to the rules of simple one-point perspective; and the construction, painting and lighting of these settings. Sabbattini echoes

¹⁰ Orville K. Larson, "Nicola Sabbattini's descriptions of stage machinery from Pratica di fabricar scene e machine ne'teatri (Ravenna, 1638). An Explanation and Commentary," Players magazine, 39 (Oct. 1962), 13.

Sebastiano Serlio's earlier explanations in de Architettura (1545). . . . his technical instructions reveal how many theatrical effects of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Italian court theatres were achieved. . . . Sabbattini drew forty-eight crude and elementary diagrams to illustrate the machines he describes."¹¹

Hélène Leclerc, in Les Origines italiennes de l'architecture théâtrale moderne (Paris: Droz, 1946), pp. 79-80, makes the point that the Pratica was not, as many have thought, the latest word on the scenic art for Sabbattini's time, but a codification of certain practices that were already passing out of style when he wrote about them. In her discussion of Serlio and the importance of his work, she quotes the Bolognese architect on the subject of the décor for the tragic stage: "les bâtiments doivent être convenables à grands personnages, à raison que, suivant la doctrine des tragi-comédies antiques et modernes, les accidents amoureux et mésaventures inopinées, dont la fin sont morts violentes et cruelles, adviennent coutumièrement dans les maisons des grands Seigneurs, comme sont rois, ducs, comtes, et semblables."

When flat, painted décors were used, they depicted typical French palaces of the seventeenth century regardless of where the action was meant to unfold. It mattered little whether the play was actually set in France, or in Spain or Italy, for example. This ambiguity was reinforced by the playwrights who themselves were often vague about the settings. Engravings from this early period appear to illustrate scenes from plays in an artistic manner rather than to represent the settings such as they actually were.

¹¹ Larson, p. 13.

There is some information available about the décor for the non-tragic theatre (for the very popular farce, in particular), but data regarding the stage décors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne in the early part of the seventeenth century are not only very incomplete, but scarce. It is not until the time of Laurent Mahelot that we get a better understanding of these décors.

In the 1620's and 1630's the simultaneous décor was still being utilized, as was the "décor à compartiments." It was the former type which was apparently used for most of the plays of Alexandre Hardy--tragedies, comedies, and tragi-comedies--which were presented at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, beginning in the early 1620's. His plays showed no concern for the unities of time or place, and the décors reflected this lack. By 1630, however, movement toward an observance of the unities of time and place had begun. Jean de Mairet was a particularly strong advocate of them, and his ideas, based on the Italian rules of composition, gradually came to be supported by other dramatists. In discussing this pre-classical period, S. Wilma Deierkauf-Holsboer points out that the unity of time was more easily followed in theatre composition than that of place, for a more concentrated setting would call for simplified décor and fewer compartments on the stage.¹² The changes in composition that were setting in gave rise to endless criticism and disputes over what constituted the unities of place and time. Could "one place" mean a whole city, with the décor showing several houses wherein the action was to take place, or only an indoor or

¹² S. Wilma Deierkauf-Holsboer, L'Histoire de la mise en scène dans le théâtre français à Paris de 1600 à 1673 (Paris: Nizet, 1960), p. 56.

outdoor area the size of the stage? Did the unity of time mean that the events depicted were conceivably to take place within twenty-four hours or did they have to be limited to the real time it took to present the play on stage? These problems regarding the unities came to be resolved slowly, over the span of a number of years, as the trend toward a simple décor was developing.

Lanson noted, in Esquisse d'une Histoire de la Tragédie Française (Paris: Champion, 1927), that by about 1628 tragedy and comedy had been far outranked in popularity by the tragi-comedy, the pastoral play, and the farce; however, from 1628 to 1640 they were making their comeback.¹³ and, he added, "Le triomphe de la tragédie est assuré par les unités qui s'établissent entre 1628 et 1637."¹⁴ With the return to the tragic genre and the increasing application of the rules to the written form, the décor was, of necessity, affected. While audiences had accepted certain spatial and temporal incongruities in the lighter theatrical entertainments, they became more exigent with regard to the tragic theatre. Lanson added: "L'argument de la vraisemblance, appliqué à la réalité de la mise en scène du temps, est tout puissant sur lui. Une fois éveillé, ce sens critique rejette toutes les solutions intermédiaires, et va aux interprétations les plus étroites des règles."¹⁵ This stricter observance of the unities came to include the unity of action as well. Concentration of locale and reduction of time span in which events could transpire were naturally reflected in

¹³ Lanson, p. 53 and p. 55.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 66.

the simpler scenery and less episodic nature of the plot. A more concentrated plot called for more concentrated writing, and this is when the literary esthetics of the classical period began to be molded by theoreticians and playwrights. Not every dramatist was able to conform successfully to the emerging ideals, some finding the rigors of the restrictions stifling to their creative orientation. According to Lanson, it was Corneille who found a way to circumvent the unities, namely, to situate the events in the human heart.¹⁶ A tragedy which, while breaking several rules, served as the cornerstone of future French tragedy was Corneille's Le Cid, performed in 1636 or 1637 at the théâtre du Marais. The psychological conflicts of passion and duty formed the true "action" of the play, while duels and wars were fought offstage, only recounted by witnesses to these events. The audience could identify and sympathize with the major characters. This form of dramaturgy emphasized the need for enhancement of poetic expression and for a tightening of the dramatic structure, and served the gradual process of the refining of the dialogue.

Modification of the décor came about primarily between the time Mahelot and Laurent were writing the Mémoire. It was then, wrote Lancaster, in his edition of the Mémoire, that the simultaneous décor was replaced by the modern system. He continued: "Pendant que les auteurs simplifiaient leurs pièces, les décorateurs unifiaient la scène en se servant de 'fermes' ou de rideaux, ou en ne repré-

¹⁶ Lanson, p. 67.

sentant qu'une seule salle pour toute une pièce."¹⁷ As more and more members of the upper classes and the nobility became interested in the theatre and the price of admission rose, the composition of the audiences changed. More than one writer has commented on how this newer audience in general lacked imagination, thereby affecting the production of plays: application of the unities was made necessary in order for the plays to measure up to their expectations. That which was familiar gave them pleasure. The language that was used became more and more refined, more and more artificial, and was, of course, spoken by characters who were mostly of noble birth.

The theoreticians, the molders of tradition came to formulate rules for tragedy based largely, although not entirely, on the poetic precepts of Aristotle. One early advocate of the latter's views, Daniel Heinsius, had arranged and published, in 1611, his theories in a manner facilitating reference to them. In 1647 Gérard-Jean Vossius focused on the theories the Italians had long supported, consolidating them into a major work. René Bray, in La Formation de la doctrine classique en France (1927; rpt. Paris: Nizet, 1966), refers particularly to Vossius in his lucid discussion of what the rules for tragedy embodied. In brief, in terms of inspiration, we find that the action of a tragedy had to be simple, preferably dealing with a serious historical subject drawn from a period far removed from the seventeenth century. The classical dramatists added to the ancient precepts, however, their own

¹⁷ Henry Carrington Lancaster, ed., Le Mémoire de Mahelot, Laurent et d'autres décorateurs de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne et de la Comédie-Française au XVII^e siècle (Paris: Champion, 1920), p. 40.

preference for revealing the psychological aspects or motivations of their characters and focused on the passion of love more than on the "pathetic" horror displayed in the tragedies of antiquity. The heroes and heroines of the tragedies (such as they were being written by mid-century), may have been distant in historical and geographical terms, but they had come to resemble more and more the members of the contemporary nobility in their manners, their forms of address, their very speech. Bray notes that even as early as about 1630, "la règle des bienséances s'établit vraiment en France."¹⁸ These bienséances, or the observance of propriety, mirrored the society for which the plays were being written.

Corneille had begun to write plays in the early part of the century (Mérite, 1629), with his creative powers flourishing most in the 1640's, a few years after the success of Le Cid had more firmly than ever established his fame. That period saw the introduction to the stage of Horace, Cinna, Polyeucte, Rodogune, among other plays, and was capped, in 1651, by his tragedy Nicomède. That same year, however, his play Fertharite was a failure, and after two decades in the theatre, Corneille apparently wished to retire. Although he did resume his career as dramatist eight years later, his popularity never again rose to its former heights. For Molière, Corneille's rival in the theatre, the years 1651-54 were very productive. Racine soon began his career, and attention turned to the younger playwright.

Racine came to the attention of the king in 1663 through two odes he had written; he was introduced to Molière in the same year.

¹⁸ Bray, p. 218.

Both events were an auspicious start for his career; his star was to rise quickly. In 1664 Racine's first tragedy, La Thébaïde, was presented by Molière's troupe, followed by Alexandre in 1665. Despite the fact that Molière had given Racine the all-important first exposure, Racine, with seemingly little gratitude, had performances of Alexandre shifted to the more prestigious Hôtel de Bourgogne without the prior knowledge of Molière (or of the troupe originally performing it). Molière was offended by this action, and the cordial ties between him and Racine were broken. From the very first Racine also had to contend with the partisans of Corneille who attacked his every play. He was clearly seen as attempting to rival the old master on the same ground. As it would develop, however, Racine treated the historical subjects in a way quite different from Corneille's approach.

Corneille had been interested in the intellectual and political aspects of his historical subject matter, had rendered the intrigues very complex, and created characters who chose duty above love, and were driven by desires of vengeance. Racine's characters, on the other hand, were driven by passion; the unhappiness they suffered as a consequence was very real, very human. Racine's plays were of ingeniously simple construction, the action minimal, his poetry being the unifying force. The three unities proved not to be restrictive for Racine, as his talents were well-suited to concentrated expression. Where Corneille had often been bombastic, Racine was lyrical. Racine's work was a poetic masterpiece with dramatic thrust.

Andromaque (1667) was Racine's first great success, and well

received at the court. It was followed by the comedy, Les Flaideurs (1668) and the tragedy, Britannicus in 1669. Angry with Corneille, and wishing to rivalize with him, Racine had to write a "Roman" play, since this was the type with which Corneille had had so much success. Fortunately for Racine, Britannicus, while not well received at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, was liked at the court. As Raymond Picard notes in La Carrière de Jean Racine (1956; new ed. Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 153, "Britannicus a surtout permis de mesurer la haine des ennemis de Racine, et aussi leur impuissance, que la carrière de l'heureux poète et courtisan allait continuer à démontrer." The following year the rivalry came to a head when Corneille and Racine each wrote a play on the same subject; Racine's triumph with his Bérénice over Corneille's Tite et Bérénice was complete, despite the fact that Corneille's play undoubtedly was more original and faithful to the Bérénice legend.

It was in the famous preface to Bérénice that Racine expounded on his ideas regarding the tragic theatre: "Ce n'est point une nécessité qu'il y ait du sang et des morts dans une tragédie: il suffit que l'action en soit grande, que les acteurs en soient héroïques, que les passions y soient excitées, et que tout s'y ressente de cette tristesse majestueuse qui fait tout le plaisir de la tragédie."¹⁹ He also stated that "il n'y a que le vraisemblable qui touche dans la tragédie. . . . toute l'invention consiste

¹⁹ Jean Racine, Théâtre complet de Racine, ed. Maurice Rat (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1960), p. 299. All further references to Racine's prefaces or lines from his plays will be made to this edition, which will be referred to as Théâtre complet.

à faire quelque chose de rien."²⁰ According to Racine, "La principale règle est de plaire et de toucher: toutes les autres ne sont faites que pour parvenir à cette première. . . ."²¹ One principle that Corneille, Molière, and Racine did all agree on was that a play should give pleasure--"plaire"--to the public.

With the appearance of Bajazet in 1672, the attacks by Corneille's friends were renewed. This time Racine was accused of making his play too French, of not rendering the true atmosphere of a Turkish harem. These criticisms were lodged by those hardly qualified to judge such matters, considering how little was generally known of the Asiatic empire in that period. Yet the plot--quite complicated, and in contrast to the simplicity of Bérénice--seems to have remained uncriticized. (Turkish themes were very fashionable just then--witness the popularity of Molière's delightful Le Bourgeois gentilhomme--and Racine's play was based on a melodramatic novel of the time.)

At the height of his glory Racine produced Mithridate for performance in 1673. It was considered the most "cornélien" of his plays, and rivaled Corneille in the area of dramaturgy most familiar to him. It looked to Roman history for its source, and its heroine, torn between love and duty, chose the latter. There, however, the comparison with Corneille had to end. While Racine's detractors claimed he had not represented the historical facts with sufficient accuracy, they did not concede that his changes made for a much better (and creative) play. Comparisons were made as well with

²⁰ Théâtre complet, p. 300.

²¹ Ibid.

La Calprenède's La Mort de Mithridate, written almost forty years earlier, but the two plays are of rather different inspiration and composition. The action of Racine's play is essentially simple; the psychological portraits are true, and transcend the dated personages of Corneille's theatre; the situations in which the characters find themselves are believable; the language of the characters is noble, as befits their social condition; the expression of thought and feeling and the exposition of off-stage occurrences is poetic, and moving both in content and form. In all these ways Racine was meeting his own ideal of dramaturgy, as expressed in the (first) preface to Britannicus, when he was defending himself against attacks: "une action simple, chargée de peu de matière, telle que doit être une action qui se passe en un seul jour, et qui, s'avancant par degrés vers sa fin, n'est soutenue que par les intérêts, les sentiments et les passions des personnages. . . ."22

Mithridate has often been viewed as the most "louis-quatorzième" of Racine's plays. The reasons for this are several, the most important being the "atmosphere de la cour" which Racine so adeptly recreated and in which the great warrior-king Mithridate is the center of interest. It was an homage to Louis XIV, and a glorification of his reign. Mithridate was the greatest ruler in Asia; Louis XIV, the greatest European monarch of his age. The major characters in the play were members of the nobility. The elevated tone of their language, the politeness and decorum they observed in speech and manners all echoed the strict etiquette and fashion of the court of the Sun King. Racine also observed the bienséances,

²² Théâtre complet, p. 234.

so vital in the rigidly ordered society for which he was writing.

The playwright Racine had the good fortune to coincide with his time. For the most part, the prescribed use of the unities worked well for him, and he with them. More than simply a playwright, he was a poet, one of the highest order. Profound psychological insight, and knowledge of effective dramatic devices and construction were happily contained in the breadth of his talent. Racine found the contemporary limited stage resources to his advantage in that his dialogue, which created its own décor, was highlighted as a result. This perfecter of the classical tragedy was without peer. For all the qualities that marked him a man of his time, he has shown us characters whose fundamental humanity extends beyond the confines of "le Grand Siècle," and has given us plays that mark for him a place unique in literature.

In Racine's work, the main emphasis is on the verbal rather than on the visual aspects, and it is the verbal aspect which makes us see, which creates incredibly clear images for the mind's eye. We must remember that the practices and ideals upon which the staging practices of Racine's time were based have changed over the centuries. A play is meant to be performed, not just read, and the visual aspects have necessarily come to concern us. Beginning with Racine's time, and continuing through every subsequent period, we shall see how the theatre has realized its visual ideal.

CHAPTER II

EVOLUTION OF COSTUMING AND DÉCOR FOR MITHRIDATE

It must be stated at the outset that the gaps in information about the costuming, décor, staging, and acting of many historical plays are unfortunately great. Little precise evidence has been left to us. For the period that would be of such great interest, namely, the first years that Mithridate was being performed in the public theatre, data are simply lacking.²³ (Further on, a few details for some early court performances are given.) For one, up until the closing years of the eighteenth century, a stage costume was ordinarily worn in a variety of rôles, little if any attention being given to the possible and probable incongruous effects achieved on stage. Inventories of wardrobe made at the time of an actor's or actress' death usually named the items of clothing, occasionally adding a color or shape description, but rarely cited the rôle or rôles in which the costume had been worn.²⁴ For this reason, it has been difficult to draw any sound conclusions from the documents left to us. In addition, few records were kept of specific theatrical productions. It is due both to this lack of note-taking in the first place and to a subsequent loss of archives

²³ "On voit qu'à la date où les registres de la Comédie française, enfin constituée, commencent à nous donner des détails précis et complets sur les représentations de nos deux grands tragiques, les pièces de Corneille et de Racine avaient, depuis longtemps, épuisé ce genre de succès exceptionnel qui dépend de la nouveauté." Quote taken from a section written by E. Despois in: Paul Mesnard, ed., Oeuvres de J. Racine, by Jean Racine (Paris: Hachette, 1888), VIII, 603.

²⁴ Similarly, the Livre d'Inventaire des Habits de la Comédie Française, (available in the archives de France) while detailed, gives no indications as to which costume was intended for which rôle.

that our theatre data remains incomplete. Directors as we know them today did not exist two or three centuries ago, so that the unifying force which could have given us a (written) coordinated picture of a production is sadly missing. It is possible, however, to reconstruct at least partially some performances. These reconstructions, coupled with known general information about the theatre and its practices, can be synthesized into a fairly accurate and coherent account of the currents in the French theatre in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Against this more general background will be traced the costuming and décor for as many performances of Mithridate as possible.

The Mercuré galant of July 30, 1672 announced Mithridate for the following winter,²⁵ and so it was that Mithridate was first performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne²⁶ on January 13, 1673.²⁷ The rôles were distributed as follows: Mithridate: La Fleur, Monime: La Champmeslé, Xipharès: Champmeslé, and Pharnace: Brécourt.²⁸ The

²⁵ Antoine Adam, Histoire de la littérature française au XVII^e siècle, IV (Paris: Editions Mondiales, 1968), 355.

²⁶ Located at the corner of the rue Mauconseil and the rue Neuve Saint-François, the Hôtel de Bourgogne was the only theatre in Paris in 1600. Its initial dimensions and interior arrangement are not definitely known, although it has been established that there were two stages, a number of loges, a parterre, and an amphitheatre. See S. W. Deierkauf-Holsboer's Histoire de la mise en scène dans le théâtre français à Paris de 1600 à 1673, Chapter I.

²⁷ There is some question as to the actual date of the première, but the one given here is the one most often cited.

²⁸ It is possible that Champmeslé played Pharnace, and Brécourt Xipharès, but sources do not make this clear. Henri Lyonnet, in Dictionnaire des comédiens français (Genève: Bibliothèque de la Revue universelle internationale illustrée, 1911-12), I, 234, writes that Brécourt played Xipharès in 1673.

rôle of Arbate was probably played by Hauteroche.²⁹ In the Mémoire de Mahelot, Laurent et d'autres décorateurs de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne, in the section written by Michel Laurent, an undated entry indicated the stage set for "Mitridatte": "Le théâtre est un palais à volonté. Un fauteuille, 2 tabourest."³⁰ A footnote to the title stated the following: "Tragédie de Racine, repr. en 1673. Les sièges sont pour Mithridate et ses deux fils, acte III, scène 1. On omet le poison de V, 2."³¹ (S. Wilma Deierkauf-Holsboer, in L'Histoire de la mise en scène dans le théâtre français à Paris de 1600 à 1673, cited the Mémoire as "une des principales sources de la décoration scénique au XVII^e siècle" which indicated, besides the titles of 268 plays in the repertoire of the Hôtel de Bourgogne and later of the Comédie-Française, the décor and a few of the costumes of 192 of the plays.)³² It seems there was a performance of Mithridate given on January 20, 1673, since Lyonnet mentions that La Champmeslé played Monime on that date.³³

The play was a great success, as had been predicted. Madame de Coulanges wrote of it to Madame de Sévigné in her letter of February 24, 1673, "On y pleure, on y est dans une continuelle admiration; on la voit trente fois, on la trouve plus belle la

²⁹ Paul Mesnard, ed., Oeuvres de J. Racine, by Jean Racine (Paris: Hachette, 1910), III, 5.

³⁰ Lancaster, Le Mémoire, p. 113.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Deierkauf-Holsboer, p. 39.

³³ Lyonnet, Dictionnaire, I, 307.

trentième que la première."³⁴ apart from the evocation of tears, the audience particularly liked the scene in which Mithridate reveals his war plans against Rome to his two sons. Louis XIV's declaration of war on Holland in 1672 and the subsequent victories for the French were fresh enough in the minds of the spectators for the scene to hold particular relevance for them. The first review appeared in the Gazette on February 18, and referred to the February 11 performance played before the king at Saint-Germain.³⁵ Robinet's critique (in the Gazette de Robinet) was based on the same performance, and consisted of a "Lettre en vers à Monsieur." Strangely enough, Robinet did not review the January 13 performance, if he saw it at all, until February 25. (He did see the February 21 performance.)³⁶ His review, written in about 50 lines of verse, consisted chiefly of an analysis of the action. The Gazette d'Amsterdam of March 30 of the same year announced: "'On vend icy chez Claude Barbin Mithridate de Mr. Racine, qui est une pièce très curieuse."³⁷

³⁴ Jean Racine, Oeuvres complètes de Jean Racine (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1858), p. 414.

³⁵ "Le 11 de ce mois, LL. MM. prirent le divertissement de la représentation du Mitridate, fort belle tragédie du Sr. Racine, où la Troupe Royale se fit admirer." quote taken from Pierre Mélése, "Répertoire analytique des documents contemporains d'information et de critique concernant le théâtre à Paris sous Louis XIV, 1659-1715," Société d'histoire du théâtre. Bibliothèque, No. 7 (1934), p. 155.

³⁶ Paul Mesnard, ed., Oeuvres de J. Racine, by Jean Racine (Paris: Hachette, 1910), III, 4.

³⁷ Mélése, Répertoire analytique, p. 155.

A report in the Gazette de France,³⁸ dated May 5, 1673, and made in S. Germain en Laye, stated that Mademoiselle and Monsieur, Madame de Guyfe [sic], the Princess of Monaco, and the English Ambassadors, the Duke of Montmouth, the English ambassador, and other ladies and gentlemen attended. Speaking of the chateau: "'On y entra dans un salon extraordinairement éclairé, & paré d'une merveilleuse profusion de fleurs dans des vases, & cuvettes d'argent: & la Compagnie y fut très agréablement divertie de la représentation du Mytridate du S^r Racine, par la seule Troupe Royale.'"³⁹ On that occasion, according to Pierre de Lacretelle, (in La Vie privée de Racine), "la Champmeslé fit la grande révérence de cour, habillée d'un manteau 'à la turque', en velours rouge garni de dentelles d'argent, qui recouvrait sa veste de velours noir frangée d'or et croisée d'une écharpe en point d'Espagne d'or et d'argent."⁴⁰ If this was the outfit in which she proceeded to act, then it was, in all likelihood, the dress that she wore for the earlier performances of Mithridate as well, although Lacretelle did not specifically say so. No costume descriptions are available for the rest of the cast.

³⁸ The catalogue of the exhibit on Jean Racine held in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris in 1967 tells us (on p. 53) that details of a most brilliant performance of Mithridate at the chateau of Saint-Cloud for Monsieur on May 4, 1673 are provided in the Gazette de France. Microfilm has preserved these pages (of the May 6, 1673 issue).

³⁹ "Nouvelles ordinaires, du 6 may 1673," La Gazette de France, p. 411.

⁴⁰ Pierre de Lacretelle, La Vie privée de Racine (Paris: Hachette, 1949), p. 152. This title is published together, in the same volume, with Jacques de Lacretelle, Introduction au théâtre de Racine (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1970).

A June, 1673 issue of the Mercuré galant presented historical criticism and ironic praises of the work, written by Donneau De Visé. Bayle, in a letter to his older brother, written on July 31, 1673 cited Mithridate among the theatre pieces "qui ont fait du bruit."⁴¹ On August 2 Monsieur's financial secretary, M. de Boisfranc, received Monsieur and Madame in his Saint-Ouen house. His lavish dinner was followed by a performance of Mithridate.⁴² The Gazette of August 5 reported on this performance played "avec l'admiration de toute la compagnie."⁴³ The Gazette de Robinet of the same date referred to the same performance:

"Ce charmant repas fut suivi
Du Mithridate de Racine,
Joué d'une façon divine....
Par les comédiens de l'Hôtel,
Et la Fleur, dans le maître rôle,
Se surpassa sur ma parole,
Comme fit, et me l'a semblé,
Mademoiselle Champmeslé."⁴⁴

Raymond Picard, in his La Carrière de Jean Racine,⁴⁵ mentions that the presentation of Mithridate before the Court three times in the same year was a rare privilege and due, perhaps, to Louis XIV's predilection for this play.

Several years later, on May 9, 1680, Mithridate was performed at Saint-Cloud when the Dauphine was received there for the first

⁴¹ Mélése, Répertoire analytique, p. 155.

⁴² Henry Lyonnet, Les "premières" de Jean Racine (Paris: Delagrave, 1924), p. 135.

⁴³ Mélése, Répertoire analytique, p. 155.

⁴⁴ Paul Mesnard, ed., Oeuvres de J. Racine, by Jean Racine (Paris: Hachette, 1910), III, 7.

⁴⁵ Raymond Picard, La Carrière de Jean Racine (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 178.

time after her marriage. The setting was markedly similar to the one used on May 4, 1673, as Mesnard has noted.⁴⁶ (A note in the Bibliothèque nationale exhibit catalogue mentioned earlier [in a footnote] which states, without specifying the place of performance, that in 1673 and 1680 Mithridate was performed in a "salon d'apparat" with screens, girandoles, pots of flowers, and silver vases,⁴⁷ corroborates the evidence Mesnard gives. It is most probable that the Saint-Cloud performances are being referred to in the catalogue.)

"Des paravents d'une très grande beauté, entre lesquels étaient des guéridons d'argent, portant des girandoles garnies de bougies, faisaient la décoration de ce théâtre. Entre chaque guéridon on voyait des pots remplis de toutes sortes de fleurs avec des vases et des cuvettes d'argent. Au fond du théâtre il y avait une manière d'amphithéâtre dressé dans la grande croisée qui regard Paris. Cet amphithéâtre était plein de girandoles garnies de bougies, de vases et d'autres ouvrages d'argent remplis de fleurs."⁴⁸

(Mesnard attributes this quotation to the Mercure Galant, after having mentioned that the Gazette of May 11, 1680 also referred to the May 9 performance. Goldmann,⁴⁹ on the other hand, without giving a dateline or specifying the performance the article alludes to, attributes this exact description to the Gazette. Roubine,⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Paul Mesnard, ed., Oeuvres de J. Racine, by Jean Racine (Paris: Hachette, 1910), III, 7-8.

⁴⁷ Bibliothèque Nationale, Jean Racine (Paris, 1967), p. 53. This is the Catalogue de l'Exposition Jean Racine à la Bibliothèque Nationale.

⁴⁸ Mesnard, III, 8.

⁴⁹ Lucien Goldmann, Jean Racine (Paris: L'Arche, 1956), p. 152.

⁵⁰ Roubine, Lectures de Racine, p. 9.

while citing the Mercure Galant for the same quotation, erroneously states, in a footnote, that it is a description of the feast given on May 4, 1673, not May 9, 1680. Since the feast in question was attended by the Dauphine,⁵¹ 1680 is the correct year, as that is the year she was married to the Dauphin.)

This setting quoted above was quite in keeping with the customs of the time, both in court and regular theatres, where local color or décor showing the results of historical research by its designer were virtually non-existent. The décorateur was not expected to recreate the natural scenery, architecture, or fashions of a given country at a given time in its history, but rather to embellish the stage with columns, statues, and other appropriate structures that would seem to create a "Pays de Tragédie," regal, near and yet distant, ancient and yet modern, French and yet 'exotic.' "A l'époque de Racine, on eût difficilement compris qu'un homme de théâtre pût s'attacher à des recherches aussi peu importantes, aussi enfantines que des recherches de décor et d'archéologie."⁵² The setting had to be capable of providing a support for the action in all its majesty and of keeping the story and its characters quite apart from everyday life. In great measure this unreal atmosphere was sustained through the use of candlelight, the usual mode of lighting at the time.⁵³

⁵¹ "Le Roi et la Reine, accompagnés de Monseigneur le Dauphin et de Madame la Dauphine, vinrent...ici voir Monsieur et Madame." (quoted by Mesnard, III, 7-8; see footnote 46 above.)

⁵² Jacques Talagrand, Racine (Paris: Gallimard, 1936), p. 83.

⁵³ Jacques Heuzey, "Du Costume et de la décoration tragique au XVII^e Siècle," Revue d'Histoire du théâtre, 12^e année, No. 1 (January-March 1960), p. 30.

In minimizing and conventionalizing the décor, the actors and actresses retained primary importance on the stage. Unfortunately, there was not much room for movement by them on the stages, encumbered as they already were by spectators, much less for pieces of scenery. Emphasis had to be placed on the words of a play and this was, indeed, the focal point of the theatre. Staging often involved the use of the palais à volonté, a rather indefinite place which assumed the existence of a limited area at the same time that it gave freedom for changes of scene without seeming to violate the Unity of place.

The stage costumes were the same as the fashionable outfits of the day. In the earlier days of Louis XIV's reign, princes and courtiers wore either the two-piece or the three-piece dress. The two-piece dress consisted of hose and doublet (the pourpoint), both handsomely trimmed with gold and/or silver lace and numerous buttons, while the three-piece added a plush-lined cloak, intended primarily for wear out-of-doors, and was trimmed with lace to match the hose and doublet. While the pourpoint did start to pass out of court fashion in about 1670, it was nonetheless still used on the classical stage. The rhingrave, a pair of wide breeches tied at the knee, was in style from 1665 until 1680. The justaucorps, the veste (two tunics) and the habit came into vogue in the second half of the seventeenth century. The habit, a type of long jacket, was close-fitting down to the waist, and fell skirt-like down to the knees. Its sleeves were a little wide, with cuffs that were turned back quite high up the arm and ornately finished. The stockings, or hose, were chosen to complement the color of the habit and were

attached by above-the-knee garters. There was a tremendous use of ribbons for decoration on many items of clothing. Boots were worn throughout Louis' reign, although the style did vary. Shoes were high-heeled and square-toed. Often there was as much lace in the footwear as there was leather. It was in 1673 that Louis XIV decided to wear wigs topped off with low-crowned hats. Powdering of wigs did not become fashionable until after 1700.

Women's clothing, between 1660 and 1680, included two skirts, the modeste worn over the fripone, the latter not being entirely hidden by the former. The draped overskirt was drawn back and fell into a long train known as the manteau de cour. Bodices were kept very narrow, in contrast to the bouffant skirts, necklines plunged and rose, but sleeves remained at three-quarter length. In the second half of the seventeenth century the most frequently used dress materials were velvet, satin, moire, and a type of silk called brocatelle. Black was a popular color, as were various shades of gray and red, and lemon yellow. Between 1661 and 1685 the use of beautiful laces became the rage. Hair was arranged in curls hanging over the ears, and later, was massed at the forehead in curls and locks. On the stage actresses wore many feathers on their heads, and the dresses were usually embroidered. AS André Blum notes in his Histoire du costume, les modes au XVII^e et au XVIII^e siècle, the main concern of actresses was not the provision of elements of local color (through their attire), but their own adornment.

In general it is rather difficult to give a completely clear picture of the fashions of the time due to the constant change they

were undergoing. Actors and actresses sometimes received clothing from members of the nobility and then used them as stage costumes. Richelieu especially, on a number of occasions, gave costumes that had been used at court feasts. The cost of purchasing costumes was high,⁵⁴ was usually borne by the performers, and oftentimes was quite a burden. In special cases the king defrayed these costs.

To represent a character from antiquity, and this particularly concerns costuming for Mithridate, of course, the actors would wear a wig or a plumed helmet and a fitted breast-plate that reached the hips and to which leather strips were attached. The whole formed a tunic-like costume and was worn with a short underskirt. Sleeves of the outfit were elbow-length, often with wide and flowing cuffs. Laced boots were worn on otherwise bare legs. The helmet was made of cardboard and the armor of gold and silver canvas. While actors added these touches of antiquity to their essentially contemporary costumes, the actresses modified the prevailing fashion less often. Extra embroidery or brocade might be added to the dresses, and veils and crowns were worn when a rôle demanded it. The clash of contemporary and pseudo-antique dress certainly did not escape Racine's notice. His knowledge of antiquity was thorough, and he tried several times to oppose these anachronisms, but to no avail.⁵⁵ "On pouvait contempler sur la scène des Grecs et des Romains avec des chapeaux à plumes, des gants blancs à franges d'or, une épée sus-

⁵⁴ Blum cites the example of Floridor, who purchased the outfits of Bellerose, the famous actor of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, at a price of 20,000 pounds.

⁵⁵ Victor Fournel, Curiosités théâtrales, anciennes et modernes (Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1859), p. 36.

pendue à un large baudrier. On ne songeait qu'à l'opulence et à la majesté du costume, sans songer à consulter les érudits."⁵⁶

The costume à la romaine was sufficient to identify a "type," as was a turban, a crown, or cane. All these symbolically-appareled characters played their parts in front of a painted backdrop, moving sufficiently forward to maintain the perspective intact. If the anachronisms the costumes provided are more obvious, they are nonetheless not the sole incongruities that existed. Particularly in retrospect, it becomes evident that costuming and décor (painted or three-dimensional) could not always be reconciled into an acceptable entity. While the manner of stage delivery--declamation--added to the pomposity of the characters, it often detracted from the beauty of the play or from any semblance of reality it may have intended to convey. Plays themselves often demonstrated a lack of verisimilitude in the presentation of antiquity, whether historically-based or fictitious. While Racine was not able to do much about the costumes and décor used for his tragedies, he did give a great deal of attention to the art of play interpretation, discussed in chapter IV, and defended both his accuracy in the use of historical sources and the poetic license to which he had recourse.

quite a few court performances of Mithridate were given in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and in the last years⁵⁷ of

⁵⁶ Fournel, p. 37.

⁵⁷ H. C. Lancaster, in Sunset: A History of Parisian Drama in the Last Years of Louis XIV, 1701-1715 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1945), p. 28, compiled a list of the most popular plays performed (not necessarily excluding those presented at the Court) between 1701 and 1715. He wrote: "Of all tragedies acted in 1701-15, le Cid was the one most frequently performed; next, if we leave Psyché out of consideration, five tragedies by Racine; then certain

Louis XIV's reign in the eighteenth century. Mithridate was Louis' favorite play. (See appendix for performances given in the public theatre.) Despois cites twenty-five court performances between 1680 and 1715.⁵⁸ From the evidence Mesnard gives, based on the "Registre de La Grange," some of these dates and places of performance can be specified. Saint-Cloud: May 9, 1680; Saint-Germain: December 4, 1680 and January 31, 1688; Fontainebleau: unknown number of performances between July 28 and September 3, 1681, November 5, 1684, and October 12, 1688(?); Versailles: June 15, 1685; Chambord: September 25, 1684. The private readings of Mithridate that Louis XIV also enjoyed should be taken into account when noting the frequency with which the play was given.

Except for the changes fashions in court dress were undergoing and thereby being reflected in stage costumes, there was no appreciable difference in the approach to stage costuming at the beginning of the eighteenth century. No drawings, paintings, etchings or engravings of the eighteenth century specifically illustrate any actors or actresses in a given rôle in Mithridate. It may well be that since the practice of using one costume in several rôles interchangeably was still the order of the day, portraits were labeled without a specific rôle designation. This persistent generalization

tragedies by Corneille, Campistron, Thomas Corneille, Pécbantré, Rotrou, and Quinault." Following is the above-mentioned list, with the number of performances cited for each tragedy: le Cid 111, Phèdre 92, Andromaque 87, Psyché 84, Iphigénie 68, Mithridate 67, Britannicus 66, Rodogune 52, Andronic 50, Horace 50, Polyeucte 49, Ariane 48, Essex 47, Cinna 44, Géta 43, Nicomède 43, Alcibiade 42, Venceslas 41, Agrippa 41, Astrate 40, Rhadamiste 37.

⁵⁸ Mesnard, VIII, 616.

makes it very difficult to present any concrete descriptive evidence for the eighteenth century until the stirrings of costume reform were felt. Even though he has his detractors, most sources do attribute the initial interest and efforts at innovation in this area to the well-known actor Lekain. He and Mlle Clairon led the movement, and Talma later furthered the cause considerably.

The period of the Regency was a good one for the Comédie-Française in that the latter presented biweekly performances at the Palais Royal attended by members of the nobility. Between 1715 and 1721, forty-eight public performances of Mithridate were given in the Comédie's own house, attended mostly by the bourgeoisie.

Documents in the Archives de France related to the Comédie-Française (of which there are many) shed exceedingly little light on performances ^{of} Mithridate.⁵⁹ (One reason might well be that during Louis XV's reign, spanning nearly sixty years, there were only fifteen court performances of Mithridate.) This observation is upheld, if somewhat indirectly, by a point that Alasseur makes:

La prospérité ou le déclin des théâtres dépendait en grande partie, au 18^e siècle, de la faveur ou de la défaveur que la noblesse manifestait à son égard. Les gentilshommes de la Chambre du Roi avaient, en effet, la haute main sur tout ce qui regardait les théâtres et en particulier la Comédie Française. Il est donc assez naturel que l'histoire des rapports entre la haute société et le théâtre soit en réalité, l'histoire même du théâtre.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ One set of folders which describes the conditions of costumes for court performances between 1754 and 1770 and includes programs that indicate casts would have been most helpful, had information on Mithridate been part of it, but this is unfortunately not the case.

⁶⁰ Claude Alasseur, La Comédie française au 18^e siècle; étude économique (Paris and La Haye: Mouton, 1967), p. 9.

With the very gradual change in taste in the theatre in the eighteenth century (particularly in the latter half), there was a slow shift away from emphasis on adherence to the principle of the three Unities and its accompanying lack of verisimilitude in costumes and décor and stylized acting to an emphasis on a more real world, one that was to be conceived accurately, without artifice, and was to be presented with a care for historical truth and more natural delivery. Because this conceptualization of the theatre was applied to plays being written in the eighteenth century, the classical plays of the previous century were to be approached in a different way. There was, however, no great interest in preserving the "traditional" view of dramaturgy or of interpretation. In fact, much interest was lost in the classical tragedy altogether. It simply did not fit into the newer scheme of things.

Racine was not entirely forgotten, however. As J.-J. Roubine states in Lectures de Racine on p. 70, "l'unique et fondamentale différence qui sépare la tragédie du drame réside dans les conditions de leur représentation." When interest was resuscitated, it understandably dressed the old in new attire. "Quoi qu'il en soit, l'image que cette époque se forme de Racine est d'abord théâtrale: ce sont les lectures d'acteurs, leurs interprétations, qui la dessinent."⁶¹ The resistance to stagnation and the desire for a different form of expression, reflecting values of the time may well have had its salutary effects upon the classical theatre. Perfection need not be limiting, and in breaking with tradition, new and feasible approaches to the old only served to point out the lasting greatness

⁶¹ Roubine, p. 76.

of Racine's theatre.

Progress in the area of costume design was not, however, swift or smooth. Before the initiation of costume reform in the mid-eighteenth century, stage costumes at the Comédie-Française still copied court dress, and make-up was much the same on stage as off. Karl Mantzius, in his A History of Theatrical Art, explains that (minor) attempts made in the seventeenth century to provide some semblance of historical accuracy in the costuming were forsaken in the eighteenth century, "and were replaced partly by purely contemporary dresses, partly by the fantastic conventional finery of a masquerade."⁶² The cost of the costumes was often quite high, as they were even more sumptuous than those of the seventeenth century. Jules Bonnassies notes, in La Comédie-Française (Paris: Vidier, 1874), p. 258, that several documents indicate that the wardrobes of Lekain and Mlle Clairon were evaluated at 80,000 and 120,000 pounds respectively. The "Menus Plaisirs" also used to lend costumes. "Le 27 mars 1778, les quatre Premiers Gentilshommes de la Chambre réclamèrent aux trois grands théâtres les habits et jusqu'aux pierreries qu'ils tenaient des magasins des Menus."⁶³ The court dress referred to above was worn in all tragedies, and for the actresses meant

large paniers, with diamonds and feathers in their hair, and their dresses loaded with fringe, lace, and bright ribbons. The actors had adopted a hero-costume, which had to be worn in all parts. They wore large Louis XIV wigs, even after they had gone out of fashion,

⁶² Karl Mantzius, A History of Theatrical Art, trans. Louise von Cossel (New York: Peter Smith, 1937), p. 227.

⁶³ Bonnassies, p. 257.

three-cornered hats with large bunches of feathers, elaborately worked gilt armours, wide silk sleeves, and a fine cambric shirt with lace cuffs. Below the armour was a small round wickerwork frame, a tonnelet, to which was attached a short skirt with gilt fringe reaching down to the knees. Above the skirt was a broad sword-belt, also fringed, with a small ornamental dagger. The hands were covered by gilt-fringed gloves, the legs by silk stockings and a kind of embroidered half-boots, trimmed with gold, and with high red heels.

On the stage heroes and heroines almost invariably held something in their hand, a fan, a magic wand, or some other object, and it was considered a daring innovation when Mlle Maupin, the eccentric singer, when playing Medea in the opera of that name, attempted to omit this.⁶⁴

The first small steps toward changing the prevailing anachronistic tradition in costuming, taken by Lekain and Mlle Clairon in the August 20, 1755 performance of Voltaire's Orphelin de la Chine, did not precipitate immediate further changes. These could only come gradually. With the disappearance of the huge hip pads, the hanches, the paniers also passed out of use, and gave the actresses greater freedom of movement on stage. "Roman" women, however, still wore satins and laces and long scarves.

It is interesting to quote here, at some length, the commentary of A.-Vincent Arnault, who wrote his Souvenirs et les Regrets du Vieil amateur dramatique in 1861.

Lekain traçait lui-même ses costumes, conformément aux renseignemens qu'il devait à ses recherches. C'est lui qui a établi dans cet important accessoire une vérité qu'avant lui on ne connaissait pas, et qu'il ne modifiait que pour lui donner de dignité. C'est lui qui substitua à la friperie burlesque, dont les héros de l'antiquité s'affublaient sur notre théâtre, des habits appropriés aux temps et aux moeurs

⁶⁴ Mantzius, pp. 227-28.

auxquels appartenait l'action représentée. Par lui, la tunique et le manteau des Grecs et des Romains remplacèrent l'habit à panier sur le dos de César et d'Œdipe. Le satin de Gènes et le velours à quatre poils furent toujours employés à la confection de leurs costumes: ainsi le prescrivait la bienséance. Mais ces étoffes modernes recevant les formes que leur eût données l'antiquité, l'illusion était complète.

Les doctes du jour blâmeraient peut-être l'emploi de ces étoffes modernes dans les costumes antiques. Mais serait-ce juste? Le roi et les princes, en tous les temps ne se sont-ils pas habillés des étoffes les plus magnifiques qui fussent en usage de leur règne? Ne possédant pas ces étoffes, quoi de mieux que de les remplacer par les plus précieuses qui soient aujourd'hui?

.....
Mademoiselle Clairon a rendu à la scène française des services dont l'effet s'est prolongé bien au-delà de sa retraite: elle n'a pas moins puissamment contribué que Lekain à la réforme du costume.⁶⁵

puissamment contribué que Lekain à la réforme du costume.⁶⁵
"Larive, Lekain costume.⁶⁵, ... the great wigs drew criticism of playing Caesar in a full-bottomed powdered wig, satin breeches and red-heeled shoes. Despite such questionings, stage costume before Talma's reforms took little account of the period of the play."⁶⁶ Larive's decision to stop wearing the great wigs drew criticism from the public and the Court. The wishes and opinions of the Court were indeed a restraining influence; but then, many actors and actresses were a hindrance to the reform as well. A major breakthrough came with Talma's appearance, in January, 1789, in the rôle of Proculus in Voltaire's Brutus, and for which he wore a Roman toga. The audience was astounded by the contrast between

⁶⁵ Antoine Vincent Arnault, Les Souvenirs et les regrets du vieil amateur dramatique (Paris: Alphonse Leclère, 1861), pp. 20-21 and p. 54.

⁶⁶ Herbert F. Collins, Talma (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), p. 44.

him and the other personages dressed, as was the custom, in the fashion of the day, and expressed its approval exuberantly.⁶⁷

Talma devoted a great deal of time and energy to researching his rôles for historical accuracy in costuming. He did this by himself visiting museums to see ancient statues and busts, engravings, prints, and paintings depicting the ancients, and by availing himself fo the excellent and willing services of the greatest painters of his time, notably David. Talma was known for the meticulous attention he gave to detail and he applied this same care to every rôle, major and minor, classical or new to his time. Talma's persistent efforts at reform left an indelible mark on the theatre. In his Réflexions sur Lekain et sur l'art théâtral (Paris: A. Fontaine, 1856), p. 22, he wrote:

Je devins peintre à ma manière; j'eus beaucoup d'obstacles et de préjugés à vaincre, moins de la part du public que de la part des acteurs; mais enfin le succès couronna mes efforts; et, sans craindre que l'on m'accuse de présomption, je puis dire que mon exemple a eu une grande influence sur tous les théâtres de l'Europe.

Specific information regarding costuming for Mithridate in the eighteenth century (with only one or two exceptions) is not, as has been stated previously, available. For décor, however, some concrete evidence exists; in a copy of the volume from the year 1800, (covering the end of the eighteenth century) entitled Manuel des meubles, Décors, objets & Ustensiles nécessaires à la Représentation des Pièces Composant le Répertoire du Théâtre Français, the following description is found:

⁶⁷ Collins, pp. 44-45.

Mithridate

La table dorée côté de la Reine un fauteuil à côté. Le Palais.

Un fauteuil un tabouret de chaque côté à la fin du 3^e acte on les range à la fin du 9^e. Le lit de Tancrede⁶⁸ dans la coulisse côté du Roi à la fin du 4^e acte pour le 5^e.

Un fauteuil côté de la reine à la fin du 4^e acte. Une boîte d'or pour arcas acte 5.

Népoligne pour baisser le rideau.
Venez et recevez l'âme de Mithridate. (B.)⁶⁹

The date of the earliest entry in the Manuel or of the earliest performance of Mithridate with this décor is not indicated; however, this particular décor would in all likelihood have continued to be used through the early years of the nineteenth century and would, therefore, account for the décor of a minimum of twenty-six performances at the Comédie-Française, 1800 through 1805. The year 1805 is given as a cut-off point somewhat arbitrarily, but shows regard for the years the following source covers.

The basic simplicity in staging did carry over into the nineteenth century. A slightly more elaborate description than the one given above, albeit a less clear one, is to be found in a book entitled Materiel de Décorations de 1806 à 1839. The title, along with the entries, is handwritten. This volume was written by a machiniste as is evidenced by his note inside the cover, "Dupont chef machiniste, N° 24 rue Palantine, 7."

Mithridate tragédie en 5 acte
la chambre romaine la ferme au 4^ere
sur la ferme au trophé d'armes qui a été fait
pour Caligula au 3^{em} acte la chambre du
tribun un candelambre de chaque coté de la

⁶⁸ Tancrede, tragedy by Voltaire, 1760.

⁶⁹ p. 304. This is an unpublished book in the archives of the Comédie-Française.

porte milieu idem a la Cour.
 pour fond de porte au milieu le rideau de
 Cincinatus on met un des trophé de léonidas au
 dessous de celui qui est à la ferme Cour.⁷⁰

Here, the description may or may not have applied to performances of Mithridate beginning specifically with the year 1806. If it did, the décor of thirty-six performances at the Comédie-Française is accounted for. The new production may well have premiered in 1807, though, as there were nine performances of Mithridate that year; that would only slightly reduce the total--to thirty-three performances--for the thirty-three years in question. The number of performances of Mithridate tapered off gradually (after 1807) and the play was entirely absent from the active repertoire of the Comédie-Française from 1822 to 1837. In October of 1838 Rachel made her début in the rôle of Monime; from that year, through 1855 she played the rôle of Monime in sixty-three of the sixty-eight⁷¹ performances of Mithridate given at the Comédie-Française. It seems so likely that a new production would have been mounted for this highly-acclaimed actress, but there is no specific record of it. The only piece--or pieces--of evidence on which the whole burden of proof could rest would be one photograph and one sketch showing Rachel in the rôle of Monime. (See Figs. 1 and 2.) The two costumes, while similar in style, nonetheless differ one from the other, supporting the idea of at least two different productions being staged between 1838 and 1855. Neither illustration is,

⁷⁰ p. 214.

⁷¹ There is a discrepancy, among sources, in the number of performances of Mithridate given in 1854. (See appendix.)



MONIME

Et toi, fatal tissu, malheureux diadème,
 Bandeau que mille fois j'ai trempé de mes pleurs,
 Au moins, en terminant ma vie et mon supplice,
 Ne pouvais-tu me rendre un funeste service?

(*Mithridate*, acte V, scène I.)

Fig. 1

RACHEL AS MONIME

Photograph by Henri de la Blanchère, in Rachel et la tragédie,
 by J. G. Janin.

Monime — *Antoine*
de la



Fig. 2


RACHEL AS MONIME

This sketch appears as "Planche VIII" in "La Comédie-Française 1680-1962," by R. T. Coele, facing p. 243.

unfortunately, dated, nor is the costume designer cited. Only one other costume sketch is available for the first half of the nineteenth century. The date of the production it was intended for is not specified, nor is it made clear whether the costume was for Xipharès or Pharnace. Albert designed the costume. (See Fig. 3.)

We do have a description of the décor used in the October 21, 1865 reprise of Mithridate by the Comédie-Française. It is to be found in Le Registre des Tapissiers, dating from the mid-1800's (about 1860).

Tapis gris 2 chaises peinte or et blanc
 couvertes en toile fond rouge et à
 étoile jaune, un divan à 3 bourlets,
 4 tabourets peint à têtes de lion
 or et blanc, 2^{es} romain pieds dorés
 le tout couverts en reps à rais avec
 galons d'or cousu dessus l'etoffe,
 une table romaine ronde bronze
 tapis en drap rouge avec frange or
 A Droite-- la table une chaise à coté, un ^{es} le
 long du chassis du 1^{er} plan
 Au Fond-- le divan au dessous du panneau du
 chassis du 3^{eme} plan
 A Gauche-- une chaise, un ^{es} de même que à Droite,
 les 4 tabourets au fond à chaque
 colonnes
 Pour le 3^{eme} acte mettre la table
 presqu'au millieu de la Scène la
 chaise à coté les 2^{es} de chaque coté
 à une distance.⁷²

(^{es} represents an armless, backless chair whose silhouette is best illustrated this way: ) How many performances this décor was used for is not definitely established. Sketches of a few of the costumes designed by Albert in the second half of the nineteenth century (ostensibly in the 1860's) can be found in the archives of the Comédie-Française, and were conceivably used in the production

⁷²
 Anon., n.p.



woolen bandeau

white wool "coat"

sleeves of mauve
silk, clasped
with gold
buttons

red belt with
gold medallions

tunic of light
blue wool with
white satin
horizontal band
with black and
gold design

vertical band
in gold and
black

pants of mauve
silk

gold fringe on
coat

Fig. 3

COSTUME OF XIPIHARÈS OR PHARNACE

Designed by Albert in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Drawn from costume sketch in Comédie Française. Costumes, Vol. I.
Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."



Fig. 4

COSTUME OF PHARNACE

Designed by Albert in the 1860's.

Drawn from costume sketch in Comédie Française. Costumes, Vol. I.
Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."



bandeau with
medallions

gold belt and
bracelets

sleeves of white
and gold silk

gold and white
satin bands on
lower tunic;
gold fringe

yellow pants
with silver
spots

boots of blue
and gold wool

Fig. 5 COSTUME OF PHARNACE OR XIPHAREÈS
Designed by Albert in the 1860's.
Drawn from costume sketch in Comédie Française. Costumes, Vol. I.
Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."

Fig. 6 COSTUME OF XIPHARÈS

Designed by Albert in the 1860's.



Drawn from costume
sketch in *Comédie
Française. Costumes,*
Vol. I.
Courtesy of "Les Collections
de la Comédie-Française."



bandeau of gold
with white pearls

bandeau
"streamers" of
white wool with
gold fringe

coat of brownish
red, edged in
gold fringe

robe of green
wool

golden belt

violet pants

white and gold
shoes

Fig. 7

COSTUME OF ARBATE

Designed by Albert in the 1860's.

Drawn from costume sketch in Comédie Française. Costumes, Vol. I.

Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."



Fig. 8. COSTUME OF SOLDIER

Designed by Albert in the 1860's

Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."

with the above-described décor. (See Figs. 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.) The décor may have dated back as many as almost thirty years (if Rachel was featured in a new production), or it may have been entirely new. If the 1865 production used "old" décor, it does not seem too likely that only the costumes would have been newly-designed for it. The décor probably was new. As such, one may wonder why, with only nine performances of Mithridate between 1862 and 1878 (six performances between 1865 and 1878) at the Comédie-Française, another new production would have been needed for the 1879 reprise. It may have been due to the fact that Sarah Bernhardt made her first appearance in the rôle of Monime, with Eugène Sylvain as Mithridate, that year. Whatever the reasons may have been--stellar casting or otherwise--the 1879 production was new, if judging only by the one available sketch for Pharnace's costume (see Fig. 9) specifically labeled as being for the 1879 reprise. The sketch is anonymous, and the costume is quite different from the one designed by Albert fifteen to twenty years earlier. Fortunately, the newness of the production can be more fully substantiated by the first concrete, precise evidence regarding staging of Mithridate that the archives of the Comédie-Française are able to furnish, this in the form of an annotated copy--not annotated edition--of the play. To record this (undated) mise en scène, an 1874 edition (published in Paris by Michel Lévy Frères) was used, which leads one to expect reasonably that the mise en scène described is that of the 1879 production, since there were no performances of Mithridate at the Comédie-Française between 1874 and 1878. The handwritten notations first provide a brief description

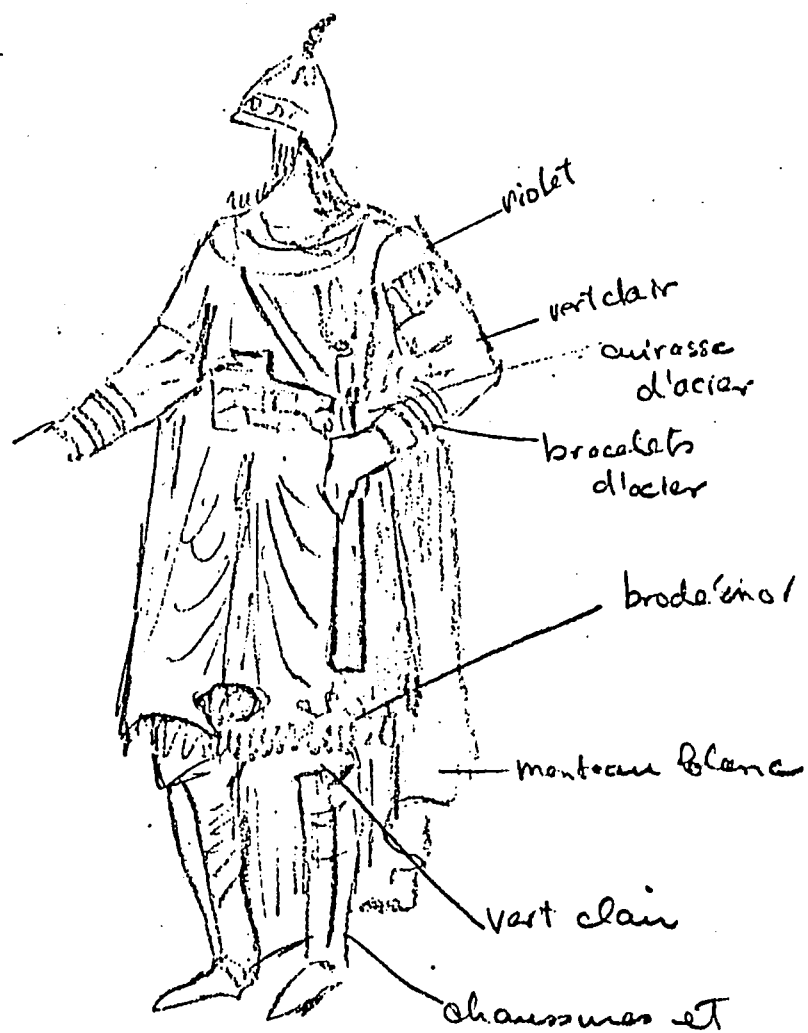


Fig. 9 COSTUME OF PHARNACE

worn by M. Dupont-Vernon for the reprise of
February 1879

Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."

of the décor and props and a simple diagram showing their positions on stage. The actual mise en scène that follows consists only of directions for physical movement on the stage with little diagrams occasionally added for clarification. There are no directions to guide the dramatic interpretations of the rôles.

Between 1879 and 1897, performances of Mithridate were not given on a regular basis at the Comédie-Française. Whether or not it was actually the latter date that saw the creation of a new production cannot be ascertained, but a photograph of the actors at that time makes a (visual) description of the costumes of the major characters possible. (See Figs. 10 and 11.) Although certain comparisons cannot be made within each production because of a "missing link," one point of contrast is interesting to note through several productions. In the performances of the 1860's, Xipharès wears a helmet clearly Greek in style; in 1879 Pharnace, the Roman sympathizer, wears a helmet of Roman inspiration; in 1897, where we see the costumes for both characters, the designs of the headgear not only reflect once again the sources of inspiration as being Greek for Xipharès, and Roman for Pharnace, but serve as well to reflect and underscore, however subtly, the ideological split between the two brothers.

In the 1800's, as descriptions of décor become more specific (and more available) we also begin to find some illustrations of costumes. These are limited in number, but are at least extant. One can no longer resort to reliance on knowledge of general stage costume styles--as was possible for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries--because the use of specific costumes for specific charac-



Fig. 10 COSTUMES OF MITHRIDATE AND MONIME, worn by M. Sylvain
and Mlle Dudley, respectively, for 1897 performance.

Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."



Fig. 11 COSTUMES OF XIPLARÈS (left) AND PHARNACE (right), worn by MM. Albert-Lambert and Leitner, respectively, for 1897 performance.

Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."

ters in specific plays, and even in reprises of the same play, becomes the order of the day.

It is not until December 16, 1937 that we again come to a (reprise of) Mithridate for which illustrations of most of the costumes exist. (See Figs. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17.) In addition, a sketch of the stage décor is available (see Fig. 18), as is a record of the mise en scène.

While Le Miroir du monde of December 24 provided photographs of Jean Yonnel and Marie Bell as Mithridate and Monime, there is no sketch of Mithridate's costume that can be reproduced here. Emile Mas, in Le Petit Bleu of January 24, 1938, noted that Yonnel's costumes were baroque, resembling a dressing gown evocative of the ballets russes in the third act.⁷³ Marie Bell, according to Antoine in Aux Ecoutes of December 25, looked as though she had been costumed in the rue de la Paix.⁷⁴

Robert Kemp found the décor stifling, oppressive, with no feeling for the nearness of the sea.⁷⁵ Whatever the staging (by Yonnel) may have lacked, the total interpretation of the play, it seems, more than made up for it, and was much praised.

The costumes, décor, and staging of the 1937 production were retained for the performances given in 1938. Thirteen years passed before Mithridate was again presented at the Comédie-Française in a new production, once again directed by Jean Yonnel, who again took

⁷³ Edouard Champion, La Comédie-Française, V (Paris: R. Munier, 1937), 207.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 206.



Fig. 12 COSTUME OF MONIME, worn by Marie Bell, December 16, 1937;
designed by Marie-Hélène Dasté. Drawn from photograph.
Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."

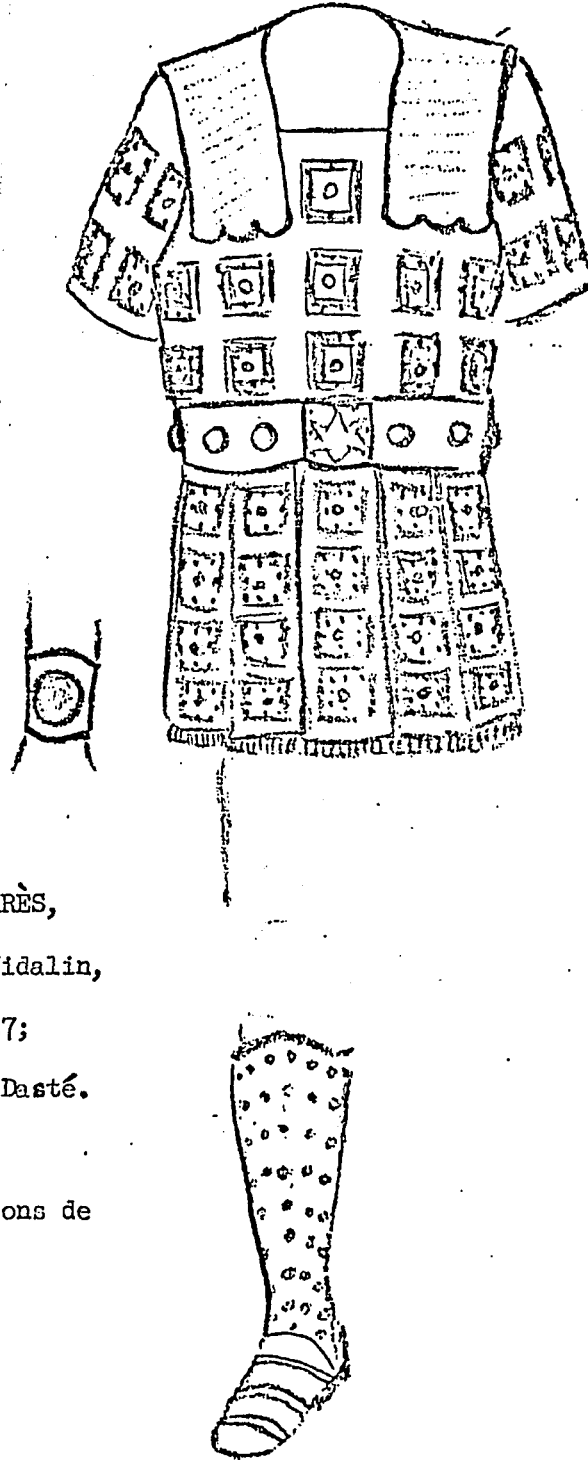


Fig. 13 COSTUME OF XIPHARÈS,
worn by Robert Vidalin,

December 16, 1937;

designed by Marie-Hélène Dasté.

Drawn from photograph.

Courtesy of "Les Collections de
la Comédie-Française."



Fig. 14

COSTUME OF ARBATE,

worn by Balpêtre, December 16, 1937; designed by
Marie-Hélène Dasté.

Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."



Fig. 15

COSTUME OF PHOEDIME,

worn by Henriette Barreau,

December 16, 1937;

designed by Marie-Hélène
Dasté.

Courtesy of "Les
Collections de la Comédie-
Française."



Fig. 16

COSTUME OF ARCAS,

worn by M. Jean Valcourt,

December 16, 1937; designed

by Marie-Hélène Dasté.

Courtesy of "Les Collections
de la Comédie-Française."

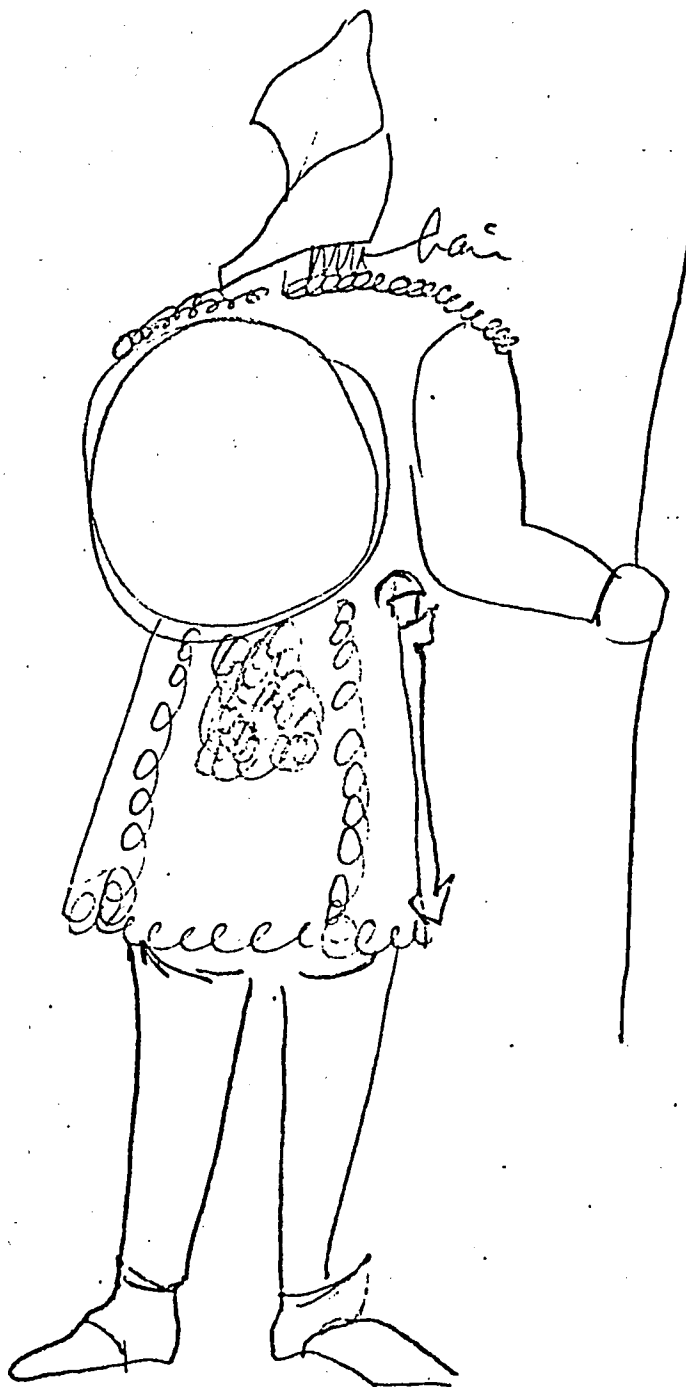


Fig. 17

COSTUME OF GUARDS;

sketch dated December 16, 1937; designed by Marie-Hélène

Dasté.

Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."

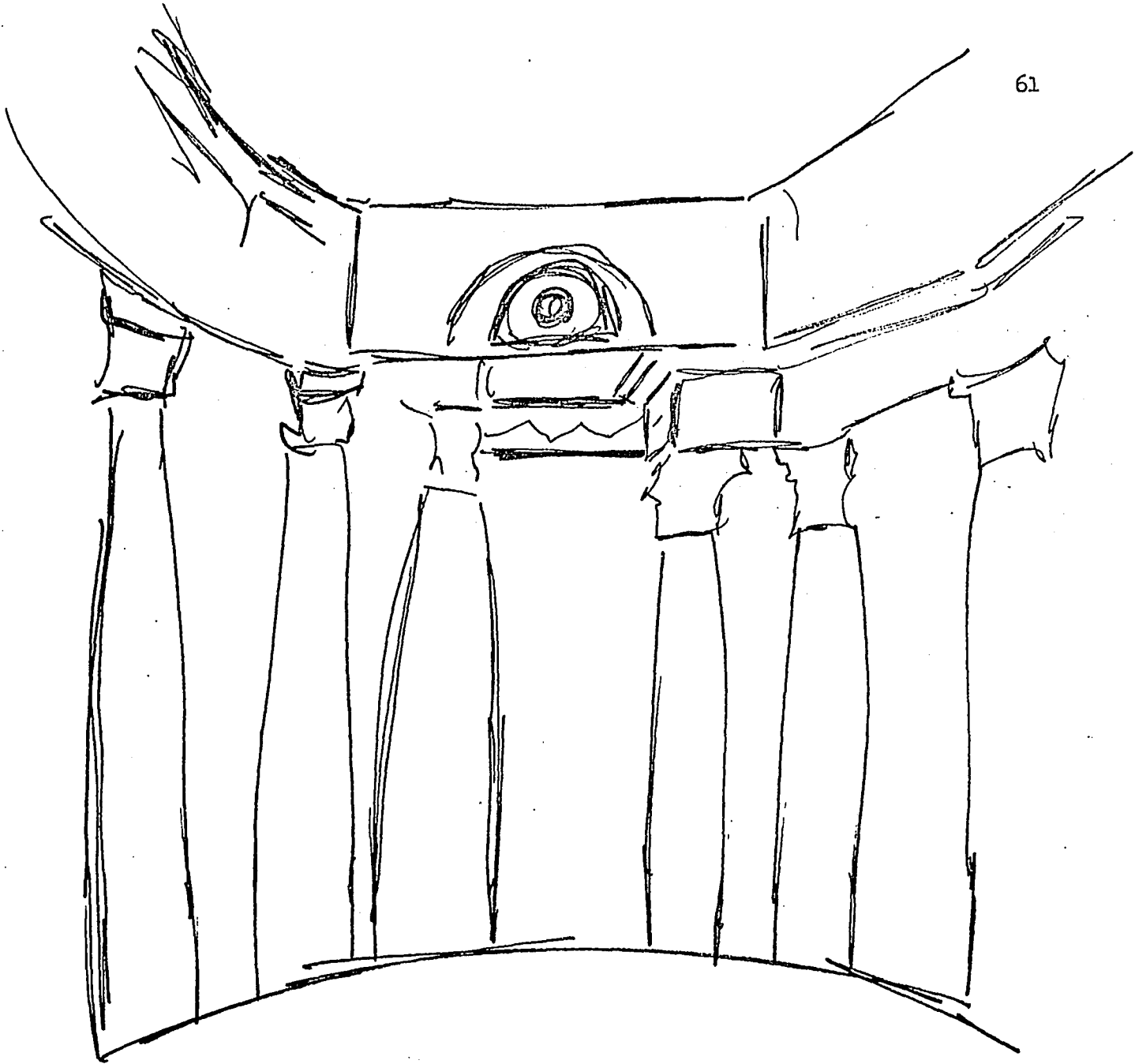


Fig. 18 SKETCH OF 1937 DÉCOR FOR
MITHRIDATE

the title rôle.

The 1937 production had had one designer each for costumes and for décor; in the 1952 production both costume and décor designs were by one man, Yves Brayer. Some similarities to the previous décor were evident, particularly in the symmetrical disposition of the scenery.

At stage center, atop a set of steps spanning the width of the stage, was an opening draped by a curtain which, when drawn, revealed a background of rocks, sea, and sky. Six entrances were provided, one each stage right and stage left on the levels of: the bay door (beyond its curtain); the ground, at the base of the steps; the ground, in the very foreground. Between the foremost entrances and the stairs two benches, one on each side, were placed parallel to the "walls," the latter set at an angle, thus focusing attention directly to the center of the stage. An armchair was provided for Act III.

The costumes were striking and less given to the busy detail that had characterized many earlier designs.

In both the 1937 and 1952 productions some music was included, although only the notes on the latter mise en scène give credit to the person in charge of this aspect of the production. It is not clear whether André Jolivet composed the necessary bars or borrowed them from the music literature, nor whether he performed or provided for the musician or musicians. Probably the music was played "live" at each performance, but this is not certain. A brief comparison of the use of music in the two productions is in order here. Both descriptions are drawn from the respective annotated copies of

the play--the records of the mise en scène.

In the 1937 staging, at almost the end of Act II, Scene i, Phoedime turns toward the door and announces, "On vient," to which Monime responds briefly, ending the dialogue of that scene, and a fanfare follows, indicating the transition into Scene ii, whereas in the 1952 staging the music, labeled as a far-off fanfare, begins immediately preceding Phoedime's "on vient," and she finishes her few words over the sound of the music. As Monime responds, the fanfare ceases. As Monime and Phoedime leave, a new fanfare and Scene ii begin with the entrance of guards, Xipharès and Pharnace, Arbate, and finally Mithridate. He enters on the last note of the fanfare.

Music was again used in Act V, Scenes iv-v. Two lines before the end of Scene iv, the 1937 mise en scène notes indicate music. Arbate moves to another spot, and presently Monime finishes the remaining two lines, beginning with, "Il vient." Xipharès enters. Only after Mithridate is borne in on a shield which is set on the ground (Scene v), and the guards, Arbate, Phoedime, and others take their places, does the music stop. Likewise, in the 1952 production, as Monime is about to speak her last two lines of Act II, Scene iv, music, this time specified as being funereal, is heard offstage. As the characters on stage in Scene iv and those entering in Scene v move to their positions for that scene, the music continues, stopping when everyone is in place and Monime begins to speak (in Scene v).

The 1879 notes reveal, by way of contrast, no use of music. The arrival of Mithridate and the others in Act II is announced only by Phoedime's looking in the direction from which the characters will

come as she says, "On vient," and in Act V it is Monime who looks in that direction before saying, "Il vient."

Despite many performances of Mithridate since 1952 (see appendix), as of this writing, about two decades later, it is still the 1952 costume sketches or photographs and notes for the mise en scène that remain as the latest complete (as possible) documentation that the archives of the Comédie-Française can offer of twentieth-century performances of Mithridate at the Comédie-Française.

CHAPTER III

INFLUENCE OF THEATRE ARTS CONCEPTS AND OF RACINE'S LITERARY
CREATION ON EVOLUTION OF COSTUME AND DÉCOR DESIGNS

Having given evidence of the evolution that costume and décor designs for Mithridate have gone through since the seventeenth century, we must now examine these designs and the changes they underwent to discover how and to what extent they were influenced by theatre arts concepts of each period as well as to find how Racine's own literary creation could possibly account for each of the artistic conceptions. His work was obviously viewed in different lights at different times, so that the play must be seen through the filter of critical interpretation each "period" more or less imposed on the earlier literary works it studied. In going yet one step further we may see how each critical interpretation influenced the theatre arts concepts and, in turn, the costume and décor designs. The relationship between critical appraisal of the play and the theatrical concepts prevalent in each period, while not exactly symbiotic is, nonetheless, often a closely-interwoven one.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, playwrights, in the process of creating their works, often did not conceive definite ideas about the place or places the action of their plays transpired, much less about an actual stage setting for their plays, leaving this matter to the metteur en scène. Thanks to this ambiguity, both implicit and explicit, plays were open to interpretation in any number of ways. Whatever the variations thus produced may have been, the stagings did basically follow the accepted formats of either a painted backdrop that situated a scene in general terms (without distinguishing between the various particular sites that general

locale could be subdivided into), or of the simultaneous stage setting.⁷⁶ The former, while providing a semblance of an element of unity of place in the staging, did little to modify the ambiguity inherent in the written version of the play; the latter only served to underscore the lack of unity of place.

The theatre curtain, which we take for granted now, but which did not gain wide acceptance in the seventeenth century, exerted an influence on the staging. As Jacques Scherer points out in his La Dramaturgie classique (Paris: Nizet, n.d. [1950]), pp. 171-75, in order to escape from a predominantly narrative form of theatre and to create a semblance of theatrical reality by an attempt to be more specific in indicating the places where the action occurs, only two options were open: one was to use successive rather than simultaneous décors (necessitating a curtain to hide the work involved in changing the scenery); the other was to have one (unchanged) décor which would be consistent with everything the spectator could imagine about the scene. That, says Scherer, is what is truly called the "unité de lieu."

Public taste, which did veer to the single décor, came about as a result of the absence of a curtain and led, in turn, to a preference for a "concentrated" décor. Still, love of spectacle on the

⁷⁶ "Les pièces classiques sont tellement psychologiques, qu'aucun accessoire matériel ne peut leur apporter ni retrancher quoi que ce soit. Elles exposent des caractères généraux qui n'exigent aucun milieu déterminé. La plupart des tragédies de Corneille et de Racine, les comédies de Molière sont jouées dans l'éternel 'palais à volonté' avec des costumes fantaisistes. Pour Rodogune, Horace, Pompée, Cinna, Britannicus, Mithridate et Phèdre, le machiniste doit en outre se prémunir d'un ou plusieurs fauteuils et tabourets." (quoted from Paul Gaultier, "L'Art de la mise en scène," Extr. du Correspondant 10 April 1909, p. 172.

part of the public did exist as well, and although not irreconcilable with the unity of place it did, nonetheless, hinder its development. However, as the spirit of classicism was being nurtured and strengthened, the forces of the spectacular and the non-spectacular gradually ceased to vie for predominance, and separated instead by having the influence of the spectacular remain in the sphere of works other than tragedies, notably in opera. As spectacular effects (usually produced by stage machinery) were no longer deemed suitable for tragedy, and the choice of alternatives for a manner of presentation of a tragedy were therefore narrowed, the playwrights adapted their plays more and more to the exigencies of the emerging conformity to rules of dramatic composition.

The best-known theorist in the field of theatre in the mid-seventeenth century was l'abbé d'Aubignac, and his Pratique du théâtre, the most famous exposition on classical dramaturgy and interpretation.⁷⁷ Scrupulous adherence to the unity of place (in décor) was for him a very important principle. Some playwrights found ingenious solutions to the problem this principle presented,

⁷⁷ B. H. Clark writes in European Theories of the Drama (New York: Crown, 1947), p. 128: "D'Aubignac touched the life of his time at many diverse points. A recognized arbiter of taste, a scholar, an author, a Précieux, a man of the world and an abbé, he was for many years regarded as one of the foremost men of his age. Even after his death his opinions were respected by such men as Corneille and Racine. His principal title to fame rests on the famous Pratique du théâtre (1657), which was studied by many practicing dramatists. Racine's copy of the book is still in existence. . . . The Pratique was intended, and to a certain extent is, a practical manual, the first of its kind. Its importance lies in the author's having insisted that a play is intended to be performed, and not merely read. This was by no means a new idea; Aristotle himself had laid down the principle, though he had not developed it. . . ."

but many had difficulty in logically accounting for the coming together of each of their characters in the one and the same place to which the stage setting was limited throughout the play.

The décor as far as is known for the early performances of Mithridate has been described earlier. As noted, it hardly bore any resemblance to the palace of a king in Asia Minor, a setting Racine envisioned for it: Nymphaeum,⁷⁸ a seaport on the Cimmerian Bosphorus, in the Thauric Chersonesus. While Racine was faithful to the unity of place in his writing, the décor was true to the established theatre tradition, but in a negative way. The play was not seen as the source of inspiration for a décorateur: a true reproduction of a setting if and even when specified by the playwright seemed irrelevant to the audience of the day--because such fidelity simply was not part of the established theatre tradition, and in the late seventeenth century, by the time Racine had written Mithridate, ideas about the production of tragedies had become quite fixed.

The weighty influence of the unity of place had made itself felt in the literary as well as theatrical domain. The static effect of the single décor was hardly offset by the staging or acting (in terms of physical movement); the burden of responsibility for bringing a play to life rested chiefly in the hands of the actors and actresses who, by their delivery of the lines, contributed greatly to the good or bad reception of a play. This is not to say that all good plays succeeded and all poor ones did not;

⁷⁸ Nymphaeum was located on the Crimean peninsula, near the present-day city of Kerch. Mithridate was king of a number of kingdoms, but principally of Pontus, on the opposite side of the Black Sea.

poor interpretation could, for a live audience, ruin a masterpiece and lend a cloak of respectability to a lesser work. The greater the reputation and talent of an artist, the greater the chances of success for the play and the brighter the reflected glory to bask in for the playwright.

AS for the costuming for Mithridate in the seventeenth century, it has been shown that the practice in the theatre was to use contemporary dress augmented by touches of antiquity where necessary. What was in fashion at the court of Louis XIV, was fashionable and correct on stage. Since there was no concept of costume design for the stage per se at that time, it is almost impossible to speak of the then prevailing practice as following a "theatre arts concept." The influences determining the costumes worn on stage were not truly theatrical ones.

The influence of theatre arts concepts were felt in the form and disposition of scenery on the stage, but what of Racine's play itself? Did it in any way influence the costuming and décor of Mithridate in the seventeenth century? Just as the décorateur of that period felt no obligation to provide a décor geographically-plausible for any given play based on references possibly made by the playwright to the actual setting of that play, so too, any references made to the apparel worn by the characters went unnoticed or unheeded by the actors and actresses in the selection of their stage costumes, with the exception of the aforementioned "touches of antiquity," which, for the actress portraying Monime, had to include a bandeau for the royal brow. Despite the known setting of Nymphaeum in olden times, the principal characters still basically resembled

Louis XIV, an incongruity Racine had suggested but not definitely intended in his characterization. The play, then, was clearly not the true source of inspiration for the costumes and scenery used in the seventeenth century productions of tragedies, including *Mithridate*.

In Racine's time, his Mithridate was seen as a "historical" play, although the degree of accuracy with which he relied upon historical sources was a matter much disputed. Racine made his defense in the Préface, citing his sources and giving his reasons for fidelity to or liberties taken with them.

Racine mentions the writings of Florus, Plutarch, Dion Cassius, and Appian of Alexandria as providing some details about Mithridate and his strategies, but declines further citation of sources, pointing out that the life of the great leader is so well known that his own representation of him in the play can be easily recognized as coinciding with established fact. The only exceptions to historical accuracy he excuses by "le droit que donne la poésie." Some events may be chronologically rearranged, but the psychological portrayals remain true and are, indeed, finely chiseled. In its historical context, then, the composition of Mithridate was influenced by convention, that is, by reliance on sources for authenticity of events. Racine's critics, however, debated his right to a reordering of events, often overlooking the truth in characterization Racine obviously strove for, in the area in which the accepted spirit of verisimilitude meant the most and was best developed by him. Lanson stated it so concisely and well in Esquisse d'une Histoire de la Tragédie Française (Paris: H. Champion, 1927), p. 109:

(Racine) "ne cherche pas la couleur locale des romantiques, ni la vérité archéologique de Leconte de Lisle. Mais une couleur légendaire, une atmosphère poétique: une vision de grandeur épique appropriée au goût de noblesse et de dignité de son temps."

The advent of the eighteenth century did not dim the basically good light in which Racine's Mithridate was judged, nor did it work major changes in the staged productions of the play. If one reduces the prime concern of the seventeenth century dramatists to their observing as faithfully as possible the three Unities and of literary critics to their appraising compliance or lack of it with these Unities, then we may note more clearly the shift in public sentiment towards an appreciation of the play for its own beauty in the eighteenth century. It was in the 1700's that an awareness of the psychological finesse in Racine's plays grew and his own image as a playwright was enhanced by this quality inherent in his plays. And, as Roubine states (pp. 49-50), "le lyrisme est, en fin de compte, l'aspect du génie racinien qui touche le plus le XVIII^e siècle." This lyrical quality could best be brought to the fore by actors and actresses truly aware of it and schooled in the manner most suited to projecting it to the audience. While this should (and will, eventually) bring us into the sphere of rôle interpretation (which in turn will reflect the influence of changing concepts in acting), we should like, for the present, to limit ourselves to seeking out the basis of costume selection and design of décor. In these two areas, theatre concepts had not much changed in the first half of the eighteenth century. The custom of using contemporary dress for stage costumes had carried over from the preceding century, and

ideas for décor were not rethought. In that respect, performances of Mithridate observed and preserved the seventeenth-century tradition in the theatre, and the play itself was not seen as a source of ideas for visual effects in costumes or décor.

The second half of the century marked the beginning of the evolution in the theatre in the areas of costuming and décor. Beginning with Lekain and Mlle Clairon, continuing with Larive and being most staunchly supported by Talma, the idea of costume reform took shape, ever so gradually. These artists in particular saw clearly how ill-conceived were the concepts prevalent in their time and strove to change them. In recreating on the stage a world so far removed in time from their own--this being the setting of most of the classical tragedies of the seventeenth century--they felt the intrusion of their own times, by means of contemporary court costumes, to seriously contradict the spirit of the works they performed in. How much better to truly draw the audience into closer contact with that creation and to gratify the visual as well as aural senses! Unfortunately, their progress toward achieving their desired ends was slow.

Talma, who had never seen Lekain perform, but had long lived in the shadow of his famed predecessor, felt that the latter had indeed been right in his attempts at costume reform. He wrote of him:

"Lekain avait sans doute regardé la fidélité du costume comme une chose fort importante. . . . en effet, la vérité dans les habits comme dans les décorations augmente l'illusion théâtrale, transporte le spectateur au siècle et au pays où vivent les personnages représentés. Cette fidélité fournit même à l'acteur les moyens de

donner une physionomie particulière à chacun de ses rôles.⁷⁹

The importance that Mlle Clairon attached to proper costuming for any given rôle is clearly indicated in her Mémoires. Following is an extended quotation from a translation of the above-mentioned work.

It is my advice to actresses in general, to pay the most scrupulous attention to dress. Dress adds considerably to the illusion of the spectators; and, when it is appropriate, it gives a degree of confidence to the actor.-- That it should be exactly so is scarce practicable:--to adopt the dress of past ages, in every respect, would be indecent and ridiculous. The dresses of antiquity display too much of the figure: they are properly applicable only to statues and paintings; but in supplying this defect, we ought to preserve, in some measure, the style of them, and show our desire to imitate, as far as possible, the luxury or simplicity of the times we are describing. Fillets, flowers, pearls, veils, and stones of different colours, were the only ornaments with which women were acquainted before the establishment of the commerce of the Indies, and the conquest of the New World.

I particularly advise tragic actresses to avoid the fashions of the day. The head-dress worn by the French at the moment I am writing, the extravagant mode of wearing the hair, imparts an appearance of disproportion to the figure, spoils the countenance, conceals the motions of the neck, and presents an air of stiffness and formality inconsistent with that ease and freedom required upon the stage. The best and only mode proper to be followed, is to adopt, as near as you can, that of the costume of the character you are performing.

An actress, in arranging her dress, should particularly attend to the situation of the person she represents. Age, austerity, and grief, ill accord with the decorations of youth, gaiety, and happiness. . . . The first appearance of an actress ought to prepare the

⁷⁹ C. F. J. B. Moreau, Mémoires historiques et littéraires sur F.-J. Talma (Paris: Ladvocat, 1826), p. 9.

public for the character she is about to
pourtray.⁸⁰

In Talma's time, success did not immediately crown his efforts. As Gaultier put it, in a 1909 article entitled "L'art de la mise en scène,"⁸¹ incoherence in dress reigned. "Les rôles étaient groupés en catégories et à chaque catégorie était attribué un costume traditionnel. . . . Sous l'Empire, la Comédie-Française n'eut pas la pauvreté comme excuse. Un même costume cependant servait à plusieurs rôles indistinctement. 'Et on oubliait, dit M. Bapst, qu'entre Sésostris et Périclès il y a plus de distance qu'entre Périclès et nous. On confondait les siècles antérieurs à Jésus-Christ, de sorte qu'il n'était pas rare qu'un héros de Sparte s'avancât accompagné d'un confident babylonien.'⁸² (The Bapst quote is drawn from his Essai sur l'histoire du théâtre, la mise en scène, le décor, le costume, l'architecture, l'hygiène, of 1893.) Lamé, in his "Le costume au théâtre. La tragédie depuis 1636,"⁸³ disparaged "advances" that were made in the domain of costuming, pointing out that since the time of Louis XIII there had been three "revolutions" in the tragic costume due to changes in public taste. This taste, he stated, necessitated a change in acting and, in turn, forced the transformation of the costumes. He continued: "D'où il suit qu'au théâtre, la recherche de la couleur historique est une

⁸⁰ Hyppolite Clairon, Memoirs of Hyppolite Clairon, trans. from the French (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1800), pp. 83-85.

⁸¹ Gaultier, p. 180.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Extr. de la Revue d'art dramatique (Oct. 1886), pp. 10-36.

chimère, et qu'aux yeux d'un contemporain de Périclès, Talma aurait paru aussi peu grec que Baron.⁸⁴ This comment notwithstanding, it can be seen that the forces of change were operating and that some long-held concepts in the theatre were being altered. The growing concern for accuracy in period dress began to make its mark on the stage. Fortunately, the interest for historically-correct costumes, whether or not it stemmed from a desire for mere outward show, did result in a more profound new search, or research, of the characters of a given play. Finding appropriate ideas for costumes in a history book on that subject could not suffice; a reevaluation, a reinterpretation and rediscovery of the play was needed for that purpose. In so doing, in finding new depths to sound, the actors were able not only to enhance the visual aspects of the play, but to enrich their performances through a fuller understanding of the creative work they were bringing to life on the stage. A greater awareness of a play as being more than just a work to be recited or declaimed widened the possibilities of interpretation, of acting.⁸⁵ While the new costumes engendered newer styles of acting, so too, the newer techniques forbade any return to costumes that had been used earlier. The new order was thus reciprocally sustained in the domains of costume design and rôle interpretation.

We have no record of what Talma wore on the several occasions that he performed the rôle of Mithridate; nor do we know the cos-

⁸⁴ Lamé, p. 36.

⁸⁵ It is to be noted, also, that greater freedom of movement became possible on the stage as of March 31, 1759, when spectators and the benches they had occupied were permanently barred from it.

tumes Mlle Clairon chose to wear when portraying Monime.⁸⁶

The new theories for the theatre were not by any means propounded solely by the actors themselves. In his Entretiens sur le Fils naturel and his treatise De la poésie dramatique (1757-1758) Diderot presented his ideas on the esthetics of the theatre, ideas which proved to be quite influential. Ianson wrote, in 1927, in his Esquisse d'une histoire de la Tragédie française (p. 156) that "Tous les progrès de l'art scénique depuis 150 ans sont sortis de Diderot et les rénovateurs d'aujourd'hui en sortent encore, même lorsqu'ils semblent le renier." Diderot was for truth in stage décor, simple costumes--appropriate to the character wearing them in a certain place at a certain time, and natural delivery coupled with pantomime that is in concordance with it. He envisioned the manifestation of these principles not only in plays written in or after his time, but in the classics of the seventeenth century as well. He pointed out the importance and influence of a correct décor in De la poésie dramatique in section XIX, "De la décoration" this way:

Voulez-vous rapprocher vos poètes du vrai, et dans la conduite de leurs pièces, et dans leur dialogue; vos acteurs, du jeu naturel et de la déclamation réelle? Elevez la voix, demandez seulement qu'on vous montre le lieu de la scène tel qu'il doit être.

Si la nature et la vérité s'introduisent une

⁸⁶ A pastel illustration of Henri-Louis Le Kain in the Rockefeller Collection of the library of the Yale University School of Drama identifies him in the title rôle of Mithridate. This is, however, an error, since he never performed that rôle, although he did appear both as Xipharès and as Pharnace. (In Monval's Les Collections de la Comédie-Française: Catalogue historique et raisonné [Paris: Société de Propagation des livres d'art, 1897], p. 138, a guide to statues, busts, medallions, etc., item #434 reads: "Lekain, Brizard et Molé. Pharnace, Mithridate et Xipharès, de Mithridate." There is no accompanying illustration.)

fois sur vos théâtres dans la circonstance la plus légère, bientôt vous sentirez le ridicule et le dégoût se répandre sur tout ce qui fera contraste avec elles.⁸⁷

In section XX, "Des vêtements," Diderot wrote:

Le faste gâte tout. Le spectacle de la richesse n'est pas beau. La richesse a trop de caprices; elle peut éblouir l'oeil, mais non toucher l'âme. . . .

Plus les genres sont sérieux, plus il faut de sévérité dans les vêtements.⁸⁸

He noted, too, the reluctance of many thespians to change their set views in the matter of costuming, and had words of praise and encouragement for the enterprising Mlle Clairon:

O Clairon, c'est à vous que je reviens! Ne souffrez pas que l'usage et le préjugé vous subjuguent. Livrez-vous à votre goût et à votre génie; montrez-nous la nature et la vérité: c'est le devoir de ceux que nous aimons, et dont les talents nous ont disposés à recevoir tout ce qu'il leur plaira d'oser.⁸⁹

The thoughtful, serious expositions of Diderot on the subject of the theatre and its ideal in its written and staged form made their mark. A growing interest in the theatre as an expression of the contemporary theories became evident. The classic theatre could not, as Diderot had foreseen, retain a purely classical interpretation, and even those plays fell under the influence of the new ideas, but failed to evince as much interest on the part of the public as in the past. The drop in the number of performances of Mithridate (as of the other plays by Racine) at the Comédie-Française was considerable in

⁸⁷ Denis Diderot, Oeuvres esthétiques (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1965), p. 264.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 265-66.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 268.

the second half of the eighteenth century. The public at that time was becoming more and more aware of its changing economic state. It saw, as well, how the tragedies of the seventeenth century, reflecting the aristocratic society they had initially been intended for, did not reflect the new bourgeoisie. Attending the theatre became a mere social ritual.⁹⁰ Roubine writes:

Les réflexions théoriques et les tentatives créatrices de Diderot et de Beaumarchais ne sont pas dissociables de ce contexte: il s'agit de fonder un théâtre où se reflèteront les valeurs et les aspirations spécifiques de la bourgeoisie contemporaine. . . . Il suffit de saluer, avec le respect qui s'impose, la perfection de l'art racinien. Le drame bourgeois témoigne, par son existence même, que cette perfection ne concerne plus le spectateur du XVIII^e siècle. De ce moment, sans même qu'on y prenne garde, le culte devient formel, Racine est embaumé, relégué au Panthéon du théâtre.

Dans l'Essai sur le genre dramatique sérieux qui, en 1767, sert de préface à l'Eugénie de Beaumarchais, la tragédie n'apparaît plus que comme un document archéologique, et sa valeur n'est reconnue que dans la mesure où elle recèle des éléments de pathétique analogues à ceux du "genre sérieux".⁹¹

With the evolution of form in the theatre, there emerged, as was briefly mentioned earlier, a change in the style of acting, one better suited to the plays being written at the time. Along with the new emphasis on proper costumes, décor, and staging for the contemporary plays, a deeper probing of the rôles became necessary and important. Only in this way could the newer principles in the theatre be upheld and eventually developed to their greatest potential.

⁹⁰ Roubine, p. 65.

⁹¹ p. 66.

What had begun as efforts for the recostuming of the tragedies of the seventeenth century had sparked, directly or indirectly, the formulation of a new vision--of a "new theatre"--which, in turn, somewhat later helped to breathe new life into the "old theatre." As interest in plays of the eighteenth century increased, changes in the manner of presentation of seventeenth century plays did not manage to keep pace, and interest flagged. Disenchanted as the audiences of the late eighteenth century may have become with Racine's tragedies, his works, and those of his contemporaries were not entirely abandoned. Through the new light being shed on the theatre, it became possible to reassess the classical theatre, and to widen the scope of its interpretation. The first steps were taken through the changes in the costumes, as we know. Once this was done, the way to removing the Racinian tragedies from their mold of the-period-of-Louis-XIV would be made clearer, and the viability of those plays outside the milieu usually associated with them would eventually be established.

Traditions governing composition of plays, décor, costumes, and acting had developed and established themselves over the centuries. While expositions on most of these subjects had been composed--whether with innovative intent, in practical manual style, or in researched historical perspective--up until the mid-eighteenth century, very little was written with a view to crystalizing conceptualizations of specific characters in specific plays on the stage. Characters were indeed discussed, theories regarding use of the voice, body movement, facial expressions were all put forth, but somehow the two never quite came together to actually encompass the

problem of rôle interpretation.

Critical appraisal did grow with the rise of new concepts in the theatre in the later eighteenth century. The closer examination and greater dissection of rôles, of characters to be portrayed, became the concern not only of the actors and actresses, but gave rise to a literary (theatre) criticism that was to gain in importance with the passage of years. This criticism, apart from its literary function, also helped shape concepts in the theatre arts. With the theatre getting away from the stifling rigidity of the classical period--in terms of its acquiescence to rules--critics did not altogether turn their backs upon that theatre, for in it, in Racine in particular, was being discovered his poetic power. Instead of proving destructive, the criticism helped bring about constructive change. While those elements that had held productions in a vise were shunned, the beautifully structured simplicity, those innately brilliant psychological conceptions of Racine's plays were being brought to the surface; it mattered not only how a play was acted, but even more so, what was said and how it was said by the playwright. Thus, Racine was seen in a new light, one in which, interestingly enough, his work could be accepted and critically elaborated on. Not only was the presence noted of qualities there all along, but the latter unexpectedly suited the guidelines the newer works (even within the context of their greater freedom) strove to emulate. New conceptions of the play lent their support to the idea of costumes and décor being designed on the basis of what was natural and historically suited to an individual play. In this way, costume and décor design reflected both the theatre arts

concepts of the time as well as the playwright's work itself because the basic theatre arts concept was, in fact, to examine the play to get ideas from it. Costume reform was, therefore, strengthened by the new views of plays, seventeenth-century plays in particular. In the seventeenth century costumes and décor did not reflect the true setting of a play, which custom was in keeping with the prevailing theatre arts concepts, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century those concepts were changing, and while they still set the standards for acting, for rôle interpretation, they ruled that it was the play, with its broader base of appreciation, that was to be the point of departure for the costume and décor designs. Writing in 1859, in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts, Louis Ulbach spoke of the need for using the text as a basis, but not a historical one, for costume and décor design:

"Habiller des héros de Corneille et de Racine sur des dessins antiques, ce serait commettre un anachronisme. Des gens qui s'appellent Monsieur et Madame, et qui galandisent comme à la cour de Louis XIV, ont besoin d'être vêtus à la mode de leur langage et d'agir dans un milieu qui se rapporte à leurs sentiments."⁹²

It must also be noted that in the last quarter of the eighteenth century there were actually too few performances of Mithridate at the Comédie-Française for them to register any dramatic change, to wholly reflect the new ideas. In the early years of the nineteenth century the numbers of performances of Mithridate did pick up, though. By the evidence available on décor for the early nineteenth century we can see that the new concepts had not made an

⁹² J. Noury, Mlle de Champmeslé (Rouen: Espérance Cagniard, 1892), p. 126.

entirely clean and automatic sweep of the past in that area. The stage properties for Mithridate remained simple and interchangeable with those from other plays. Since Mithridate does not specify the use of any particular décor or props, and the armchairs or stools that were used were of no particular style, they were deemed acceptable. The costumes strove for authenticity.

In the late 1820's the romantic vision of the theatre was being formulated, and the effect of these theories for the theatre of the nineteenth century was certainly felt in the productions of classical plays. Mithridate, specifically, was not performed at all at the Comédie-Française between 1822 and 1837, so that it does not in itself serve as a good example to illustrate that development. In his famous Préface de Cromwell Victor Hugo ridiculed the restrictions of the unities of time and place. On the subject of the latter he wrote:

Quoi de plus invraisemblable et de plus absurde,
 en effet, que ce vestibule, ce péristyle, cette
 antichambre, lieu banal où nos tragédies ont la
 complaisance de venir se dérouler, où arrivent,
 on ne sait comment, les conspirateurs pour
 déclamer contre le tyran, le tyran pour déclamer
 contre les conspirateurs, chacun à son tour. . . .
 Où a-t-on vu vestibule et péristyle de cette
 sorte? . . . On commence à comprendre de nos
 jours que la localité exacte est un des premiers
 éléments de la réalité.⁹³

True, within each act of Mithridate the setting had to remain the same for all the scenes because the linking of scenes is clearly indicated in the dialogue. Someone is always seen or heard coming or going, is called for, or is dismissed. There was no reason, how-

⁹³ Victor Hugo, Préface de Cromwell (1827; Paris: Larousse, 1949), pp. 36 and 37.

ever, why Mithridate could not be staged in such a way as to set all of the five acts in the same palace (of necessity) but in five different places within it (by choice).

While the poet Lamartine was one of Racine's greatest advocates in the 1820's, appreciating most particularly his poetry, and admiring his manner of bringing it so to the fore in the genre of the theatre, the cult of Racine was generally on the wane, more so in the succeeding decades. By mid-century it was commonly held that "Racine n'est guère qu'un témoignage d'époque qui n'a plus grand-chose à dire au public, spectateurs ou lecteurs, du XIX^e siècle."⁹⁴ When Mithridate re-entered the active repertoire of the Comédie-Française, there was perhaps more interest on the part of the public in seeing a certain actor or actress than a particular play. The audience had changed.

The popular actress Rachel performed in the rôle of Monime for close to twenty years. Two of her costumes for that rôle reflected the Grecian background of the queen: a flowing and seemingly loosely-gathered gown with a drape fixed to or near one shoulder, covering much of the gown. The borders of both garments (as can be seen in the illustration of at least one costume) bore a typically Greek design. The little bit of scenery that is visible in the photograph of Rachel reveals several square columns in a high-ceilinged room at the back of which is a wide opening, or door. In this partial view of the stage, no stage furniture is in evidence. Whether this setting would be an accurate or at least evocative representation

⁹⁴ Roubine, pp. 120-21.

of a royal palace on the Black Sea in the first century B. C. cannot be ascertained from the little that is seen of it. By that time, however, the palais à volonté had been largely dispensed with, and thanks to the few descriptions of décor for Mithridate left us, we may gather that efforts directed at new conceptions in décor were made. The props specified for the 1865 reprise, for example, include, with an emphasis on white, gold, and red, Roman-style chairs, a round Roman table, and four columns. Inspiration was being drawn from the play itself.

With the costumes designed for Mithridate by Albert in the 1860's, we have our first glimpse at solid evidence of what changes had occurred in their design. Xipharès' costume, for example (see Fig. 6), with its Greek helmet, Greek tunic with Greek border design, and the identically-patterned vest and pantaloons of Asiatic (more precisely--Phrygian) origin, is the clearest example of the costume designer basing his ideas on actual models from antiquity, as suggested by the historical setting the playwright selected for his drama. There is no color scheme given for his striking costume. Another costume (see Fig. 5) attributed to either Xipharès or Pharnace does have color designations, and white and gold are the predominant ones. (This must be Pharnace's costume since another sketch, also from the 1860's, which is almost identical to it except for lack of the color description on the side is specifically labeled as being his.)

For the 1879 production of Mithridate there is only one costume sketch available, that of Pharnace. Green and white were the chief colors used here, and the outfit had a more military appearance than

the earlier ones. In this production the setting was a spacious open palace, opening onto the sea. This "hall" had columns along the sides, with two in the middle, toward the back. Behind the rear columns was a balustrade, beyond which the sea formed the background. A chair, a round table, and an armchair--all noted as being in the ancient style--were placed on each side of the stage, near the front. These furniture groupings must have given the hall some air of being "lived in" (particularly since they were put to use during many of the dialogues and were not merely ornamental). In this way the impression of a pervading empty coldness often created with earlier (and sparser) décors was diminished. To some extent an atmosphere of both isolation and insulation had to exist, however, but it was also necessary to have a setting that would serve as a plausible chance or predetermined meeting place for the characters in order to move the plot forward. Consideration was, therefore, given to Racine's dialogue groupings, and an attempt was made to maintain a natural flow of words and action by means that would appear as unobtrusive as possible. For a late nineteenth century view, we have a theory of Perrin, as quoted by Ganderax, pointing out the subtle care with which décor and costuming were ideally to be treated:

"L'importance du décor et du costume ne doit jamais être une préoccupation pour le spectateur. . . . mais rien en cela ne doit être donné au hasard: le temps ni la dépense ne doivent compter; le jeu des acteurs, le mouvement de chaque scène, l'aspect du décor, la juste harmonie de chaque accessoire, doivent être réglés avec le soin le plus scrupuleux, parce que du bon accord de toutes ces choses dépend

souvent la bonne impression reçue par le public."⁹⁵

Ganderax continued:

Si, pendant longtemps, le luxe des décors fut réservé aux "comédies en musique," aux ballets, à l'Opéra, c'est qu'un décor simple et en quelque sorte neutre suffisait le plus souvent à des ouvrages composés sous le régime de l'unité de lieu; c'est aussi que le public du XVII^e siècle voyait plutôt avec les yeux de l'esprit qu'avec les yeux du corps ces héros plus spirituels que matériels de la tragédie et de la comédie classiques. Ce n'est pas pour une autre raison qu'il laissait la fantaisie maîtresse du costume au théâtre.⁹⁶

Descotes states that "mettant à profit les ressources du costume, de la mise en scène, on s'applique à renouveler l'interprétation en rendant aux héros leur caractère historique. Les initiatives prises pour restituer aux tragédies cette 'couleur locale' que la génération romantique avait tant prônée, ont abouti, à la fin du XIX^e siècle, à d'innombrables innovations de caractère baroque."⁹⁷

Earlier settings and stagings of classical plays may have seemed to be devoid of what in the nineteenth century was introduced as "couleur locale." However, as Praviel argued, "la véritable couleur historique, celle qui procède d'une étude profonde des milieux, des moeurs, des âmes, elle existe beaucoup plus dans les tragédies de Corneille et de Racine que dans tout le clinquant extérieur des drames de Victor Hugo et de Dumas père. Aux acteurs

⁹⁵ Louis Ganderax, "La Comédie-Française et l'art de la mise en scène d'Emile Perrin," Extr. de la Revue des Deux Mondes (15 May 1883), p. 458.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 459.

⁹⁷ Maurice Descotes, Racine (Bordeaux: Guy Ducros, 1969), p. 118.

de l'exterioriser avec goût."⁹⁸ While the plays of Racine (and Corneille) may have fallen from popular favor as the era of their composition became more distant, the success of later plays often hinged on the accouterments that became the preoccupation of plays written in later periods. In the nineteenth century so much depended on a colorful and "real" décor and on a lively staging (for the contemporary play whose plot often left much to be desired) that these features served to undermine the very possibilities for the survival of the play as time went by, whereas the classical plays of the seventeenth century could renew themselves since they had the intrinsic qualities that lent themselves to reevaluation from various points of view.

In the 1870's Francisque Sarcey marked the beginning of a move to the restitution of classical drama, and while his writings did not register wholehearted approval and admiration of all facets of that theatre, he did resuscitate some interest in it. The waves of increased or decreased interest in the classical theatre as such were not reflected on a proportional basis in the number of performances of Mithridate. In fact, performances of that play in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century were few. However, the popularity of Racine definitely grew, and one of the reasons for this renewed interest in and success of his tragedies was the excellence of the interpreters of the classical theatre at the Comédie-Française.

Long after the decline of the romantic theatre, and by the end of the nineteenth century, the naturalist theatre was flourishing in

⁹⁸ Armand Praviel, "De l'interprétation des classiques," Le Correspondant, 285 (1921), 105.

France. Using that theatre as a point of departure, Antoine established (in 1887) and developed his Théâtre Libre which awakened an interest in contemporary European plays and reawakened an interest in French plays. From the technical point of view, his theatre was concerned with truth in décor and costumes and in interpretation. Antoine introduced several reforms important to the theatre in his time. It is possible that his ideas affected the productions of Mithridate at the Comédie-Française of the 1890's.

Three performances of Mithridate in 1897 were the last ones of that play given at the Comédie-Française before the turn of the century, and sketches made from a photograph of the cast in their costumes show some modifications from those worn in the 1880's. The brothers are dressed for battle, but it is difficult to ascertain from this particular view of his costume what actions Mithridate might be set to undertake. There appears to be detailed embroidery or appliqué on the costumes of all three men; Monime's Grecian robe seems plainer, and rather in contrast to the elaborate, almost gaudy outfits of the warriors. There was an obvious attempt at a colorful, non-abstract, non-stylized portrayal of antiquity, one that would seem to carry the spectators back to an ancient world and, at the same time, appeal to their visual senses, by then well accustomed to the detailed completeness of realism on the stage.

A very similar (undated) photograph (actually a halftone colored reproduction of a photograph), shows M. Albert-Lambert (Xipharès), M. Silvain (Mithridate), Mlle Ludlay (Monime), M. Villain (in all probability Arcas), and M. Amel (who appears to be a guard) in a scene from Mithridate. This must be the last scene,

for in no other are all these characters seen on stage at the same time. This particular two-page reproduction is not found in every copy of Brander Matthews' book, The Theatres of Paris (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1880), and seems to have been inserted (after p. 138) into one particular copy by the original owner of the book, years after the publication of the volume.⁹⁹ It is not possible to verify whether the colors used were those of the original costumes or whether they merely suited the artist's fancy. Although the "photograph" is partially obliterated and the pages are crumbling with age, the colors can be discerned.

Xipharès is wearing a violet vest, and over it, a yellowish-beige short-sleeved tunic with a reddish-orange "girdle" crisscrossing the chest. The close-fitting pantaloons are violet. The mantle, or "chlamys," is white. The boots are beige.

Mithridate is seen wearing a violet tunic with gold fringe. His vest and pantaloons are green. A chlamys or "himation" (shorter or longer type of shawl) is beige, with some design markings. Silvain's hair (gray) is simply combed back.

Monime is wearing a white himation with a border design over a pink "chiton" with either an embroidered or designed border.

M. Villain is attired in a golden tunic with a vest whose

⁹⁹ Matthews' The Theatres of Paris was published in 1880, but the photo-reproduction is of the 1897 production, not of the 1879 production as might be supposed at first glance. There is a double proof for this. Mlle Dudley, whose name is clearly given on the reproduction, did not perform in the rôle of Monime before 1882; M. Villain, whose name is just as clearly given, did not appear in Mithridate in 1879 (1882 unknown), but did perform in the rôle of Arcas in 1888. (The name of the actor filling the rôle of Arcas is not cited again until 1902, when it is no longer M. Villain.)

sleeves are reddish. His helmet is gold.

M. Amel appears to be wearing a gold, three-quarter-length robe with a belt over a brown robe. On his feet are sandals, and his headdress is gold with reddish stripes, reminiscent in shape of ancient Egyptian headdresses.

The little that is seen of the décor reveals a backdrop on which a low balustrade with the sea and sky beyond are painted. Two flat panels show a wall on which are hung spears, a shield, and a quiver full of arrows. On the side are seen high walls, basically simple in their design and adornment.

The designer of the 1897 production was obviously seeking historical accuracy in his designs. It is known that the dress of the male inhabitants of Asia Minor characteristically included a vest with tight, long sleeves, and pantaloons (of the same material and design) that reached the ankles. These pantaloons were always either quite close-fitting or wide, with ends tucked in the boots or sandals. The material was often embroidered or decoratively painted. A sleeveless tunic of a different material and design was worn over the vest. It was girded once (at the waist), or twice (lower down), depending on its length. A mantle was often worn with this outfit, "different from that of the Greeks in being edged round with a regular and distinct fringe, not interwoven with the body of the stuff, but purposely tacked on; and this studied enrichment, never observable in Grecian dresses, is in fact represented by Eschylus as a peculiarity characteristic of the peplos of

the barbarians or Asiatic nations.¹⁰⁰ Buskins--open, laced half-boots--were also worn by Asiatics. The Phrygians¹⁰¹ were the first, according to Pliny, to embroider with gold thread.¹⁰² The use of the breast plate was Greek, however, not Asiatic. The chlamys and himation were also basically Greek outer garments, although they were also worn by the Asiatics.

The formation of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre (as it was eventually called), in reaction to Antoine's Théâtre Libre created a few years before, brought to the stage symbolist plays. The symbolist theatre posited great simplicity in the décor, going so far as to suggest that the imagination created it. This idea was in danger of being pushed too far, for by the same token, one could theorize that the imagination could create the costumes as well. Thus, as Praviel said in his article, "De l'interprétation des classiques," there was a return to the purely intellectual conception of the theatre which seems to be in contradiction with the very essence of this literary genre. He felt, too, that the fullness, beauty, and picturesque qualities of a décor in no way stifled a classical play, as many thought.¹⁰³

In a lecture entitled "La mise en scène et l'interprétation du répertoire classique" and delivered in 1906 at the Ecole des

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Hope, Costume of the Ancients (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1841), I, xxvi.

¹⁰¹ Phrygia was a region of Asia Minor, now in central Turkey.

¹⁰² Katherine M. Lester and Rose N. Kerr, Historic Costume, 6th ed. (Peoria, Ill.: Chas. A. Bennett, 1967), p. 33.

¹⁰³ Praviel, p. 106.

Hautes Etudes Sociales, Henri Beaulieu expressed his beliefs on appropriate staging in the twentieth century for the classical plays. He was completely against costuming in the style featured in the seventeenth century. The staging was to be kept as simple as possible, with the use of a décor and minimum stage furniture likewise of greatest simplicity, but very beautiful. "Il doit y avoir juste le nécessaire pour aider à la vraisemblance. . . . Puis les mouvements des acteurs réduits à leur minimum, mais avec le souci constant, sans qu'il soit apparent, de la beauté et de la pureté des lignes dans les attitudes."¹⁰⁴ There were no performances of Mithridate at the Comédie-Française between 1904 and 1907, so it is impossible to know if ideas such as the ones Beaulieu expressed would have been carried out for that play at that time. Also, there were not too many writings dealing with costuming, décor and staging of the classical plays in the early years of the twentieth century (because they were considered more works of literature, intended to be read, than theatre pieces, intended to be performed), but works of critical appraisal of Racine's plays flourished unabated for decades.

From the naturalist theatre there evolved the Théâtre d'idées, the Théâtre d'amour and the Théâtre gai. Theories formed by the playwrights or metteurs en scène who initiated these changes in the theatre of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were, in some cases, limited to new ideas that their own dramatic creations illustrated, and in others attempted to influence the inter-

¹⁰⁴ Lecture printed in Revue d'art dramatique, semestre 1 (1906), pp. 277-91. quote is taken from p. 279.

pretation of the body of plays already extant.

Between the two world wars prodigious activity, particularly on the part of actors/director-producers Jacques Copeau, Georges Pitoëff, Charles Dullin, Louis Jouvet and Gaston Baty raised the French theatre to new heights. For Copeau the text of the play was of prime importance, with all actors and actresses equally joining forces for the greater glory of the play. The décor was to be simple and evocative. Gaston Baty, on the other hand, preferred to emphasize the sets and staging: "la magnificence des décors et des costumes, les accessoires, les éclairages et la musique créent, selon lui, au-delà du texte, 'une zone de mystère, ce qu'on appelle l'atmosphère, l'ambiance.'"¹⁰⁵ "Si différentes que fussent leurs tendances, Pitoëff, Dullin, Jouvet et Baty s'unirent en un 'Cartel des quatre' pour mieux défendre les intérêts supérieurs de leur art, et contribuèrent avec Edouard Bourdet à la rénovation de la Comédie-Française."¹⁰⁶ (Bourdet, a playwright, was administrator of the Comédie-Française from 1936 to 1940.)

And so, although 1900-1913 saw eighteen performances of Mithridate given at the Comédie-Française, and between 1918 and 1935 there were thirty-three, forty years elapsed since 1897 before Mithridate was newly staged again (in 1937).

The décor for the 1937 reprise was simple, and apparently claustrophobic. While this atmosphere could have been unpleasant

¹⁰⁵ Pierre-Georges Castex and Paul Surer, Manuel des études littéraires françaises. XX^e Siècle (Paris: Hachette, 1953), p. 115.

¹⁰⁶ André Lagarde and Laurent Michard, XX^e Siècle. Les Grands auteurs français (Paris: Bordas, 1966), p. 371.

to the audience, the set designer may have wished to illustrate the feeling of captivity, of hopelessness and helplessness before the vicissitudes of fortune and the overwhelming and subjugating power of Mithridate. The costumes were quite rich, pointing up the opulence of Mithridate's court, but seemed to be out of place with the décor. This may have been an attempt to revitalize the play by contrasting the innate simplicity of the classical play with pompous trappings: an intellectual approach to the psychological interpretation, but aiming for visual splendor by a modern conception of the original setting.

Since the early twentieth century stage directors have assumed greater and greater importance in the theatre. With more individualization of approaches to various types of plays, the diversity of practices not only as regards direction, but as far as influences on costume and décor design are concerned as well, has grown. With more and more freedom, the costumes and décor that have been created often result from very personal visions of a play (classical plays included) and can only be judged by their appearance or evaluated on the basis of an explanation offered by the designer. There is no set standard theatre concept to guide productions. In fact, variety in interpretation is encouraged and meant to be judged on its own merit.

The 1952 production of Mithridate brought the seaport setting into clearer focus than the earlier one had done. An unencumbered stage with a décor that provided for many entrances set the tone of regal simplicity at the same time that it facilitated a "logical" staging. The entrances and exits of the characters were more natural given the several means of access to various parts of one and the

same palace. Neither the décor or costumes seemed to overshadow the play; both were effective, and they supported and enhanced it by creating the proper background for the words. Suzanne Lion wrote, in the winter 1954-1955 issue of L'illustre théâtre, that costume design had by that time reached a happy medium between the two extremes; costumes were not acceptable if they were based on the latest archeological finds, nor would copies of seventeenth-century fashions have been tolerated. She continued:

. . . rien ne doit distraire le public du fond même de la tragédie. De nos jours, l'art tend à styliser le costume: on veut, non pas tant le reconstituer qu'en indiquer le caractère; il doit être l'expression d'une pensée, une manière subtile d'allier une fantaisie et des matériaux modernes à un classicisme sévère. Pendant des siècles, le costume que nous eussions dit "d'époque" n'était que le costume moderne naïvement vieilli par quelques détails insignifiants; aujourd'hui, le costume d'époque, après avoir visé à la reconstitution fidèle, a la coquetterie de se rajeunir: il prétend ainsi, à juste titre, allier l'art qui le veut sincère et la mode qui le désire plier à son caprice.¹⁰⁷

The costume designs for 1952 fit into this category of stylized creations. They bore an air of authentic antiquity mingled with a freshness that avoided their acquiring the look of museum pieces.

(See Figs. 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23.)

Throughout certain periods, some more than others, it has been possible to point out how theatre arts concepts have influenced the costume and décor designs for Mithridate. This search for the sources of inspiration has often been complicated--especially so for about a quarter of a century before and at least that long after 1900--by a

¹⁰⁷ Lion, "Théâtre et Couture," L'illustre théâtre. (La Vie et l'Histoire de la Comédie Française), No. 1 (Winter 1954-55), p. 38.

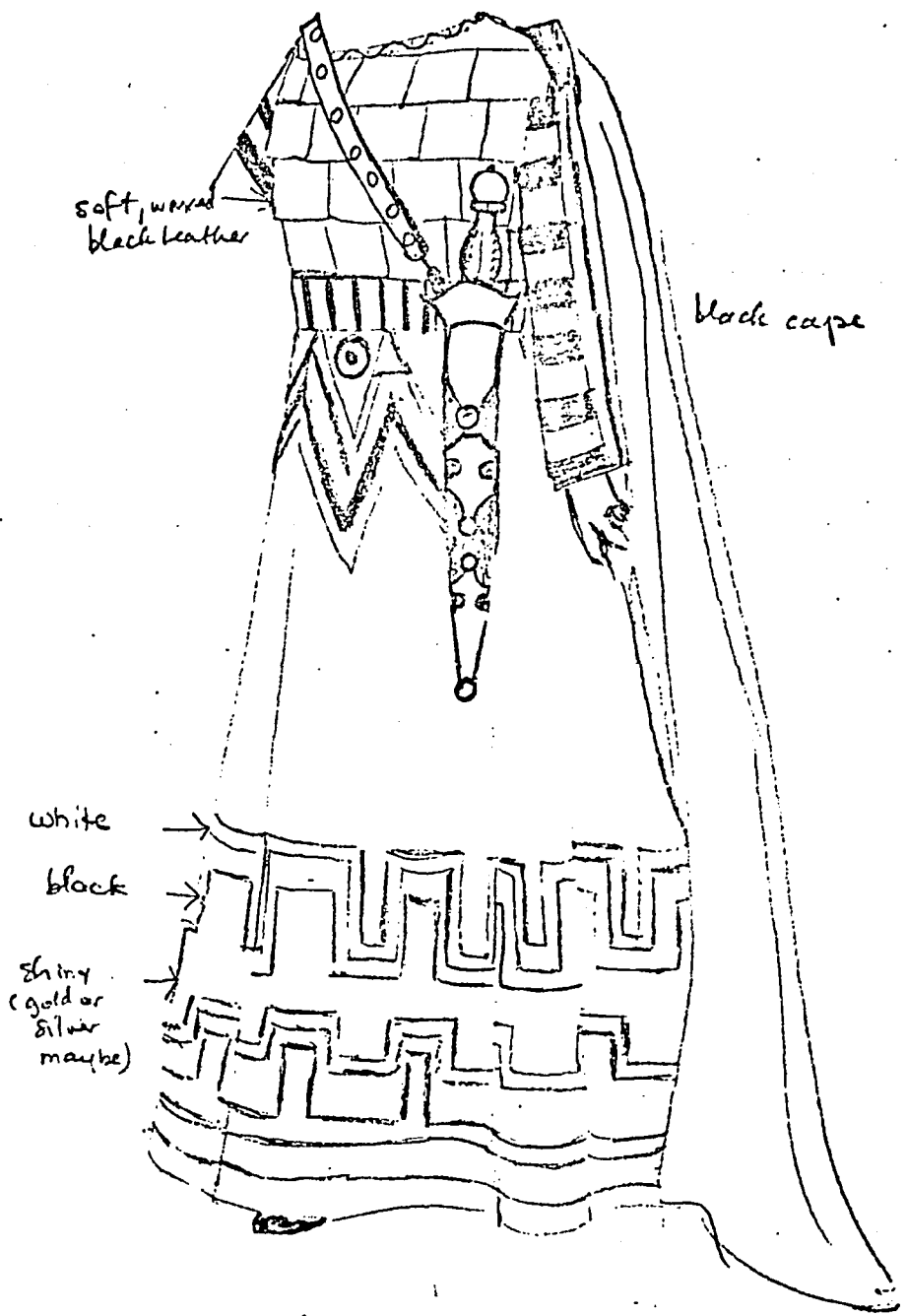


Fig. 19

COSTUME OF MITHRIDATE

Drawn from photograph dated December 1, 1952.

Designed by Yves Brayer.

Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."



Designed by Yves
Brayer.

Courtesy of "Les
Collections de
la Comédie-
Française"

Original
photograph
dated Dec. 1, 1952.

Fig. 20 COSTUME OF MONIME

Drawn from photograph.

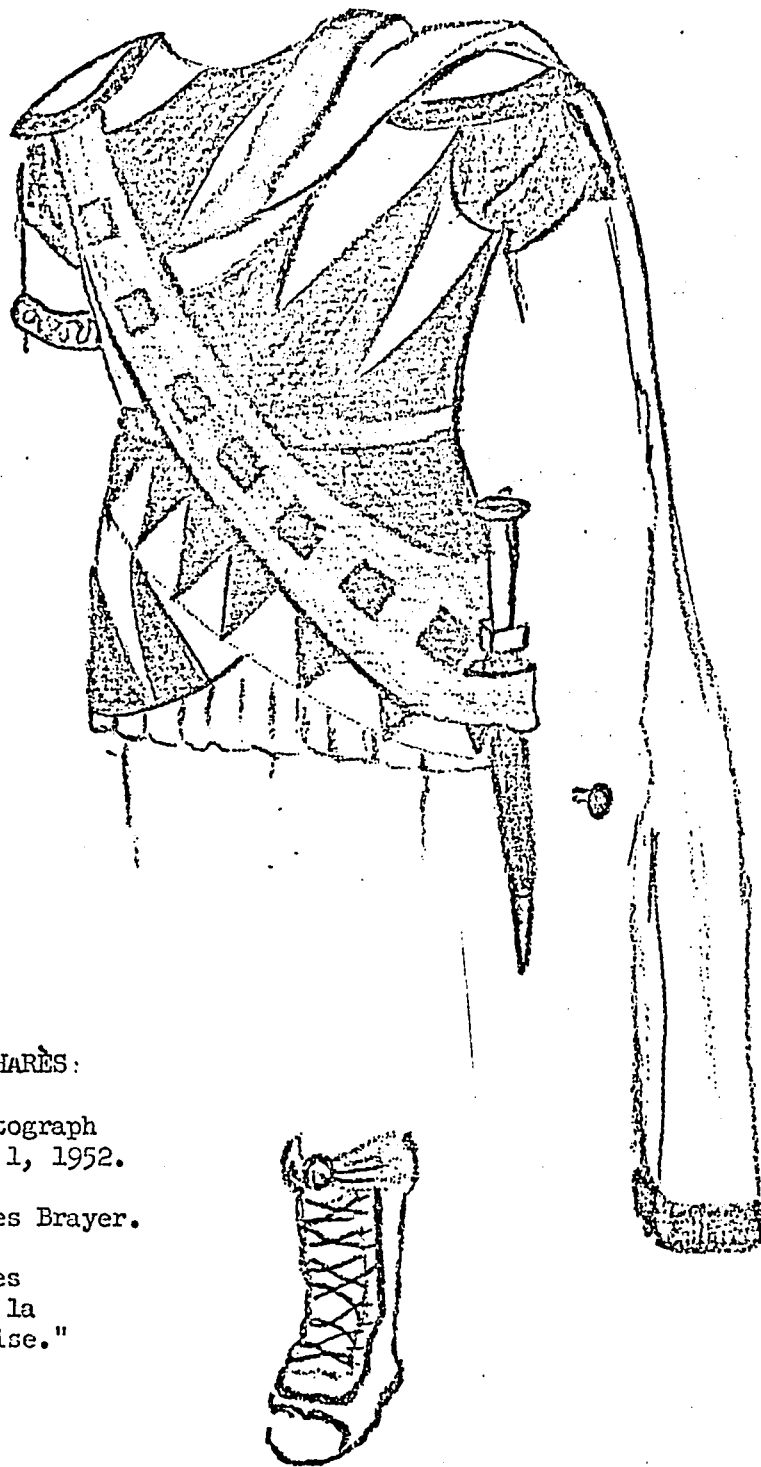


Fig. 21

COSTUME OF XIPHARÈS:

Drawn from photograph
dated December 1, 1952.

Designed by Yves Brayer.

Courtesy of "Les
Collections de la
Comédie-Française."



Fig. 22 COSTUME OF PHARNACE, worn by Jean Davy.

Drawn from photograph dated December 1, 1952.

Designed by Yves Brayer.

Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."



Fig. 23 COSTUME OF ARBATE(?), worn by Jacques Eyser.

Drawn from photograph dated December 1, 1952.

Designed by Yves Brayer.

Courtesy of "Les Collections de la Comédie-Française."

number of factors, one of which is the succession of new ideas in the theatre that sometimes resulted in overlappings, both in terms of time and theoretically. Perhaps these developments, singly or collectively, did influence productions of Mithridate; if so, we do not have concrete evidence of when or how. We must also keep in mind that the absence of Mithridate from the repertoire of the Comédie-Française often eliminated a possible illustration of these developments. On the other hand, the continued use of a certain set production over a number of years for reasons that were not spelled out also disallowed a parallel reflection of the new developments in performances of Mithridate. There may have been financial considerations, for example, or perhaps these developments in the theatre were simply not deemed suitable for application to Mithridate.

It is helpful when influences and effects can be balanced, and the mismatch of theory and practice can certainly hinder the desired clear-cut exposition. All the same, some of the major new trends whether or not they affected the classical theatre, and Mithridate in particular, did have to be presented to insure some continuity in the narrative related to the climate of the theatre and to fill in the gaps that the chronological distribution of Mithridate created.

CHAPTER IV

INFLUENCE OF COSTUMES AND DÉCOR, OF RACINE'S WORDS,
AND OF THEATRE ARTS CONCEPTS ON RÔLE INTERPRETATION

In the preceding chapters, the history of costumes and décor used for performances of Mithridate at the Comédie-Française has been recorded. The changes wrought in those two areas over the centuries have been traced against a more general background of the developments in the theatre. The central topic of this chapter will be acting or (in a broader term) rôle interpretation. While this particular element and its evolution has been very closely linked with costumes and décor, it has until now been kept out of the discussion as much as was feasible to enable the focus to first rest distinctly on each element instead of attempting a comprehensive overview wherein the importance of the individual factors might have been diminished. How have costuming and décor affected the interpretation of a rôle? Did performers in Mithridate use costume and décor designs to guide their interpretations? Did they use Racine's words to guide them? What were the theatre arts concepts that affected rôle interpretation? These are the main questions with which we shall be concerned here.

We know that when the French actor of the late seventeenth century faced his audience he usually found himself on a small stage with a painted backdrop behind him by way of décor and spectators (who often enough were less than attentive) seated on the sides of the stage. The grandeur of his costume was dictated only by the customary adherence to the styles of court dress. His "acting" consisted of little more than declamatory delivery of the lines and

limited stage movement. The pompous declamation and stiff formality of the costumes actually went quite well together, to a certain extent. Although sorely out of place historically, such costumes, decreed as they were by theatre tradition, did reflect the high station in life occupied by a character and, therefore, called for nobility in speech and bearing. Given the nobility of so many of the characters that peopled the classical tragedies, and the consequent elegance of the language assigned to them, any other form of recitation was almost unthinkable. It can be seen, therefore, that both the costumes and the playwright's language exerted an influence on the rôle interpretation. This is, however, a generalized conclusion, for while the costumes called for dignified deportment, they in no way helped, in that era, to distinguish the character of a Mithridate from that of a Xipharès or a Pharnace. The actual words of Racine did, of course, delineate each character as a unique personality, but the contemporary interpretation would not have helped to differentiate one from another. This is where Racine's own rehearsals with actors was of the essence.

Declamation was, indeed, the vogue in Racine's time, but he did not approve of it. ("quand Racine porte Andromaque aux fameux comédiens de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne, leur manière d'interpréter la tragédie est aux antipodes du naturel. Une prononciation ampoulée, la pompe, l'emphase, l'outrance sont de règle. On fait ronfler le vers.")¹⁰⁸ Unlike some other dramatists, he had some definite ideas about how he

¹⁰⁸ Andre Villiers, "Racine et la mise en scène à l'Hôtel de Bourgogne," Les Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud--Jean-Louis Barrault, 3^e année, 10^e cahier (1955), p. 37.

wished his plays to be performed and he did not allow himself to be dictated to by the performers. Racine was considered a very fine reader himself, and he devoted much attention to instructing his famous interpreters. It has been said that when preparing *La Champmeslé* for the rôle of Monime that he coached her word for word, indicating precisely every detail in the diction he wished to have underscored in order to do full justice to his poetry and to arrive at an ideal portrayal of the character. This story, while traditional,¹⁰⁹ has not been fully substantiated, but the fact that Racine guided the interpretations of the rôles definitely has been established. He was, in fact, so well-known for his ability to create the most sonorous effects with his verse and to draw from the actors readings--or recitations--that displayed the full measure of their beauty that Lully, the foremost composer of the period once said, "'Si vous voulez bien chanter ma musique, allez entendre la Champmeslé.'"¹¹⁰ The alexandrine verse proved to be well suited to a lyrical interpretation, for it was able to reflect emotional fluctuations rather than force the expression of states of the heart to conform to any possibly rigid poetic line.

Six or seven years prior to her publishing Du Nouveau sur Racine, Béatrix Dussane had come across some unsigned notes in a

¹⁰⁹ The literary critic, l'abbé du Bos wrote about this in 1719, twenty years following the death of *La Champmeslé*, and Henry Lyonnet, in his Les "Premières" de Jean Racine mentioned in a footnote (on p. 134) that "Brossette, de son côté, rapportant une conversation qu'il avait eue avec Boileau, sur la déclamation, raconte (Manuscrit, p. 62) que celui-ci lui récita avec véhémence une tirade en ajoutant: 'C'est ainsi que M. Racine le faisoit dire à la Champmeslé.'"

¹¹⁰ Villiers, p. 40.

family library that contained much Racineana. The only clue as to who wrote these notes came from his remarking that he had had the honor of seeing Jean-Baptiste Racine every day for several years; he wrote down some of the things the son had said about his father. Included was the following story:

Il n'approuvait point la manière trop vraie de réciter établie dans la troupe de Molière. Il voulait qu'on donnât aux vers un certain son qui, joint à la mesure et aux rimes, se distingue de la prose; mais il ne pouvait supporter ces tons outrés et glapissants qu'on veut substituer au beau naturel, et qu'on pourrait pour ainsi dire noter comme de la musique. Choqué de ce mauvais goût qui commençait à s'introduire, il vint un jour trouver les comédiens assemblés: "Messieurs, leur dit-il, je vous apporte une mauvaise nouvelle. On va faire fermer votre théâtre." Toute la troupe pâlit à cette annonce. "Eh! pourquoi donc? Monsieur, lui répondit-on. --Pourquoy? reprit M. Racine. C'est que vous devez savoir que Lully a seul le privilège de faire chanter sur son théâtre, et on s'aperçoit que fort mal à propos vous chantez sur le vôtre."¹¹¹

About the practice of declamation and the way Racine instructed La Champmeslé, l'abbé du Bos wrote:

"Les compositeurs de déclamation élevaient, ils rabaissaient avec dessein, ils variaient avec art la récitation. Un endroit devait quelquefois se prononcer suivant la note plus bas que le sens ne paraissait le demander, mais c'était afin que le ton élevé, où l'acteur devait sauter à deux vers de là, frappât davantage. . . . Racine, aussi grand déclamateur que grand poète, lui avait appris à baisser la voix en prononçant les vers suivants, et cela encore plus que le sens ne semble le demander:

...Si le sort ne m'eût donnée à vous,
Mon bonheur dépendait de l'avoir pour
époux.
avant que votre amour m'eût envoyé ce
gage
Nous nous aimions...

¹¹¹ Beatrix Dussane, "Du Nouveau sur Racine," Le Divan (1941), Kraus rpt., 27, 33^e année, No. 238-240 (1968), 54-55.

afin qu'elle pût prendre facilement un ton à l'octave au-dessus de celui sur lequel elle avait dit ces paroles 'Nous nous aimions' pour prononcer 'Seigneur, vous changez de visage...' Ce port de voix était excellent pour marquer le désordre d'esprit où Monime doit être quand elle s'aperçoit que sa facilité à croire Mithridate vient de jeter, elle et son amant, dans un péril extrême."¹¹²

Béatrix Dussane, from whose book the du Bos quotation is drawn, placed her evaluation on his report. She felt that it was possible that there had been a wider musical scale in Racine's time, and that it was true, too, that on the stage poetry effects greater contrasts than in conversational speech. She continued: "mais, précisément, tout réside dans l'évaluation de cette mesure, que Racine lui-même semblait vouloir maintenir dans la modération. Et un écart d'une octave pour marquer l'effroi d'une jeune femme pudique et retenue, dans un entretien où rien ne la porte à extérioriser fortement ses sentiments, nous paraît insoutenable. . . . Avec son 'octave,' l'abbé du Bos sans doute exagérait déjà en écrivant; l'auditeur qui lui avait cité l'exemple avait exagéré lui-même ... et qui sait si la Champmeslé, continuant pendant de longues années à jouer les mêmes rôles hors du contrôle de Racine, ne fut pas la première coupable de l'exagération?"¹¹³

Writing in 1681, the author of Entretiens galants spoke of La Champmeslé's touching voice, explaining that "le récit des comédiens dans le tragique . . . est une espèce de chant, et vous m'avouerez bien que la Champmeslé ne vous plairait pas tant, si elle

¹¹² Béatrix Dussane, Reines de théâtre 1633-1941 (Lyon: H. Lardanchet, 1944), pp. 47-48.

¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 48-49.

avait une voix moins agréable; mais elle sait la conduire avec beaucoup d'art, et elle y donne à propos des inflexions si naturelles qu'il semble qu'elle ait véritablement dans le coeur une passion qui n'est que dans sa bouche."¹¹⁴

One way to try to get an idea of what declamation may really have sounded like in the seventeenth century would be to examine some recitatives composed by Lully. Chailley, in his article, "Le Récitatif D'Opéra, Sténographie de la déclamation théâtrale des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles," made some interesting and concise observations on this account. Using Jean-Jacques Rousseau's definition of recitative as being "une manière de chant qui approche beaucoup de la parole, une déclamation en musique, dans laquelle le musicien doit imiter, autant qu'il est possible, les inflexions de voix du déclamateur,"¹¹⁵ he pointed out that produced by a knowledgeable musician a recitative marked on a musical scale would be "la transcription minutieuse, tout juste stylisée, des inflexions qu'aurait eues la voix parlée de l'acteur s'il avait déclamé les vers au lieu de les chanter."¹¹⁶ He went on to state that

Lully dut une très grande part de sa célébrité à l'art avec lequel il sut précisément procéder à cette transcription, prenant pour modèle, à ce qu'affirme la tradition, la diction de la Champmeslé qu'il allait fréquemment entendre afin de s'inspirer d'elle.

¹¹⁴ Pierre David Lemazurier, Galerie historique des acteurs du Théâtre Français depuis 1600 jusqu'à nos jours (Paris: Joseph Chaumerot, 1810), II, 72.

¹¹⁵ Jacques Chailley, "Le Récitatif d'opéra, sténographie de la déclamation théâtrale des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles," Revue d'histoire du théâtre, 15^e année, No. 3 (July-Sept. 1963), p. 247.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Mais s'il en est ainsi, une telle transcription peut être réversible. La déclamation de la Champmeslé s'est éteinte avec elle, mais la transcription de Lully en subsiste. Il nous suffit dès lors de procéder en sens inverse à l'opération décrite par Rousseau pour retrouver les moindres inflexions du modèle saisi par le musicien.¹¹⁷

In his book on the mise en scène for Phèdre, Barrault mentioned that Racine notated his plays word for word, striving for the most natural form of declamation possible, using musical symbols to approximate the desired inflections and intonations.¹¹⁸ "Il tenait la synthèse de l'élégance, de noblesse et du naturel dans un registre qui n'était ni le chant, ni la prose. Et pourtant le rythme devait être rigoureusement observé."¹¹⁹ The notation, or annotation, by Racine, of the words of his text is not denied; however, the use of musical notes on a staff for the purpose of marking all the qualities of the spoken word seemed impossible to Régnier, "l'éminent professeur à la déclamation de la Comédie." He said that "'la musique de la parole ne se note point. C'est le sentiment même de ce que l'acteur doit exprimer qui détermine le ton, la force et la nuance des intentions. Jamais on n'a pu et l'on ne pourra enseigner la déclamation par la notation musicale."¹²⁰

Unfortunately, very little written appraisal of the characterizations drawn by early performers in Mithridate other than La Champ-

¹¹⁷ Chailley, p. 247.

¹¹⁸ Jean-Louis Barrault, ed., Phèdre de Jean Racine, mise en scène et commentaires de Jean-Louis Barrault (Paris: Editions du seuil, 1946), pp. 23 and 25.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

¹²⁰ Noury, p. 153.

meslé or Michel Baron were made, much less left for posterity.¹²¹

We do have commentaries, such as the following, made so much after-the-fact:

La Champmeslé avait une déclamation chantante, une sorte de mélodie se rapprochant quelque peu de celle des acteurs de l'antiquité. Floridor est le premier qui parla la tragédie au lieu de la chanter. Après lui, Baron alla encore plus loin: nul n'a mieux su joindre à la noblesse le naturel, la simplicité, la familiarité même, au besoin. . . .¹²²

Twenty years earlier Bolot had written about Baron:

Il paraissait, et c'était Mithridate ou César: il n'avait rien, ni ton, ni voix, ni geste, ni mouvement qui ne fussent dans la nature; quelquefois sans lien, mais toujours vrai. Il pensait qu'un roi dans son cabinet ne devait pas être un héros de théâtre. Aussi, la déclamation de Baron causa-t-elle une surprise mêlée de ravissement. On admira un jeu tranquille sans froideur, une manière véhémence, impétueuse avec décence et des nuances infinies, sans que

¹²¹ Although repetitiveness and generality are wearisome characteristics of descriptions available for the late seventeenth century, these descriptions are still slightly fuller, on occasion, than the ones available for the earlier periods. This oft-encountered problem regarding sources is important to understand and is well-illustrated by the following citation from Lacour's *Les Premières actrices françaises* (Paris: Librairie française, 1921), (pp. 202-03 in Chapter XIV entitled "Le 'Jeu' et la Déclamation sous Louis XIII"): "Comment 'récitaient', comment jouaient les actrices, les acteurs 'sérieux' les plus goûtés par le brillant public masculin et féminin. . . . Poser la question est facile. Y répondre ne l'est pas. On a lu tous les textes relatifs au succès, au talent des étoiles de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne et des demoiselles LeNoir et Villiers avant leur entrée à l'Hôtel; aucun de ces textes ne nous a apporté sur leur déclamation et leur jeu une lumière suffisante. Nous savons qu'elles furent admirées; nous ignorons pourquoi, techniquement parlant, elles le furent. . . . Sur les deux principaux acteurs de la même époque, Mondory et Bellerose, on est mieux informé; ce qui ne signifie pas qu'on le soit parfaitement. L'absolument certain peut se résumer en quelques mots--Bellerose l'emportait par la grâce, Mondory par la vigueur; mais cette vigueur de Mondory n'excluait pas la grâce, au lieu que la grâce de Bellerose semblait molle ou trop maniérée à beaucoup."

¹²² Fournel, *Curiosités*, p. 212.

jamais la recherche et l'étude s'y laissassent
surprendre.¹²³

and almost thirty years prior to the above-quoted appraisal, was one
written by Lemazurier:

Sa profonde intelligence lui faisait découvrir
des nuances délicates auxquelles l'auteur lui-
même n'avait probablement jamais pensé. . . .
On sait avec quelle finesse d'intelligence, dans
le début de Mithridate avec ses deux fils, il
marquait son amour pour Xipharès et sa haine
pour Pharnace. Dans ces vers,

Princes, quelques raisons que vous
puissiez me dire,

Votre devoir ici n'a point dû vous
conduire,

Ni vous faire quitter en de si grands
besoins,

Vous le Pont, vous Colchos confiés à
vos soins.

il disait à Pharnace: Vous le Pont, avec la
hauteur d'un maître et la froide sévérité d'un
juge; et à Xipharès: vous Colchos, avec
l'expression d'un reproche sensible, et d'une
surprise mêlée d'estime, telle qu'un père tendre
la témoigne à un fils, dont la vertu n'a pas
rempli son attente.¹²⁴

Mazoyer, quoted by Lamothe-Langon, gave a fuller impression of

Baron:

"Cet acteur, qu'on ne pourra jamais louer autant
qu'il l'a mérité, possédait la brillante réunion
de toutes les qualités dont chacun de ses suc-
cesseurs, sans même en exception Lekain,
n'offrit qu'une portion plus ou moins grande.
La nature semblait s'être épuisée en le formant;
sa taille était avantageuse et bien prise; sa
figure avait le caractère de beauté mâle qui
convient à l'homme; elle prenait un air
imposant et fier, tendre et passionné, selon son
rôle; sa voix était forte, sonore, flexible;
sa prononciation nette, facile et d'une grande
précision; ses sons énergiques et variés; ses

¹²³ Auguste Bolot, Mlle Rachel et l'avenir du théâtre (Paris:
Rousseau, 1839), pp. 87-88.

¹²⁴ Lemazurier, I, 92-94.

inflexions ajoutaient souvent au sens des vers qu'il récitait; son silence, ses regards, les divers sentiments qui se succédaient sur son visage, ses attitudes, ses gestes, ménagés avec art, complétaient l'effet infallible de son débit entièrement dû aux inspirations de la nature."¹²⁵

Lamothe-Langon continued:

Dans Mithridate on admirait avec quelle nuance il savait, dans des phrases simples, manifester sa haine pour son fils Pharnace et son amitié pour Xipharès. Vis à vis de l'un, sa froideur, son mécontentement éclatait quand il lui reprochait d'avoir abandonné le Pont; et, quand il se plaignait à l'autre de son départ de Calchos [sic], on devinait que cette plainte partait de la politique et non du coeur. . . .

Au lieu de les crier, selon l'usage de tous ses confrères, lui, les débitait avec un dédain calme et plein d'ironie, et comme si la chose eût été trop ridicule par son impuissance pour qu'il dût s'en courroucer.

.
 Au reste, le grand Racine appréciait le célèbre acteur; car, un jour où il expliquait aux comédiens l'esprit d'une de ses pièces, il se tourna vers Baron et lui dit: "Pour vous, monsieur, je n'ai pas d'observations à vous faire; votre âme et votre génie vous en diront plus que mes instructions ne vous en feraient comprendre."¹²⁶

For thirty-two years following the death of Racine in 1699 Mithridate was given every season by the Comédie-Française, and thereafter it was missing from the repertoire only intermittently until the 1790's. It is impossible to determine how long Racine's influence on the performances of his plays survived him. While Baron still performed in Racine's plays in the eighteenth century--having returned to the stage after a very long retirement--he was,

¹²⁵ Etienne Léon, baron de Lamothe-Langon, Rachel (Paris: auguste Le Gallois, 1838), pp. 35-36.

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp. 37, 37-38, and 40.

apparently, no longer his "old self," and La Duclos took over La Champmeslé's repertoire of tragic heroines upon the latter's death in 1698. More beautiful than her predecessor, she nevertheless lacked the same lively spirit, it was said. And so, perhaps, Racine's influence vanished with him.

Contemporary accounts of La Duclos were none too complimentary. Although an admirer of the actress in earlier days, Voltaire wrote in his Dictionnaire philosophique that she, "'n'ayant pour toute mérite qu'une belle voix, sans esprit et sans âme, rendit enfin ridicule ce qui avait été admiré dans la DesOeillets et la Champmeslé."¹²⁷ Noury, from whose article the above quote is taken, presented further comments on La Duclos in a footnote on the same page:

Bachaumont s'accorde ici presque avec Voltaire: "La Duclos, reconnue fort bête pour tous ceux qui l'ont connue, avec une petite taille, un beau visage et de beaux éclats dans la voix, nous a fait illusion et nous a tous enchantés. Cependant à y regarder de près, sa déclamation n'était point naturelle. C'était une espèce de chant presque toujours le même; mais une manière d'entrailles et de sentiments, un ton assez majestueux et imposant nous empêchaient de nous apercevoir du défaut d'esprit de la comédienne." Mémoires, Jeunesse de Bachaumont, Magasin de librairie, année 1859, p. 183.

If one is to believe Louis Racine's account (and there are several points that prevent belief), La Champmeslé, in her later years lost most of the mellifluous tones she had either acquired or cultivated a natural gift for, and often resorted to an unpleasant loudness. Being a pupil of hers, La Duclos continued in the tradi-

¹²⁷ Noury, p. 157.

tion of the by then eroded proper declamation and, at the same time, gave a wrong impression both of what La Champmeslé had sounded like in her prime, and what Racine had wished theatre speech to be like. One of the factors that weakens Louis Racine's statements as Emile Mas correctly points out in La Champmeslé (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1927), p. 27, is the fact that he was but a child of six years when La Champmeslé died (and his account appeared only in 1746). In explaining the change in La Champmeslé's declamation, he mentioned that "la Chammelay, quand elle eut perdu son maître, ne fut plus la même. . . ."¹²⁸ If by "perdu" Louis Racine was referring to Racine's leaving the theatre after Phèdre in 1677 (and getting married in that same year), the statement might be valid. If, however, "perdu" is misconstrued as meaning his death (as, for example, is very clearly done by Jack Richtman in his book Adrienne Lecouvreur: the actress and the age (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 60, or if Louis Racine meant "perdu" to be taken in the sense of Racine's having died, then either Richtman creates a rather awkward situation, or Louis Racine's statement becomes untenable, for how could La Champmeslé react to Racine's death if her death preceded his (by about one year)!

Tragedy continued to be very popular in the French theatre at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Just as the costumes did not change except to keep up with court fashion, so too, interpretation was scarcely modified and the influence of one upon the other remained as artificial as before. However, the début perfor-

¹²⁸ Mas, p. 28.

mance of Adrienne Lecouvreur in 1717 brought some innovations to the French theatre. The Paris audience present at her first appearance in Crébillon's Electre was indeed startled to find the heroine wearing a Grecian robe (of white satin) and speaking her lines in a natural voice, for both the speech and costume ran counter to the style of the day. It is most likely that Mlle Lecouvreur wore a similar costume for her début as Monime that same year, although this is not recorded. As an inventory of her costly wardrobe would show, her costumes included twelve "habits à la Romaine," and four "habits à la Française." Her search for authenticity in costume did not actually set a trend, for several decades passed before costume reform was to be taken more seriously. As for her style of acting--it was in marked contrast to the traditional overblown and exaggerated declamation. "Adrienne Lecouvreur introduit de la simplicité et de la sensibilité: elle s'interdit des éclats de voix; elle a des tons touchants et une physionomie attendrissante."¹²⁹ Mlle Lecouvreur sought only the most natural forms of expression both in speaking and in acting. She was aware of what she was saying, entering completely into her rôle, becoming that character, and moved in a manner that would coordinate most naturally with her words. She also actually listened to her fellow actors and actresses, giving evidence of this by reacting--by look, by gesture--to their lines. For Adrienne Lecouvreur, the costumes she wore in her (classic) rôles were a natural outward manifestation of the character in question, and they helped to sustain her portrayal, but the

¹²⁹ Lanson, p. 171.

true source of inspiration for rôle interpretations were the words of the playwright. The motivation for her acting was internal; the costumes an external auxiliary.

While Mlle Lecouvreur had many partisans and supporters, her insistence on the simple and natural also won her many enemies and especially on-stage rivals (most notably La Duclos) who continued to carry the banner of the old school. Voltaire found in her a wonderful interpreter of his works, and delighted in her style, for it was much better suited to the plays that were, with the changing tide in dramatic theory, beginning to be written for the stage. These plays called for far greater naturalness in the delivery of the lines and in the acting than had heretofore been the tradition, and those performers who could not or did not wish to change and adapt to the newer interpretive requirements found themselves quite out-of-step with the times. Since the focus was shifting to plays dealing with contemporary life, the costumes had to be contemporary, and the acting could not retain its former stiltedness. Even though interest in the classical theatre ebbed, it still was being produced in mid-century. The costumes used for the seventeenth century tragedies, despite the early efforts of Mlle Lecouvreur, retained most all the vestiges of the preceding era.

Adrienne Lecouvreur had chosen costumes to suit the character she was portraying and the times that character had lived in; later in that century Henri-Louis Lekain strove for the same exactitude, and sought veracity in stage deportment, in the whole area of acting as well. He, too, was considered bold in his actions. He preferred designing his own costumes, being ever watchful that they express and

fit in with the local color of the given milieu. The writings of Plutarch, Tacitus, Suetonius and the French chroniclers served as sources of inspiration, as did drawings, prints and other forms of reference material found in some excellent library collections he was able to visit. He mentioned these sources in notes he kept.¹³⁰ While Voltaire praised his efforts (in the area of acting as well), and saw in him a model worthy of imitation, the results of his efforts were not too well received by the public. This could be explained, according to Olivier,¹³¹ by its (the public's) confusing "la chasteté du nu" with "le déshabillé," and by its misconception regarding a tragic hero's attire, that is, assuming that the latter had to reflect the grandeur and pomp of the play and to strive for the "effet théâtral."¹³²

What then, did Lekain's costumes for characters of antiquity look like?

Du costume antique il conserva la coupe et les principaux accessoires, mais il y ajouta une culotte et des bas. De plus il surmonta les casques de panaches multicolores, embellit les cuirasses et remplaça par du velours et de la soie la laine des toges et des manteaux. Il eut de la sorte un riche vêtement, dont il habilla tous ses personnages anciens, qu'ils fussent grecs ou romains, juifs ou assyriens. Les gouaches de Fesch . . . montrent ce qu'était ce costume.¹³³

¹³⁰ Jean Jacques Olivier, Henri-Louis LeKain de la Comédie-Française (Paris: Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie, 1907), pp. 158-59.

¹³¹ J. J. Olivier's book provides excellent descriptions of the artistry of Lekain and of theatre practices in his time.

¹³² Olivier, p. 159.

¹³³ Ibid., pp. 159-60.



Fig. 24

HENRI-LOUIS LE KAIN

pastel by Adelaide Labille-Guiard

Courtesy of the Rockefeller Collection of the Library of the
Yale University School of Drama.



Fig. 25 LEKAIN (PHARNAËCE)--BRIZARD (MITHRIDATE)--MOLE (XIPHARÈS)

Gouache by Fesch-Whirsker, taken from Catalog Monval, No. 434; appears in J. J. Olivier's Henri-Louis LeKain de la Comédie-Française, p. 60.

We have no description of his costume for the rôle of Xipharès, which he filled thirty times over a period of fifteen years,¹³⁴ but for the rôle of Pharnace (which he performed thirteen times between 1768 and 1778)¹³⁵ the following description was found (by Olivier) in the Archives nationales: "une tunique blanche à fleurs d'or, un manteau nacarat ramagé d'or, une culotte et des bas de soie gris clair, des brodequins nacarat galonnés d'or à talon rouge."¹³⁶ Lekain's costumes not only reflected his own view of the character he was portraying, but helped him to delineate that character by lending credibility and support to his interpretation of a given rôle. (See quote by Talma on pp. 72-73.) While his costumes and style of acting went reasonably well together, both elements shocked his audiences, for the former were so "different" and new to the latter. There eventually came a period of transition from the use of contemporary court dress to more appropriate and accurate costuming for the personages of antiquity, but a dichotomy persisted for a longer time in the area of acting: ". . . comme les croyances littéraires sont changées, l'acteur sera forcé d'adopter deux systèmes de déclamation, un pour les poètes de son temps, un pour celui du temps passé."¹³⁷ "A partir de 1730, en effet, les comédiens étaient retombés pour la plupart à réciter leurs rôles, comme on le

¹³⁴ See appendix for a table listing Lekain's performances in Mithridate.

¹³⁵ See note above.

¹³⁶ Quoted from a footnote on p. 161.

¹³⁷ Charles-Adolphe de Chambrun, quelques réflexions sur l'art dramatique. Mlle Rachel, ses succès, ses défauts (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1853), p. 14.

faisait à l'Hôtel de Bourgogne: ils les psalmodiaient ou les déclamaient d'un ton boursoufflé."¹³⁸ ("Selon Talma, on continue de chanter jusqu'après 1750.")¹³⁹

In the eighteenth century, the acting itself consisted largely of assuming "dignified" stances and, as such, was rather lifeless. Olivier likened the actors' manner of walking, when movement occurred, to that of a riding-school horse: proud, each step raised. The poses and actions were calculated, lacking all spontaneity; "tirés à quatre épingles, poudrés et pomponnés, les acteurs, dans les situations les plus violentes, jouaient les coudes au corps et mesuraient leurs gestes au compas. Consacrée par la tradition, cette invraisemblance ne choquait personne. Loin de là, on la croyait nécessaire à 'la dignité tragique.'¹⁴⁰ Lekain was praised for his acting in several rôles, including that of Xipharès, by Arnault (in Les Souvenirs et les Regrets du vieil amateur dramatique), by Coste d'Arnobat (in Mémoires de Mlle Lumesnil), and in the Mercure (December, 1763 issue).¹⁴¹ He attempted to emphasize the feelings and ideas contained in the alexandrine rhyme, avoiding the extremes of pomposity and of everyday speech. Talma wrote of Lekain, in his quelques Réflexions sur Lekain et sur l'art théâtral (translation by Collins), that "Lekain displayed supreme intelligence in the tempo of his delivery, which he made more or less rapid, more or

¹³⁸ Olivier, pp. 152-53.

¹³⁹ Lanson, p. 171.

¹⁴⁰ Olivier, p. 92.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 60.

less slow, according to the emotional state of the character, whose lines he would often break up with studied pauses."¹⁴² Collins also noted that Talma "paid Lekain the tribute of humanizing tragedy without any loss of its inherent nobility."¹⁴³

Etre vrai, disait-il, ce n'est pas être plat. Une oeuvre écrite "dans un langage au-dessus du langage ordinaire, doit être récitée 'd'un ton au-dessus du familier.'" Aussi, après avoir poussé dans la surprise, dans la joie, dans la colère, dans la crainte, dans la passion, un cri d'un réalisme saisissant, notre acteur ne craignait-il point de faire sonner comme une fanfare les couplets à panache et d'indiquer la musique des vers. Peut-être abusa-t-il de ces effets d'harmonie, ainsi que l'en accusèrent quelques critiques, mais la plupart de ses contemporains le louèrent d'allier dans sa diction le naturel, le sublime et la poésie, et de ramener de la sorte à la Comédie-Française "la bienséance et la vérité." Ce n'est pas seulement dans son débit, ce fut encore dans son action que Lekain entreprit d'être vrai, et certes, en cela il a accompli toute une révolution.¹⁴⁴

Echoing Lekain's sentiments somewhat was Rémond de Sainte-Albine, writing in 1747, when he noted in his Le Comédien (Paris: Desaint & Saillant et Vincent Fils), p. 138, that "la vérité de l'expression dépend de la vérité de l'action, & de la vérité de la récitation," and that "de même que l'action & la récitation composent l'essence de l'expression, la vérité du jeu des traits, & celle de l'attitude, du maintien & du geste, forment la vérité de l'action." (p. 147)

In his time, regardless of the ethnic quality of the character they were portraying, French actors remained essentially French,

¹⁴² Collins, p. 353.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Olivier, p. 154.

ever mindful of the courtesies that were the overt manifestation of a gentleman's good breeding. "Au comble du désespoir et de la fureur, aux moments les plus pathétiques, ils conservaient impassibles les grâces d'un marquis ou d'un abbé galant."¹⁴⁵ Lekain did not let the contemporary French code of conduct limit his movements or facial expressions. Quoting, in part, from the Mémoires of Molé (p. 46), Olivier stated that "jamais chez un acteur 'la correspondance entre l'âme et les traits' n'avait paru 'plus fidèle, plus vive, plus mobile que chez lui.'"¹⁴⁶ He continued:

Il laissait apercevoir dans ses yeux l'intérêt qu'il prenait aux discours de ses partenaires. Son masque reflétait tous les sentiments et toutes les passions: la colère, l'ambition, la crainte, la fermeté, le dédain, le mépris, l'amour tendre, l'amour jaloux, l'amour furieux. Ses mouvements surprirent davantage encore. C'était la nature même, et personne (sauf parfois Mlle Dumesnil) n'avait montré tant de réalisme sur les planches correctes et guindées de la Comédie-Française. Lekain ne feignait pas de traverser la scène en courant, de se traîner à terre, de donner à ses gestes une farouche énergie, de reproduire les spasmes de la mort.¹⁴⁷

Although a greater, a truer show of emotion, of bearing appropriate to a given character in a particular historical and geographical context would certainly have improved the quality of the presentations of seventeenth-century tragedies--even if the actors were to be garbed in the fashion of their day--how ridiculous indeed Lekain would have appeared exercising to the fullest the spoken

¹⁴⁵ Olivier, p. 155.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 155-56.

aspect of his art were he to have been dressed in the contemporary style, or were he to have been dressed in ancient style but acting in the manner prevalent in his time. He needed his version of ancient costume to complete the illusion, both to make his identification with the rôle as real as possible, and to involve the audience as fully as possible in the world and character he was recreating on the stage. From the costumes that Lekain chose as being the most suitable for a rôle he drew some strength of characterization; the costumes were complementary to his acting. The nature of his interpretation of a rôle depended largely on the text of a play, and was always guided by his precept that performances were to be as true-to-life as possible. The sentiments that the text expressed were given a visual and oral interpretation in a form that best fit that play, and which complied with the basic principle of naturalness and freedom in expression.

Although Lekain kept notes on his work in the theatre (on which the oft-quoted Olivier based his details) not all of them survive, for he was responsible for destroying part of them. For example, his notes on the rôle of Pharnace are not extant.

As has been noted before, any headway Lekain was able to make with Mlle Clairon in the area of costume reform was rather slow, but progress it was. Thanks to Lekain,

les protagonistes de la tragédie n'avaient plus l'air de marionnettes ou de poupées; ils étaient humainement vêtus. . . . Au XVIII^e siècle, les spectateurs, les critiques eux-mêmes, n'avaient que des données assez vagues sur les costumes historiques, partant [sic] ils ne pouvaient juger de leur exactitude comme nous le faisons aujourd'hui. Enfin, ne l'oublions pas, Lekain était avec Mlle Clairon

le premier artiste qui se fût soucié d'habiller ses personnages d'une manière bienséante et vraie.

At this point a footnote is added by the author quoted above.

Ajoutons que Brizard et La Rive furent à peu près les seuls à suivre l'exemple de Lekain et de Mlle Clairon. « la fin du XVIII^e siècle, dans les rôles du Vieil Horace, de Mithridate et d'Agamemnon, Vanhove, un roi "de vaste circonférence," portait une cuirasse de velours vert rehaussée d'écaillés d'or, ornée d'un trophée de canons, de tambours et de fusils. Aux côtés de cette armure se trouvaient deux poches, que le tragédien s'était fait faire, l'une pour son mouchoir, l'autre pour sa tabatière.

Avant Talma la rigoureuse exactitude ne fut jamais observée dans les habits de théâtre. . . .¹⁴⁸

Lekain made contributions to the theatre not only in costume design, but in décor and staging as well. Just as he selected costumes for their suitability to a given rôle and for the support they gave, so too, did he select décors specially adapted for the individual plays he directed. He abandoned the palais à volonté that had traditionally been so indiscriminately used, saw to it that the scenery was artistic in design, and took pains to establish proper lighting. He saw a definite need for accuracy in décor, being cognizant of the fact that the physical surroundings of the actors would affect their interpretation of a rôle and would help establish the mood of the play. The construction changes that the Théâtre-Français underwent in 1759-1760 helped him realize his goals.

Referring to the "décorations," Olivier stated that

non seulement elles se distinguèrent par une recherche de la couleur locale, mais, comme le voulait Diderot, elles furent assez discrètes

pour ne pas détourner à leur profit l'attention du public. Elles ne contiennent que les accessoires et les meubles nécessaires: des statues, des bancs, des tables, des lustres et des flambeaux.¹⁴⁹

With the stage thus set, Lekain concerned himself with the staging, with the stage deportment of the performers. Actors were never to remain rooted to the spot, whether they were the principal characters reciting their lines or secondary personages, conventionally immobile, blending into the background. Everyone was to "live" and "move" in his or her rôle in a manner that would be normal in real life. In this fashion, "des groupes vivants, des cortèges harmonieux."¹⁵⁰ were formed rather than static stage pictures. To this charged tableau Lekain sometimes added music, an innovation. While the orchestra of the Comédie-Française had always played before the beginning of the performances and during the intermissions, the pieces played were entirely unrelated to the stage play, a situation Lekain chose to alter.

Lekain jugea que l'exécution de symphonies inspirées de ces ouvrages en augmenterait l'effet et aiderait le spectateur à les mieux goûter. Il résolut de tenter l'épreuve dans Le Triumvirat. "Les connaisseurs ayant approuvé son essai, depuis lors" il accompagna "nos tragédies de morceaux convenant à leurs caractères."¹⁵¹

A "livre de service," dating from about 1750, showed that Racine's Mithridate was being performed in a "salon," whereas other tragedies on classical subjects were set in the palais à volonté.

¹⁴⁹ Olivier, p. 172

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 172-73.

Bergman, who makes note of this, also observes that changes of scenery were avoided as much as possible in the eighteenth century, thus generalizing the setting.¹⁵² (It should be remembered that benches for spectators were still placed on the stage up until March of 1759.) And so, while the theatre of the eighteenth century was moving away from the literary confines of the preceding century, and while the portrayals of Racine's characters were assuming a more "natural" aspect, the décors usually left much to be desired still. Antonio Paolo Brunetti was the painter of décors at the Comédie-Française from 1753 to 1783, yet few if any of his designs remain; none seem to exist at the Comédie-Française.

Lekain and Mlle Clairon joined forces in their crusade for costume reform in mid-century. We have already seen (pp. 73-74) how important correct costuming was to this actress in her craft, the effect the right outfit would have on her interpretation of a rôle. Writing specifically about Monime, Mlle Clairon presented her concept of the rôle and the factors that contributed to the formation of this concept. Racine's text formed the basis of her interpretation, the costumes she wore enhanced it and were constant reminders both for her and the audience of her character and station in life.

Rôle de Monime

Le rôle de Monime doit offrir, depuis le premier vers jusqu'au dernier, l'ensemble de l'athénienne que j'ai dépeinte. L'actrice qui, d'après les vers qu'elle dit au quatrième acte, croirait pouvoir se permettre le moindre emportement dans ses sons, sa physionomie, sa démarche, ses gestes, feroit la plus énorme faute. . . .

¹⁵² Gösta M. Bergman, "La [sic] décorateur Brunetti et les décors de la Comédie-Française au XVIII^e siècle," Theatre Research. Recherches Théâtrales, 4, No. 1 (1962), 10. This article was presented as Paper 10 at the 1960 Stockholm Symposium.

La première étude que je faisais d'un rôle était de chercher à lui donner le caractère qu'il exigeait, de chercher ensuite dans ce rôle le coup-let où ce caractère une fois reconnu, se ferait sentir avec plus de force. Mon grand plaisir était de me proposer à moi-même les plus grandes difficultés; je les trouvais dans ces vers:

Non, seigneur, vainement vous
voulez m'étonner;
Je vous connais, je sais tout ce
que je m'apprête,
Et je vois quels malheurs j'assemble
sur ma tête.
Mais le dessin est pris...Rien ne
peut m'ébranler:
Jugez-en, puisqu'ainsi je vous ose
parler,
Et m'emporte au-delà de cette
modestie
Dont jusqu'à ce moment je n'étais
point sortie, etc.

La douceur de mes sons et l'ensemble le plus modeste faisaient le contraste le plus frappant avec la valeur que je mettais aux mots que j'ai soulignés, et la fermeté qui se peignait sur mon visage.

On peut douter des résolutions d'une femme qui s'emporte; mais je crois qu'on ne doit rien espérer de celle qui résiste, sans avoir même l'apparence de l'emportement.

Ce rôle est un des plus nobles et des plus touchants qui soient au théâtre; mais je l'ai vivement éprouvé, c'en est un des plus difficiles.

Sans cris, sans emportement, sans moyens d'arpenter le théâtre, d'avoir des gestes décidés, une physionomie variée, imposante, il paraît impossible de sauver ce rôle de la monotonie qu'il offre au premier aspect; ces secours aideraient l'actrice; mais ils seraient autant de contre-sens pour le personnage.

. . . Ce n'est qu'après quinze ans d'étude sur les moyens de contenir ma voix, mes gestes, ma physionomie, que je me suis permis d'appréhender ce rôle, et j'avoue que pour parvenir à graduer de scène en scène et sa douceur et sa noble simplicité, il m'a fallu tout le travail dont j'étais capable et tout le désir que j'avais de bien faire. . . .

. . . Monime est absolument hors des routes

ordinaires.¹⁵³

Thoughts on interpretation in a more general vein are taken from an English translation of her Mémoires.

Every motion of the soul is expressed through the medium of the countenance: the extension of the muscles, the swelling of the veins, the blush upon the face, all evince those inward emotions, without which great talents cannot display themselves. There is no character in which the expression of the countenance is not of the utmost importance. To feel a character, and to show by the motion of the countenance that the soul is agitated by what it feels, is a talent of equal consequence in an actress with any she can possess.

It is by the countenance alone you can distinguish between irony and jest.¹⁵⁴

Hawkins, in his French Stage in the Eighteenth Century (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1888), I, 374, appraised Mlle Clairon in this way:

Unlike the actresses of her time, who neglected some passages in order to produce greater effect in others, she elaborated her characters in the minutest details, subordinating all to the development of a definite idea. . . . Her style, without being exactly stagey, was measured, severe, statuesque. It is said that she never gave way to a sudden impulse; all her tones and gestures had been carefully rehearsed beforehand.

The use of her voice, the pauses within a speech, and the play of her features were all calculated for effect, and effect they did have. Referring to a particular passage in the third act, Mlle Clairon mentioned that "le public qui n'avait jamais vu ce jeu de théâtre, daigna me donner, en l'approuvant, le prix de toutes mes

¹⁵³ C.-J.-H. Legris de Latude Clairon, Mémoires de Mlle Clairon, new ed. (Paris: Ponthieu, 1822), pp. 296 and 297-98.

¹⁵⁴ Clairon, (trans.), pp. 89-90. See footnote 80 for full reference.

recherches."¹⁵⁵ Descotes points out, and rightly so, that the fact that artifice was involved in the heightening of the effect of certain passages was not a novelty--for even La Champmeslé had practiced it. The search for the most effective means of interpreting the rôle always posed problems.

Mlle Clairon was the Monime of the eighteenth century, Lekain was known for his portrayals of both brothers, and Brizard was the most memorable Mithridate of the period. An anonymous quote (possibly that of Geoffroy) described him as "'doué d'une figure imposante et vénérable, d'une taille élevée et majestueuse, [and, therefore] on ne pouvait imaginer un plus beau vieillard."¹⁵⁶ Descotes, citing the above quote in his own commentaries, continues, "il était, selon Geoffroy, admirable, lorsqu'il criait sa haine de Rome. A l'annonce du débarquement ennemi, Brizard se jetait avec impétuosité sur son casque, et l'accent terrible qui sortait de ses entrailles quand il s'écriait "Les Romains!" produisait la plus vive impression." Mais l'amoureux ne valait pas le guerrier; il paraissait alors pâle, mal convaincu de sa passion."¹⁵⁷

Another actor, by no means lacking in spirit and fire on the stage was Dumirail, whose third début was in the rôle of Mithridate in 1724. However, as Lemazurier noted, ". . . il représenta Mithridate de manière à satisfaire tous ses auditeurs, s'il n'avait eu

¹⁵⁵ Maurice Descotes, Les grands rôles du théâtre de Jean Racine (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), p. 125.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 118-19.

pour auditeurs que des aveugles."¹⁵⁸ Lemazurier went on to recount an unfortunate incident. "Dans la scène où Monime dit à ce prince: Seigneur, vous changez de visage? un mauvais plaisant cria du fond du parterre à l'actrice: Laissez-le faire. Ces trois mots firent appercevoir [sic] au public le peu de convenance qui se trouvait entre la personne de Dumirail et son rôle, et diminuèrent beaucoup l'effet que ses talents avaient produit. . . ."¹⁵⁹ The outward appearance of an actor certainly does matter and can make, or, as it did in Dumirail's case, break an illusion.

Talma, the greatest actor of his time, was a handsome man, and cut a striking figure on the stage. Aside from his own physical appearance, however, his costumes accounted for much of the effect he was able to achieve. We know that correct costuming for every rôle was of prime importance to him, and he spared no efforts to realize his ambitions for true and lasting costume reform. It was his drive to continue and develop the ideas begun to be put into practice by Lekain and Mlle Clairon that finally gave that reform movement the impetus it had needed. The process of change had been drifting along all too gradually, and the waning of interest in the tragedies of the seventeenth century did little to help the situation.

When Talma began preparing for a rôle he first set his character in context, in a milieu.

I seek first to soak myself in the character
from the historical angle and I do that not only

¹⁵⁸ Lemazurier, pp. 251-52.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 252.

for the character I shall act but also for all those who will be around me, participating in my acting and contributing to the action of the play. I busy myself with dates and give my whole attention to the period.

I become a Roman. I live in Rome as my native city. I get help from looking at statues in museums. I note their stance, even the folds of their cloak. After a performance of Manlius David once paid me a flattering compliment. "When you came on the stage I thought I saw a Roman statue walking."

When that preliminary study is completed, I then go for the whole character. I feed on its passions. I get accustomed to feel as it feels, I mean as it would feel if it were alive. Then in the evening, before the public, I let my whole being expand, take fire and blaze forth from the great character I have created. What they call my talent is perhaps only a remarkable facility for plunging into the excitement of feelings which are not mine but which, through my imagination, I take unto myself. For a few hours I know how to live the life of others.

. . .¹⁶⁰

The words of the text, the playwright's creation, prompted the initial conception of the rôle at hand. His acting ran counter to the norm in his day: "Talma's crime--and the criminal charge endured until the death of the last critic to use Lekain as a yardstick--was to pour an impetuous, often an unrestrained emotion into his parts, to break up the alexandrine under tension, to base his by-play and gestures upon 'nature and truth', in short to infuse his role with a warm, pulsating humanity."¹⁶¹ He himself said, "I confess I prefer the sublime interpretation to the technically perfect performance."¹⁶² Total abandon was not his aim, how-

¹⁶⁰ Collins, p. 281.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁶² Ibid.

ever, and Talma did mark his scripts for modulation and all intended vocal effects.¹⁶³ A critic once wrote of Talma's acting as follows:

Citizen Talma possesses, among his theatrical qualities, a dark, expressive face, whose striking character is admirably suited to tragedy, a resonant voice, penetrating and with a rather fine middle register, an easy gait, poise, a warm delivery of his lines, great accuracy in the matter of costume and a scrupulous observance of good taste, etc. etc. He collaborates perfectly with his authors, is careful about his diction and clearly varies his gestures, he prepares and carries off with skill declamatory effects and any dramatic situation, he knows the art of filling the stage, he is eloquent even in his silence; in a word, he reveals himself in many parts as an artist, knowledgeable and profound.

This praise was tempered with criticism, however.

That sonorous, penetrating voice ceases to be beautiful when it becomes noisy. An unpleasant roughness takes over in moments of anger and despair. In grief, it seems throaty and trails off into a harsh plaintive monotone which ends by tiring the least perceptive ear. . . . His diction, usually competent, is not always sufficiently varied. He sometimes errs as to the degree of pride he should impart to a particular rôle; finally, if he often succeeds in moving the soul of the spectator, he hardly ever ennobles it.¹⁶⁴

The impression created by the fusion of dramatic delivery, intense characterization, total involvement in the character and his milieu had to be reinforced by effective costuming and, of course, Talma always insisted on it. The costume had an undeniable effect upon him (and any other actor) as well as upon the spectators. The theatre-going public began to see classic plays as not just oral

¹⁶³ Collins, p. 282.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 127.

literature over which the dust had begun to settle, but as a theatre that was viable outside of the passé seventeenth century opulent and anachronistic settings they had customarily been given in. The rethinking of the theatre, the new trends that had evolved during the course of the eighteenth century made it possible to review and accept (even if not unconditionally) the new views of the earlier theatre. It has already been noted how the type of plays that were written and produced in the eighteenth century--in themselves necessitating many changes in theoretical and practical theatre arts concepts--helped to alter the conceptions held about the classical theatre.

The brightest stars of the eighteenth century, particularly as regards performances of Mithridate were, then, Mlle Lecouvreur, Mlle Clairon, Lekain, Brizard, and Talma, each injecting his or her individuality into the theatre. For each of these performers the choice of costumes and décor was important, and each manifested, to varying degrees, his need for the right one as an element vital to his interpretation and projection of a character. Whether a necessary adjunct to or a direct influence on the interpretation, the "authentic" costume for the tragedies of the seventeenth century began to find its place in the theatre only near the end of the eighteenth century. (Lanson noted that the progress that was made in the space of a few years in the area of costume design could be seen in the difference in exactness in two works by Le Vacher de Charnois, the first, Costumes et Annales ..., 1786-1789, and the second, Recherche sur les costumes ..., 2nd ed., 1802.) As concepts in costume design changed, so did the manner of acting, and despite the emphasis necessarily

placed on costume reform, rôle interpretation also depended largely on the text of the play itself. The trend in dramaturgy at the time made this textual examination essential in the actor's process of finding the right interpretation for the contemporary plays, and this practice was carried over into the study of the tragedies of the preceding century.

Let us look at the theoretical side of the theatre as it had dealt with acting and rôle interpretation. In the first half of the eighteenth century Louis (Luigi) Riccoboni, the Italian actor and author who brought the Comédie Italienne to the Hôtel de Bourgogne and was himself a member of that troupe, was active in the theatre. Some of his writings (an "Extrait des pensées sur la déclamation de Louis Riccoboni") are found in Jean-Nicolas S. d'Hannetaire's Observations sur l'art du Comédien, published in 1786. In this work Riccoboni spoke of the capacity of the whole face for revealing the feelings of the soul, rather than the eyes alone, to which this expression was usually reserved. The power of facial expression is such that the eyes and the spoken word both need its support for total communication. The unchanging face was not so rare in an actor, noted Riccoboni, for complaints were always heard from the spectators: "'C'est un visage qui ne dit rien."¹⁶⁵ He continued, proceeding from a specific reference to Mithridate to more general theories on the nature of acting, of rôle interpretation.

Racine s'en sert bien à propos dans Mithridate, lorsqu'il fait dire à Monime: Seigneur, vous changez de visage! Les plus grands Acteurs

¹⁶⁵ d'Hannetaire, Observations (Paris: Ribou, La Veuve, Duchesne, Costard, 1786), p. 400.

doivent trembler lorsque ce moment approche; car ils sont dans le risque ou de ne point du tout changer de visage, ou bien de faire une grimace. Ce passage de Racine est une belle instruction à tous les Comédiens, à qui il ne suffit pas d'écouter l'acteur qui parle, mais qui doivent encore entrer si vivement dans ce qu'on leur dit, que, pour en faire connoître l'impression, il est nécessaire qu'ils changent de visage, même sans parler. Il faut cependant sur ce point savoir distinguer la différence qu'il y a entre le changement du visage qui exprime les sentimens de l'âme, & les grimaces de ceux qui ne font seulement que jouer du visage; le premier est du ressort du grand Acteur, mais les autres ne sont que l'appanage du Scaramouche. Celui qui entrera fortement dans l'enthousiasme nécessaire, & qui déclamera dans les tons de l'âme, parviendra à faire que son visage réponde & accompagne les expressions de la parole. Cet accompagnement des yeux & du reste du visage est indispensable à l'expression, autant que l'accompagnement des instrumens peut l'être à une belle voix qui chante: si les yeux & le visage n'accompagnent pas la déclamation, c'est comme si le violon & la basse, qui devraient accompagner la voix, s'arrêtoient. Le plaisir de la Musique diminue, & l'effet de l'expression s'affoiblit.

Les gestes ont leur éloquence aussi-bien que le visage; mais c'est de la Nature seule qu'on doit les tenir. . . .

. . . Il faut que l'acteur déclame si naturellement, qu'il force, pour ainsi dire, les Spectateurs à croire que tout ce qu'il dit, il le pense dans l'instant même.¹⁶⁶

While it was possible to leave the spectators with the impression that the actor was indeed "thinking" and "living" the part of the character whose rôle he assumed, the actor had to pay heed to François Riccoboni's (Louis' son) warning about the dangers of true total emotional involvement of the actor with his rôle. He felt that actually experiencing the feelings that the text expressed

¹⁶⁶ d'Hannetaire, pp. 400-01 and 402.

would incapacitate the actor, making it practically impossible for him to keep up with the often necessarily faster-than-real-life changes of disposition that had to be portrayed on the stage. Preservation of the illusion was one thing; the means by which this was accomplished was another.

Diderot also discussed (but at greater length) the difference between the expressing and the experiencing of sentiment by the actor in his "Paradoxe sur le comédien." The 'First Speaker' pointed out to the 'Second Speaker' that although the spectator is moved, all the pain, sadness, fear, uncertainty, despair reflected in an actor's delivery and physical movements are not true reflections of his own feelings, and gave several examples to support this claim. Among his 'proofs' he noted that the expressions are measured, prepared, subject to unity and to a system of declamation, that they require long study and many rehearsals for satisfactory conveyance to an audience, and that the actor listens to himself all along:

. . . c'est qu'il s'écoute au moment où il vous trouble, et que tout son talent consiste non pas à sentir, comme vous le supposez, mais à rendre si scrupuleusement les signes extérieurs du sentiment, que vous vous y trompiez. Les cris de sa douleur sont notés dans son oreille. Les gestes de son désespoir sont de mémoire, et ont été préparés devant une glace.¹⁶⁷

Knowing precisely what he is going to say and do at precisely which moment (his actions all premeditated imitation of the required sentiments), and being conscious of every movement at the moment of its execution, all the actor fortunately usually does is tire himself

¹⁶⁷ Diderot, p. 312.

physically, not mentally. The unhappy sentiments are experienced by the members of the audience, it is with them that the sadness remains, not with the actor.

. . . c'est qu'il s'est démené sans rien sentir, et que vous avez senti sans vous démener. S'il en était autrement, la condition du comédien serait la plus malheureuse des conditions; mais il n'est pas le personnage, il le joue et le joue si bien que vous le prenez pour tel: l'illusion n'est que pour vous; il sait bien, lui, qu'il ne l'est pas.¹⁶⁸

How, by mid-century, had the manner of acting been altered on the French stage? For a comparison with the earlier period we turn to Lanson. Referring to Lekain, he stated that the actor "renonce aux 'vociférations,' et 'parle' la tragédie. Cependant il a un jeu toujours chargé; il met trop d'intentions, souligne trop, paraît outré. On loue sa pantomime. Mais la déclamation tragique demeure trop conventionnelle, ampoulée, ronflante ou furibonde, monotone ou minaudière."¹⁶⁹ Talma, he wrote, "fait une révolution: il est le Garrick français."¹⁷⁰ Finally, summarizing the trends in acting after 1750, he stated that expression gained the upper hand over dignity, and the natural over the "chant," and that pantomime was added to the delivery of the lines.

Écrire un rôle n'est plus pour le poète donner des vers à réciter au tragédien; mais lui indiquer une action à représenter. Le poète a, pour s'exprimer, non plus la voix de l'acteur, mais tout son corps. Là où son invention ne dessine pas les attitudes, le tragédien, s'il a du talent, les trouve; il a sa part de création.

¹⁶⁸ Diderot, p. 313.

¹⁶⁹ Lanson, p. 172.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

Par là, le progrès de l'art du comédien contribue aussi pour une part à faire passer la tragédie de l'analyse à l'expression pathétique, à l'évocation poétique.

Ainsi de toutes parts la tragédie classique se défait par le perfectionnement des moyens matériels et du jeu.¹⁷¹

How were the rôles in Mithridate viewed in the late eighteenth century? We have a brief evaluation of the main character of the play contained in Du Fresnel's essay in the section entitled "Analyse de divers Rôles, pour servir à distinguer les nuances des caractères différens."

C'est, selon moi, celui de tous les caractères le plus difficile à bien rendre: les plus fortes passions doivent ici dévorer l'ame de l'Acteur.

Qu'il soit, je le veux, sublime dans sa haine, implacable contre les Romains; dans sa tendresse pour Xipharès; dans son amour pour Monime; dans sa colère contre Pharnace; dans sa dissimulation avec Xipharès & Monime; mais qu'il consulte encore avec moi M. Brizard.¹⁷²

The fuller accounts, or dissections, of Mithridate of that period, while serving a critical, literary purpose, could not show us how the actors and actresses that filled the rôles actually portrayed certain characters. But it is possible to formulate images of how rôles were to be interpreted ideally, and this could bring us closer to the reality of rôle interpretation as it was practiced in the late 1700's.

We may take as a first example of the exposition of theory Julien Louis Geoffroy's Manuel Dramatique à l'usage des auteurs et

¹⁷¹ Lanson, p. 173.

¹⁷² Essai sur la perfection du jeu théâtral contenant les principes nécessaires à la bonne représentation théâtrale (Liege, 1782), n.p., p. 75.

des acteurs . . . Speaking of Monime he wrote the following:

Monime est une des plus belles figures que le génie de Racine ait jamais dessinées; elle a toute la grâce céleste de ces statues antiques qui sont le désespoir des artistes modernes. C'est un admirable mélange de timidité et de courage, de modestie et de fierté, de sensibilité et de vertu: jamais le caractère des filles grecques n'a été peint avec plus de vérité. Pour rendre fidèlement un pareil personnage, il faut qu'une actrice trouve de grandes ressources dans son âme et dans son talent. Le charlatanisme ordinaire de la scène, les cris, les emportemens, les grands airs et les fières attitudes des princesses tragiques, tout ce qui a coutume d'éblouir les spectateurs, serait dans ce rôle un contre sens ridicule. Telle est l'idée que Monime elle-même attache à la modestie de son sexe, qu'il lui semble qu'elle en franchit les bornes en déclarant à Mithridate qu'elle préfère la mort au tourment d'être son épouse.

Le comble de l'art, pour une actrice dans ce rôle, est d'être douce, décente et modeste, sans être fade et monotone; d'allier la noblesse et la dignité avec la grâce et la pudeur.

Mademoiselle Clairon, l'actrice la plus consommée dans son art, étudia pendant quinze ans ce rôle de Monime, et cependant ne se flattait pas d'avoir atteint la perfection.¹⁷³

This is a résumé of the very notion of classic "perfection"; it is a restatement of the meaning of the classic.

Descotes quotes Geoffroy on the subject of Mithridate:

"Mithridate offre à l'acteur qui le représente des difficultés presque insurmontables, parce que la grandeur simple et véritable donne peu de prise au charlatanisme de la scène, et surtout parce que son caractère est un composé très étonnant de qualités et de passions très opposées. Il joint le courage à la cruauté, la magnanimité à la dissimulation, les emportemens de la haine aux faiblesses de l'amour, le génie des grandes entreprises aux petites ruses domestiques."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Geoffroy, Manuel Dramatique (Paris: Painparre, 1822), pp. 191-92.

¹⁷⁴ Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. 116.

Du Fresnel, mentioned earlier, was a French actor who performed in the provinces. His essay neither claimed to be the definitive doctrine of his time, nor did it, by dint of its full title (Essai sur la perfection du jeu théâtral contenant les principes nécessaires à la bonne représentation théâtrale, puisés dans les meilleurs ouvrages connus; rétablis dans un nouvel ordre, & augmentés d'un grand nombre de nouveaux avis: l'analyse de divers Rôles, pour servir à distinguer les nuances des caractères différens; & un abrégé de Prosodie française, extrait du "Traité de M. l'abbé D'Olivet." Ouvrage fait pour les jeunes gens qui se destinent aux Théâtres publics, ou qui se proposent de jouer la Comédie sur les Théâtres particuliers) show that it was simply a random collection of thoughts put together in second-rate fashion. Du Fresnel noted three basic principles: thinking (for the imagination), feeling (for the soul), speaking (for expression). Each is necessary for the other. For "thinking," he wrote "étudiez les usages du siècle, les moeurs nationales, le caractère, l'âge, la situation & la fortune de votre personnage: Étudiez la nature; Cherchez la vérité."¹⁷⁵

For "feeling," he continued:

Et sentez vivement si vous voulez bien exprimer; c'est-à-dire, pénétrez-vous vivement du ton plus ou moins indiqué par les moeurs, le caractère & la situation de votre personnage: la sensibilité, la tendresse & le feu doivent résider dans le coeur & non dans la tête.

Votre coeur est le foyer qui doit allumer, sans peine, dans l'âme du spectateur, le feu de la sensibilité, & lui inspirer, sans effort, les sentimens d'admiration ou d'honneur, de plaisir ou de douleur, d'amitié ou

¹⁷⁵ Du Fresnel, p. 3.

de haine que mérite votre personnage.¹⁷⁶

Speaking should be in natural, never forced, varied tones. He also wrote:

Et parlez dans le ton qui approche le plus de la conversation ordinaire, suivant qu'il sera plus ou moins indiqué par le siècle, les moeurs, le caractère, l'âge, & la situation de votre personnage.¹⁷⁷

(In d'Hannetaire's book there is an editorial remark deploring the fact that in that last quarter of the eighteenth century vocal delivery had acquired tones so familiar as to be ridiculous at times, making it as bad as the contrasting overblown and declamatory style seemingly prevalent in Louis Riccoboni's day.)¹⁷⁸ This striving for the natural predated Antoine's similar search for the total natural scenic and interpretive effect by more than a century, yet was seen as an innovative move on his part in the late nineteenth century.

A fourth principle, that of walking, was added, with the note that "en général, dans chaque genre, chaque rôle a sa marche."¹⁷⁹

Further thoughts on the interpretation of tragedy were included:

Le but de la Tragédie est de nous représenter la nature par les côtés les plus imposans, elle demande une récitation naturelle, mais soutenue & quelquefois majestueuse: son objet est de nous toucher par des malheurs extraordinaires, de nous étonner, de nous instruire par de grands exemples; elle nous conduit à la catastrophe par l'incertitude, par la crainte & par les larmes: tout en

¹⁷⁶ Du Fresnel, p. 4.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ d'Hannetaire, p. 406.

¹⁷⁹ Du Fresnel, p. 10.

elle doit être intéressant & tendre, majestueux & terrible.

Outre ce qu'on vient de dire en général de la Tragédie, il faut distinguer les quatre genres connus, qui ont chacun leur ton particulier. . . .
2^o Les Tragédies historiques, telles qu'Athalie, Cinna, Mithridate, Warwick. (Genre pour lequel il faut le plus scrupuleusement consulter les moeurs nationales.)¹⁸⁰

The natural in acting which came to be so greatly emphasized by the close of the century had been nurtured as an ideal earlier, although always in a controlled context. Evidence of this is found in the schooling Talma received at the Ecole Royale de Déclamation (later renamed Le Conservatoire), to which he was admitted after reading the part of Xipharès. The three famous teachers whose pupil he was were Molé, Fleury, and Dugazon, each bringing his own particular contribution to the study of the theatre craft.

Molé, as Collins noted, was a "mannered tragedian reared in the pompous classical school but a well-graced actor withal" who provided "an admirable corrective to the exuberance of his student who, like the youth of that generation, was all afire with the new theories of Rousseau, firmly convinced that a blind obedience to Nature should be an actor's only guide."¹⁸¹ A controlled technique was everything for Molé. Fleury was pictured as "a fine artist, aristocratic of bearing, a veritable talon rouge and yet, in the sense the world gives it the word, totally uneducated,"¹⁸² who sought to develop in his students their awareness for and the delicacy of

¹⁸⁰ Du Fresnel, pp. 5-6.

¹⁸¹ Collins, p. 29.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 30.

shades of meaning. "His ideal was the smooth, polished performance ant to achieve this an actor must have style."¹⁸³ Dugazon worked on acting as taken apart from that required by a particular rôle or playwright, teaching the actor "pantomime, . . . gesture, the technical skill to keep interest alive during gaps in the dialogue and above all the art of listening."¹⁸⁴ As Collins mentioned in his summary of the benefits of Talma's education, "only an enunciation complete in its physical and technical mastery could bring to Racine's poetry full significance and deep feeling."¹⁸⁵

Well aware of the decline in interest in the classical theatre in his time, Talma injected his own performances with the vitality often lacking in the "correct," established way, often breaking rules of recitation so as to display to greatest advantage and with greatest effect the full gamut of emotions contained within the twelve-syllable lines. Descotes termed his interpretations of Racinian tragedy at the beginning of the nineteenth century "pre-romantic."¹⁸⁶

Another notable interpreter at the beginning of the nineteenth century was Saint-Prix, whose Mithridate was "superbe," according to Geoffroy.¹⁸⁷ After his great entrance in the second act--the conquering hero returning to pick up the reins of government once again--

¹⁸³ Collins, p. 30.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁸⁶ Descotes, Racine, p. 117.

¹⁸⁷ Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. 116.

N^o 172 Costume de S^r PRIX, dans MITRIDATE, Tragedie.

Theatre Francais.



Dark red material with border design draped over green tunic; leggings: blue; helmet with laurel trim and red plumes.

ARCAS

Seigneur tout est perdu. Les rebelles, Pharnace,
Les Romains sont en foule autour de cette place,

MITRIDATE

Les Romains!

Acte II, Scene VII.

A Paris chez Martinet Libraire, rue du Coy N^o 1215

Fig. 26

COSTUME OF SAINT-PRIX IN MITRIDATE

Original drawing in Costumes of the French Theatre. Vol. XX,
p. 23.

it seems that Saint-Prix had trouble in deciding, as would any actor in that rôle, what tone to adopt, for there are such extremes of sentiment and such not unreconcilable but different aspects of his nature that a balance is hard to achieve. As Descotes writes, "l'unité de ton semble ainsi impossible à maintenir."¹⁸⁸

Both Mlle George and Mlle Duchesnois performed in the rôle of Monime in the early nineteenth century. According to Roubine, Mlle George's acting "apparemment confirme cette tendance à une interprétation plus psychologique, même si la recherche de l'effet demeure très visible."¹⁸⁹ The performances of her rival, Mlle Duchesnois, were always marked by a variety of tone.¹⁹⁰ Roubine added, further on, that "évitant un style trop facilement larmoyant, elle allie sensibilité et énergie, tendresse et dignité. Mlle Duchesnois, comme Talma, vise à restaurer la cohérence du personnage tragique."¹⁹¹

The last two decades of the eighteenth century saw very few performances of Mithridate at the Comédie-Française, but in the early nineteenth century (during Napoleon's reign) there was a resurgence of them. With an ever more personal interpretation becoming the norm--even in the classical theatre--it is not surprising to note that the interest of the public turned to the individual performer, and that the play and its author were relegated to second place. Despite this shift in spotlight, the link with the

¹⁸⁸ Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. 117.

¹⁸⁹ Roubine, p. 80.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 82.

theatre of the past was not broken. In seeking to bring out "naturally" what psychological truths a play contained or was based on, performers found that Racine's plays were psychologically valid and could, therefore, be interpreted in the style propounded by contemporary theoreticians. (One such theoretician--also an actor--was Félix Bernier de Maligny, called Aristippe, whose L'Art du Comédien [1819] and Théorie de l'Art du Comédien ou Manuel théâtral [1826] were widely read in his time. Mme Sylvie Chevalley notes that these two works "constituent, aujourd'hui, un intéressant document sur les conceptions théâtrales pendant la Restauration.")¹⁹² Unfortunately, just when the ideas on use of local color in the theatre were coming into their own, Mithridate was out of the repertoire of the Comédie-Française. That absence lasted about sixteen years, until 1838, when Mithridate was revived for Rachel, who took on the rôle of Monime for the first time, making it her own for the two decades to follow.

The critics were rather less than enthusiastic about her performance. Descotes quoted from La vérité Rachel (p. 41): "'étonnante sécheresse de langage, de beaux discours mal tenus.'"¹⁹³ In the feuilleton of "La Presse" of October 7, 1838, Granier de Cassagnac wrote that "'Mademoiselle Rachel uttered fifteen lines decently, and all the rest of the part in the coldest and most colorless manner.'"¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² S. Chevalley, "Aristippe 'Le Talma de l'Amérique,'" Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre, 3^e année, No. 2 (April-June 1951), p. 185.

¹⁹³ Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. 126.

¹⁹⁴ A. de Barrera, Memoirs of Rachel (New York: Harper & Bros., 1858), p. 40.

If the critics did not love Rachel's Monime, the public did.

Jules Janin spoke warmly of her.

De ce rôle de Monime la jeune Rachel, à son aurore, avait fait une admirable composition. Elle y était si touchante et si grande à la fois! Je la vois encore! Elle arrive, et la voilà pâle, triste, calme et résignée, et toute prête enfin à marcher à l'autel! Mais aussitôt, quand vient l'instant de la révolte, la voilà qui se redresse éclatante et de toute sa hauteur. C'en est fait, la captive redevient une reine, la femme humiliée relève la tête; cette enfant timide va lutter contre ce féroce vieillard; toute la dignité de la jeune fille offensée éclate enfin et se révèle dans ce geste, dans ce regard, dans ce noble maintien: cela durait...tant que durait la violence, et tant que Mithridate veut épouser Monime, en un mot tant qu'il y a lutte entre la jeune fille et le vieillard.¹⁹⁵

Left alone, Monime again became weak, afraid, aware of her powerlessness in the face of such an adversary as Mithridate. Janin continued:

Ah! qu'elle était touchante en ce rôle de Monime; qu'elle y apportait de grâce, de douleur, de réserve, de prudence et de sang-froid; qu'elle était peu semblable à l'Emilie implacable, à la furieuse Hermione; avec quel art ingénu elle s'emparait de ce rôle à demi voilé, si doucement indiqué!¹⁹⁶

Rachel's performance was beautifully complemented, Janin felt, by the Mithridate of Joanny. His interpretation became almost paternal in reaction to the charm of the suppliant Monime.

Rachel was famous for an outpouring of emotion when the part called for it; it was perhaps for this reason that her portrayal of Monime, whose feelings, whose anguish are largely interior,

¹⁹⁵ J. G. Janin, Rachel et la tragédie (Paris: Amyot, 1859), p. 140.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 141.

suffered. Samson, who helped prepare Rachel for the rôle of Monime, found that her diction was simultaneously natural and grandiose, and it was these two elements that rendered it so original. Barthou noted that her acting reflected the same qualities and nuances as her speech, and that by her sincerity and correctness and moderation in movement and gesture she was able to revive tragedy which had been killed by the histrionics which had earlier been imposed on the theatre by tradition. Said Barthou, "elle se souciait peu de la tradition et, sans la mépriser, elle l'ignorait. Elle n'était pas une copie: elle était un modèle; non, pas même un modèle, puisque sa personnalité ne permettait pas d'imitation. Elle jouait comme elle sentait."¹⁹⁷

How was Rachel's rôle interpretation of Monime motivated? Apparently she looked for and found in Racine's text the psychological essence of this character, and then portrayed in as realistic a fashion as possible the heroine, as she understood her to be, with all her human strengths and weaknesses. This return to the text was noted in the costume and décor designs as well. (However, one reservation must be expressed here. Emile Perrin noted that even in her "authentic" costumes there appeared "certaines concessions faites malgré elle, à son insu, au goût de la mode de 1840 à 1852.")¹⁹⁸ Perrin also wrote that her innately regal manner was very suited to her stage portrayals, and that her spare shoulders

¹⁹⁷ Louis Barthou, Rachel (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1926), pp. 27-28.

¹⁹⁸ Les Annales du Théâtre et de la Musique, 8^e année (1883), p. LIII. This volume covers the year 1882.

lent an incomparable grace to the folds of her peplum.¹⁹⁹ (A peplum is a draped cloak worn in ancient Greece.) It is possible, therefore, to state that while Rachel looked to the text for guidance in her interpretation rather than to the costume designed for that rôle, that her Grecian robes, basically in harmony with the setting suggested by the text, helped to create a definite atmosphere within which the recreation of characters out of antiquity was facilitated. The direct effect costumes had on rôle interpretation did diminish in the nineteenth century at the same time that greater accuracy was sought in their design, but they never ceased to render the supportive services they were originally intended for.

Beginning in the period that Rachel appeared as Monime, the actor Maubant performed in both the rôles of Pharnace and Mithridate. He conceived the latter as an authoritarian prince, and was seen on the stage as an irritated and violent despot in whom no traces of the lover were evident.²⁰⁰ Besides Rachel, he played opposite Mlle Favart, Sarah Bernhardt, and Adeline Dudley.

Mlle Favart's gentle portrayal of Monime was favorably compared to the proud one of Mlle Rachel.²⁰¹ A contemporary of hers noted that she interpreted "avec une grande autorité le personnage si touchant de Monime. Tout le succès fut pour l'artiste. . . ."²⁰²

Paul de Saint-Victor was quoted in the Annales du Théâtre et

¹⁹⁹ Annales, 8^e année (1883), p. LIII.

²⁰⁰ Descotes, Les grands rôles, pp. 120-21.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 126.

²⁰² Annales, 5^e année (1880), p. 83.

de la Musique for the year 1879 in his appraisal of Sarah Bernhardt in the rôle of Monime:

. . . le rôle est dans les cordes de son talent; il est écrit pour sa voix. Elle en a l'accent mélodieux, le ton uni, la douceur touchante, relevée par quelques élans de dignité offensée, par quelques sourires d'ironie tranquille. Elle y a été très justement applaudie. Mais une remarque à lui faire, c'est que son geste n'est pas d'accord avec sa diction: souvent l'un s'emporte tandis que l'autre soupire; on dirait la pantomime d'une prose un peu grosse accompagnant un chant d'élégie.²⁰³

Bernhardt herself did not really care for the rôle, and objected strongly when Emile Perrin, the administrator of the Théâtre-Français, first proposed that she learn it. She found in it no "effects" whatsoever to produce. Phèdre was a true rôle, but not Monime. "'C'est la pluie! il n'y a rien, rien, rien, je vous dis qu'il n'y a rien!"²⁰⁴ (She did, however, like Racine very much. From the English translation of her L'Art du théâtre we take her own testimony:

Tuly I prefer Racine, and have never played Corneille. I have tried--for my own satisfaction--and have gladly abandoned the attempt. I have often been asked why I have such a predilection for Racine, and such a horror of Corneille. The explanation is simple: in my opinion, Corneille, the sublime Corneille, does not know how to make a woman talk. None of his heroines (Psyche must be excepted) is really a woman. They declaim, but their heart is not in their breast, it beats in their head. Their love is of a subtle, complicated, and hair-splitting variety. . . . I find Corneille often superhuman, but never human.

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²⁰³ Annales, 5^e année (1880), p. 83.

²⁰⁴ Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. 123.

. . . the women of Racine, . . . still remain women however heroic their feelings.)²⁰⁵

The Annales du Théâtre et de la Musique, published for the years 1875 through 1916, provide us with several contemporary insights and judgments, however cursory, into performances of Mithridate. Much of the information that follows will be drawn from them.

The 1882 performances of Mithridate featured M. Sylvain²⁰⁶ in the title rôle. He personified the aged king, his authority unquestioned. His diction was precise. Mlle Dudlay, whose efforts were praiseworthy in her portrayal of Monime was, however, at that time still lacking a certain feminine charm, a mysterious attraction in the opinion of the Annales reviewer.²⁰⁷ He felt, too, that just as her Monime and the Pharnace of M. Dupont-Vernon were each "convenable," both artists were being asked for more than they simply were capable of giving.²⁰⁸

Six years passed before Mithridate was again performed at the Comédie-Française. The September 12, 1888 reprise was in honor of both M. Maubant, who was thinking of retiring, and of the young Lambert. Maubant was judged in the following manner:

Si M. Maubant n'a jamais complètement réussi dans le personnage de Mithridate, il lui donne

²⁰⁵ Sarah Bernhardt, The Art of the Theatre, trans. H. J. Stenning (1924; reissue New York and London: Benjamin Blom, 1969), pp. 125-26 and 132.

²⁰⁶ Both spellings, Sylvain and Silvain are to be found.

²⁰⁷ Except for forewords, all entries in the Annales, although edited, were anonymous.

²⁰⁸ Annales, 8^e année, pp. 70-72.

au moins un très noble aspect, il en exprime avec force le désespoir hautain, enfin il en rend la mort avec un sentiment très touchant et très fier.²⁰⁹

M. Albert Lambert fils was a very elegant Xipharès, handsomely costumed as an Asiatic prince. Although his diction could have been clearer and less inclined to the "chant," his work was seen as coming along well. Contrary to the opinion held by the reviewer of the 1882 performance, the reviewer of the 1888 reprise found M. Dupont-Vernon's interpretation of Pharnace to be a vigorous and completely intelligent one. Mlle Dudlay, likewise, was viewed in a better light. Considered touching when speaking to Xipharès, thrilling when suspecting the trap she had fallen into, dignified when refusing to marry Mithridate, heart-rending when longing for death, her performance was well modulated. M. Martel's dramatic speech as Arbate was most warmly and strikingly delivered.²¹⁰

The writer for the Annales of 1895 (21^e année) commented at some length on the performance of August 2 of that year. (For the years since 1888, only statistical data was provided annually.)

Le personnage de Monime est admirablement tracé, plein de décence, de retenue et de modestie. Il n'exige ni force, ni emportements, ni cris, mais seulement de la grâce, de la tendresse et un charme touchant; il convenait tout particulièrement à Mlle Marguerite Moréno. La jeune et intelligente artiste a dit le rôle avec cette voix harmonieuse et douce dont l'impression est si profonde. Peut-être--et c'est la seule critique que je me permettrai de lui adresser ici--peut-être n'a-t-elle pas toute la simplicité du geste... Monime est une figure de la statuaire grecque; Mlle Moréno lui donne de-ci de-là les attitudes

²⁰⁹ Annales, 14^e année, p. 56.

²¹⁰ Annales, 14^e année, pp. 54-56.

agitées de la sculpture contemporaine. Monime doit faire songer à Phidias, et Mlle Moréno nous rappelle Carpeaux... M. Silvain, au puissant masque de César, a composé largement le rôle de Mithridate, cherchant à dégager le naturel à travers l'emphase ou la périphrase tragiques. . . . Il a merveilleusement développé son "plan" et pathétiquement rendu la scène finale. Il a été fort apprécié et fort applaudi. Encore que sa diction soit généralement défectueuse, M. Albert Lambert a eu un beau moment au troisième acte, lorsqu'il supplie son père de poursuivre ses desseins contre Rome et flétrit la pusillanimité de Pharnace. Pharnace, c'est M. Leitner qui met sa voix admirable et de solides qualités dramatiques au service de ce personnage éminemment ingrat. . . . En résumé, très intéressante reprise, qui prouve, quoiqu'on dise, qu'il y a encore des tragédiens au Théâtre-Français.²¹¹

According to Descotes, Silvain, in contrast to the interpretation of his predecessor, Maubant, allowed his passion for Monime to outweigh his hate for the Romans; the torment and jealousy of the old man was brought to light far more than his historical stature and preoccupation with political concerns. These two sides of a rather complex figure have always created difficulties and, at the same time, given different actors opportunities to follow different lines of character development. Descotes makes a point of prime importance, and goes on to support his preferred interpretation.

Le comédien doit bien, s'il entend vraiment composer un personnage, rechercher dans le rôle ce qui explique le développement du caractère.

C'est là que se manifeste la supériorité de l'interprétation qui met l'accent sur la haine de Mithridate pour les Romains: le roi abandonne Monime à Xipharès parce que celui-ci a épousé sa cause, parce qu'il lui évite le déshonneur de mourir entre leurs mains (v. 1667-1770), parce que, en fin de compte, la haine de Mithridate est plus forte que sa passion. Certaines de ses déclarations autorisent à marquer ce trait:

²¹¹ Annales, 21^e année, pp. 57-58.

"J'ai besoin d'un vengeur, et non d'une maîtresse" (v. 1400); et tout le monologue du 4^e acte permet de laisser entrevoir, dans l'indécision où il laisse le personnage, ce que sera sa dernière volonté.²¹²

The Annales contain no remarks about the 1897 performances of Mithridate in which the costumes worn reflected such close observance of the style of dress prevalent in the part of the world that Mithridate had ruled. Here was a production full of the local color so dear to the hearts of the Romantic generation. Special attention was perhaps not paid to these performances, however, since the principals of the play were not new to their rôles, and the production may not have been a new one that year. In any event, the authenticity in costuming must have contributed positively to the overall effect the play produced.

At the turn of the century, in an article entitled "Le Théâtre de Racine," N.-M. Bernardin discussed various ways of conceiving the historical drama,²¹³ including the episodic one in which the sequence of events of a story is unraveled in chronological order, and another in which one central action is chosen and set in a certain place and period. This historical setting would be reconstructed by carefully-researched and faithfully executed costumes, décor, and properties, as well as by the inclusion of prudently selected details that characterize it. The first system was unsuitable for French tragedy, for the latter was "une crise rapide."²¹⁴ Likewise,

²¹² Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. 120.

²¹³ Bernardin, "Le Théâtre de Racine," Revue des Cours et Conférences, 9, No. 1 (1900-1901), 72-87.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 78.

the second system, the Romantic one, was praiseworthy but not without its drawbacks, in Bernardin's opinion, for it overemphasized local color and often drew out a work to unnecessary lengths. Racine, in contrast, used historical events, but only those he needed, and then organized them, using poetic license, into a sequence suiting his purposes. The rendering of an accurate historical account was not his aim; instead, he chose to show Mithridate's "indomptable courage" and his "haine inassouvie contre Rome."²¹⁵ For Racine, local color was a means, not an end.

. . . il n'a peint de quelques touches rapides l'époque et le milieu que pour mieux faire comprendre la finesse, la dissimulation et aussi la jalousie terrible du despote oriental. Ainsi, dans Mithridate l'historien et le peintre sont, comme il convenait, restés subordonnés au psychologue dramatique, et les faits et la couleur locale n'y servent qu'à mettre dans son vrai jour l'âme du principal personnage, en laquelle se joue véritablement la tragédie.²¹⁶

This interior action concerns itself with the struggle of Mithridate between two passions: his hatred for Rome, and his love for Monime. "La tragédie de Mithridate est donc, d'après un procédé que nous retrouvons dans presque toutes les tragédies de Racine, composée d'une partie historique et d'une partie romanesque adroitement et étroitement soudées l'une à l'autre."²¹⁷

The importance of costumes and décor and attention to the text were all discussed in René Doumic's article, "Le décor de la tragédie de Racine," appearing in the September 1, 1901 issue of Revue

²¹⁵ Bernardin, p. 79.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

des Deux Mondes (Tome 5, pp. 444-56). Doumic found that a play was meant not only to be recited and heard, but also to be acted and seen. Since the costumes and décor used in Racine's time did not warrant the continuous attention of the spectators, Doumic contended, it had to be another element that riveted their eyes to the stage. Racine's style created its own décor, which was complemented by the facial expressions his interpreters used, exposing and expressing the innermost feelings and states of the soul of a character. Referring to the best-known and most often cited passage in the play, Doumic explained the importance of the facial expression in interpretation.

Mithridate feint d'être disposé à unir Monime à Xipharès; et celle-ci, trompée au piège, avoue ingénument qu'elle aime le jeune homme. C'est alors qu'un changement de visage de Mithridate lui révèle la ruse à laquelle elle s'est laissée prendre et lui fait aussitôt mesurer l'étendue de la faute qu'elle vient de commettre. Ce fameux "Seigneur! vous changez de visage" est un des plus saisissants effets de théâtre, comparable au "Sortez!" de Roxane. Il contient la condamnation de Xipharès livré par qui? par celle qu'il aime et dont il est aimé. Il est en outre le point de départ d'un revirement essentiel dans le rôle de Monime. Car jusqu'ici nous n'avions vu en elle qu'une touchante héroïne de la résignation. Pour obéir à la raison d'Etat, pour se conformer à un engagement que d'autres avaient pris en son nom, elle consentait à refouler son amour dans son coeur et à jurer au roi un serment de fidélité qu'elle aurait tenu. Maintenant, outragée, elle se refuse à faire un sacrifice qui serait non plus celui de sa tendresse, mais celui de ce qu'on lui doit, et chez qui la douceur s'achève en fermeté.²¹⁸

qui sait ce qu'elle se doit à elle-même, et aussi ce qu'on lui doit, et chez qui la douceur s'achève en fermeté.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ Doumic, p. 452.

Thus, he summed up, the facial expressions provide a décor, and are at one with the action of the play. Since the indications for the play of the features are an integral part of the text, they must never be overlooked. Doumic objected to Mlle Clairon's contention that she had 'invented a certain manner of saying a passage,' for Racine, he said, "ne laisse pas tant de liberté à ses interprètes."²¹⁹

He continued:

C'est peut-être ce qui rend ses pièces plus difficiles à jouer: il ne s'agit pas ici d'inventer; il faut comprendre. Un acteur ne devrait pas aborder le répertoire de Racine sans s'être d'abord enquis des procédés d'expression très particuliers qui seuls y sont de mise. . . . La tragédie de Racine n'admet pas la déclamation, veut une extrême sobriété de gestes, et surtout ne doit pas être récitée comme on fait de beaux vers destinés à être dits. . . . Mais il n'est pas indifférent que la critique, en rectifiant les erreurs du public, y répande un courant d'opinion auquel il faudra bien que l'acteur se conforme puisqu'il risquerait, sans cela, je ne dis pas de trahir les intentions de Racine, mais de manquer l'applaudissement.²²⁰

Returning to the Annales we find only a few notes regarding the cast for the performances of Mithridate in 1900, but no critique. Whether the reviewer whose remarks were recorded for 1902 (December 21, to be exact) was the same as the one for 1888 cannot be ascertained, but the commentaries for both years have some striking similarities. Albert Lambert played Xipharès on both occasions, but the earlier Pharnace was Dupont-Vernon, while the later one was Leitner; yet, in 1902 the descriptions of the interpretations of both rôles

²¹⁹ Doumic, p. 455.

²²⁰ Ibid.

are, in part, practically identical! Silvain was said to bring to the rôle of Mithridate the authority customarily his in the interpretation of tragic figures, and Mme Silvain, appearing as Monime for the first time, "se faisait très favorablement apprécier."²²¹

The year 1903 brought three performances of Mithridate to the Comédie-Française, and four to the Odéon. Five years passed before it was again performed at the Comédie-Française, only once, to commemorate the 269th anniversary of Racine's birth. This performance featured the triumphant return of M. Silvain (after having withdrawn his letter of resignation), and mitigated triumph for Mme Silvain. The critic for the Annales wrote:

. . . notre éminent confrère du Temps reconnaît qu'elle a traduit les sentiments de Monime et réalisé sa physionomie avec beaucoup de mesure, d'intelligence et de distinction. On a apprécié, au troisième acte, la sobriété de son jeu, son émotion concentrée et pénétrante. On l'a moins goûtée au quatrième, où elle a un peu crié. Mme Silvain n'est pas encore la Monime rêvée, mais elle y progressera.²²²

Between 1909 and 1916 there were only seven performances of Mithridate preserving, with one exception, the same cast throughout; for these years only statistical notes were given about Mithridate in the Annales. (1916 was the last year covered by the Annales.)

The next performances, in 1918, again featured the same performers in the four principal rôles. In the performances of 1920, Maxime Desjardins assumed the rôle of Mithridate, and Mme Segond-Weber that of Monime. G. Boissy, writing on July 13, 1920, com-

²²¹ Annales, 28^e année, p. 84.

²²² Annales, 34^e année, p. 115.

mented that he saw Desjardins portray Mithridate as a warrior whose being was consumed far more by the hatred of the enemy than by love for his chosen queen.²²³ Descotes points out that Desjardins stormed about the stage, his bitterness and anger vented in rude outbursts. The polarity of the character was practically nonexistent in his interpretation.²²⁴ Referring again to Boissy (commentary of July 16, 1920), Descotes notes that Mme Segond-Weber did not succeed in keeping the physical and moral self-effacement necessary in her rôle.²²⁵

In 1921, Armand Praviel began his article, "De l'interprétation des classiques,"²²⁶ with a discussion of why the (seventeenth-century) classical theatre was so rarely represented at the Comédie-Française at that time. Primarily, he said, actors were influenced by the opinions of scholars which held that these classics were meant to be read, but not performed. Praviel felt, on the contrary, that "le drame est fait pour le théâtre, . . . et ce théâtre doit être un vrai théâtre, avec toutes ces ressources scéniques."²²⁷ Performances in which the tragedies would be treated purely as literature, and thus rendered lifeless, were to be avoided at all costs. Instead, these plays deserved being acted, as any other theatre piece would be. The difficulty in achieving this lay in the very traditions that had developed around the interpretations of the

²²³ Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. 119.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid., pp. 126-27.

²²⁶ Praviel, pp. 96-120.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 98.

classical plays. Having grown staid and inflexible for the most part, these time-honored interpretations, combined with some newer ideas, often made a performance "quelque chose de bizarre, de faux et, la plupart du temps, de mortellement ennuyeux."²²⁸ Lacking the support of visual effects used in most other plays, and being largely at the interpretive mercy of the individual actors, the classical play usually suffered. Such a play, Praviel declared, required a staging which in itself called for study, taste, and thought. It was the text that had to be illuminated; the text had to be the point of departure, not a nearly forgotten element in the production, overshadowed by the search for "effects."

One of Praviel's solutions to the problem, admittedly easier to suggest than to implement, was to apportion rôles in such a way as to have the age of each character more accurately reflected in his interpreter. Due to the system of advancement inherent in the theatre, the star performers were usually too old to portray the younger heroes and heroines in completely convincing fashion, wigs and costumes notwithstanding. Often much of the meaning of a rôle was lost if the actors were of the wrong age.

Another major area of concern that Praviel discussed was that of costuming. Two schools of thought existed here. One said that "notre tragédie classique, sous des noms grecs et romains, étudie simplement l'éternel coeur humain dans le décor de Versailles."²²⁹ For that reason it was considered pointless to attempt to bring in

²²⁸ Praviel, p. 98.

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

local color (itself absent from the texts) through the costumes. Partisans of this theory thought it more appropriate to garb the protagonists in the style in which the classical plays were originally presented. This, argued Praviel, would make venerable museum pieces of them, seen by the public only out of curiosity, and would serve to further reduce the genuine interest that it was hoped would be generated.

The second view was that historical accuracy ought to be observed in the costumes. To avoid possibly strange combinations of costumes due to the tastes and preferences of individual actors, the selection of costumes was always to be left up to the person charged with the staging. It was to be the job of the actor, however, to seek to bring out all the historical flavor inherent in the play.

In short, only with proper costuming and with respect for the text, both elements set in a unified context by the metteur en scène, could there be any hope of restoring the classical tragedy to its rightful place among the masterpieces of dramatic literature that could and should be viable and meaningful on the stage in any era.

It seems that by 1935 moves had been made in that direction for Mithridate. Emile Mas, writing for La Presse on January 14, 1935 about the January 10 performance, pointed out how Albert-Lambert's costume and bearing played an important part in his interpretation of Mithridate:

Albert-Lambert a composé une magnifique figure du vieux roi; avec sa large barbe blanche, ses épais sourcils noirs, sa longue chevelure rejetée en arrière découvrant un large front, il a vraiment l'aspect d'un superbe personnage de l'Orient, alliant une fière distinction à une sorte de barbarie qui se manifeste par des éclats, des gestes,

des mouvements violents aussitôt reprimés; il porte avec une aisance étonnante le lourd et riche costume de Mithridate; bref, il donne dès son entrée, avant même d'avoir prononcé un seul mot, l'impression d'un grand chef. Et il joue le rôle avec une rare maîtrise et une émotion profonde, détaillant le vers en virtuose; Mithridate tel qu'Albert-Lambert le présente est effrayant et pitoyable. Enfin, le brillant tragédien conserve cette qualité qui, hélas, tend à disparaître: la dignité de l'attitude, de la démarche et l'élégance de la parole.²³⁰

Almost three years later came the reprise of Mithridate which was staged by Jean Yonnel, who also performed in the title rôle. On that occasion, the lavish costumes designed by Mme Marie-Hélène Dasté,²³¹ and M. Louis Sué's décor of a comfortable palace, were apparently quite a departure from the earlier settings for Mithridate. If one is to judge from the literary, operatic, artistic, and historical references made by the critics à propos of the costumes, the latter in particular seem to have been somewhat removed from antiquity, and mixed in style. The décor, Robert Kemp felt, though airless, was also too pleasant for what it should have represented. (See Figs. 18 and 27.) It lessened the potentially stark contrast between the gentle Monime and her 'barbarian' surroundings. Yet, said Kemp, Yonnel made the best of the décor in his staging, and observed the unity of time.²³² The beginning of the play coincided with daybreak, when burning torches were extinguished, and evidence of a sunset marked the end of the day as well as of Mithridate's life at the conclusion of the play.

²³⁰ Champion, III, 186.

²³¹ Mme Dasté is the daughter of Jacques Copeau.

²³² Champion, V, 206.

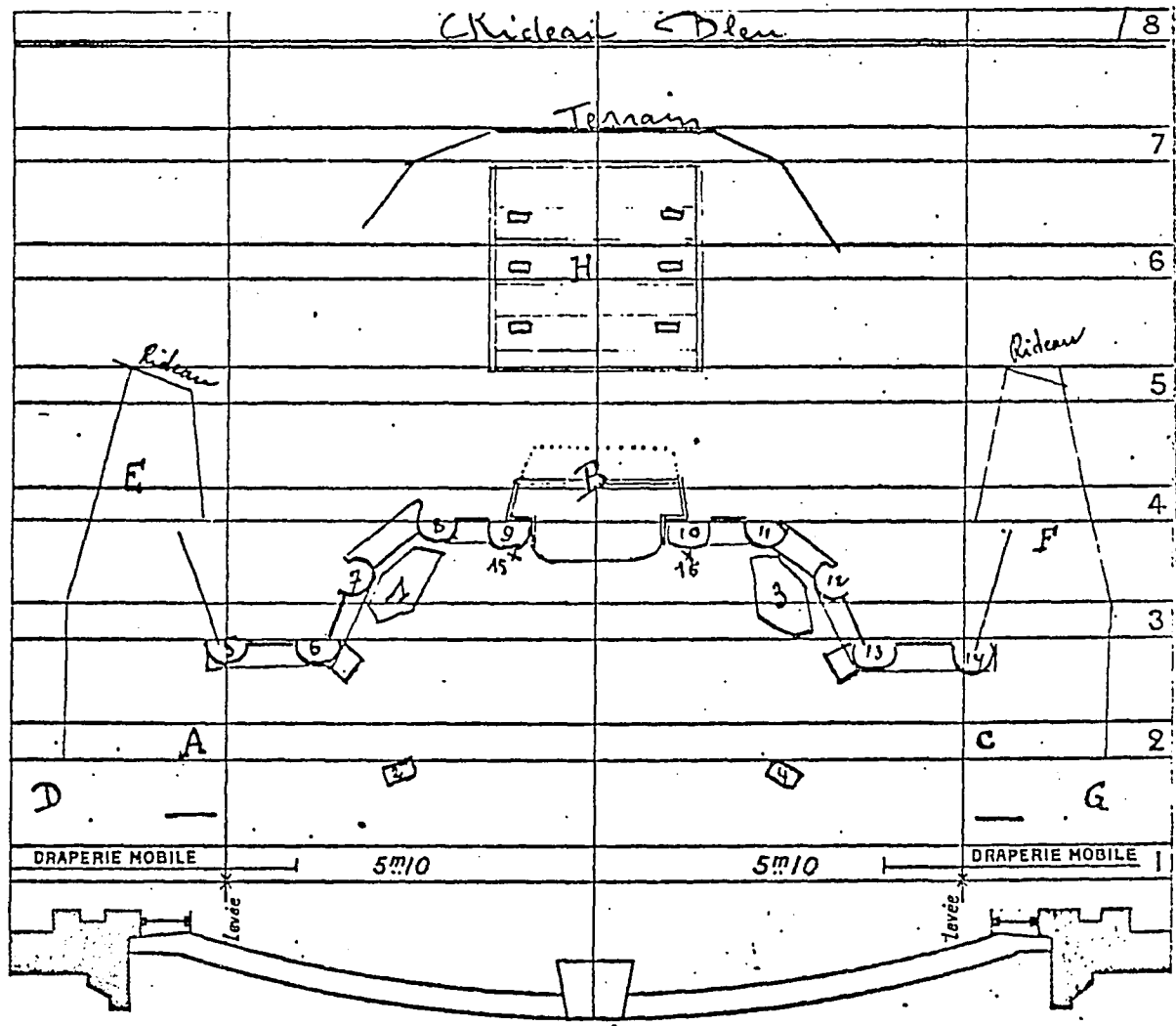


Fig. 27

DECEMBER, 1937

PRODUCTION: FLOOR

PLAN

Courtesy of "Les
Collections de la
Comédie-Française."

1) Moirine se lève -

2) Phostine se tourne vers la porte du fond.

3) Moirine sort par A et E en passant H:1 de Phostine.

Sanfane -
Aras entre par F et C. Il vient à la porte du fond, ouvre le fond et pousse doucement les portes deux battants de la porte, les machinistes l'aident par derrière. Il se place ensuite derrière le battant de gauche.

Six gardes venant des dessous viennent se placer en éventail à genoux. Pharnac et Ziphariès entrent ensuite. Pharnac se place après les gardes de gauche et Ziphariès après ceux de droite. Mithrisate ensuite prend le fond

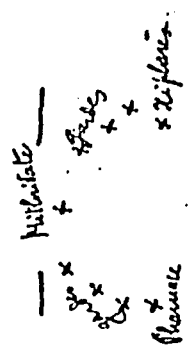
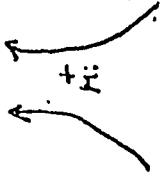


Fig. 28

4) Mithrisate tend ses mains à ses enfants - Ceux-ci se lèvent, vont à lui et lui baisent la main.

Pharnac aussitôt redresse et sort à droite par C et F tandis que Mithrisate caresse la joue de Ziphariès - Celui-ci ensuite suit Pharnac à droite.

Les six gardes se lèvent et sortent par le fond en passant de chaque côté de Mithrisate - Ils s'en vont sans les dessous.



ACTE III (1)

SCÈNE PREMIÈRE. — MITHRIDATE, PHARNACE,
XIPHARÈS.

MITHRIDATE. (2)

- 755 Approchez, mes enfants¹. Enfin l'heure est venue
Qu'il faut² que mon secret éclate³ à votre vue.
A mes nobles projets je vois tout conspirer⁴;
Il ne me reste plus qu'à vous les déclarer (3)
Je fuis (4) ainsi le veut la fortune ennemie.
760 Mais vous savez trop bien l'histoire de ma vie
Pour croire que longtemps soigneur⁵ de me cacher,
J'attende en ces déserts⁷ qu'on me vienne chercher.
La guerre a ses faveurs⁸, ainsi que ses disgrâces.
Déjà plus d'une fois, retournant sur mes traces,
765 Tandis que l'ennemi, par ma fuite trompé⁹,
Tenait après son char¹⁰ un vain¹¹ peuple occupé,
Et, gravant en airain ses frères¹² avantages,
De mes États conquis enchainait les images,
Le Bosphore m'a vu, par de nouveaux apprêts,
770 Ramener la terreur du fond de ses marais,
Et, chassant les Romains de l'Asie étonnée¹³,
Renverser en un jour l'ouvrage d'une année¹⁴.
D'autres temps, d'autres soins (5) l'Orient accablé
Ne peut plus soutenir leur effort redoublé.
775 Il voit plus que jamais ses campagnes couvertes

1. *Approchez, mes enfants*. Var. : « Venez, princes, venez. » La correction de Racine révèle mieux le caractère dissimulé de Mithridate. Comparer ce début de scène avec *Rodogune*, III, III, et *Britannicus*, IV, II; 2. *Qu'il faut* : où il faut; 3. *Eclate* : se manifeste de façon brillante. Mithridate a déjà parlé deux fois de son dessein; 4. *Conspirer* : concourir, être d'accord; 5. *Je fuis*. Avec plein de fierté. Cf. le Portrait d'Emile (Grand Condé) dans La Bruyère; 6. *Soigneur* : soucieux; 7. *En ces déserts* : la Chersonèse Taurique, qui était une région désertique; 8. *La guerre a ses faveurs*... Cf. Rivarol : « La guerre est le tribunal des rois et les victoires sont ses arrêts »; 9. *Par ma fuite trompé*... Plutarque dit, en effet, dans la *Vie de Pompée*, que Mithridate était plus difficile à vaincre quand il fuyait que quand il combattait; 10. *Tenait après son char*... Dans ces trois vers il s'agit des triomphes romains : le char est le char des triomphateurs; l'airain est l'airain des tables sur lesquelles on grave les victoires et qu'on déposait au Capitole. Les *images enchainées* sont les statues personnifiant les nations soumises et les fleuves conquis; 11. *Vain* : ici qui n'a pas de force, dépourvu de valeur ou de sérieux (latin *vanius* : vide, d'où sans fondement). Cf. Cayrou, op. cit.; 12. *Frères*. Sens étymologique : frères (*Urophiis*); 13. *Étonnée*. Sens étymologique : frappée comme par un coup de tonnerre (*extorreat*); 14. *Renverser en un jour l'ouvrage d'une année* : vers d'allure cornélienne. Cf. Ovide : « *Longue perit labor irritus anni* »; 15. *D'autres temps, d'autres soins*. Le XVII^e siècle employait l'article indéfini où nous l'omettons. Cf. le *Misanthrope*, v. 27 : « Et si par un malheur j'en

5) Mithridate passant derrière Xipharès va s'asseoir
divan 2.

1) On enlève rapidement le casque de
Mithridate qui est sur le divan 3.
Le siège 1 est amené côté jardin

2

4

1

2) Au lever du rideau Mithridate est seul
en scène au-dessus du siège 1. Il pousse ce
siège légèrement du pied. A ce moment
Xipharès et Pharnace venant de 5^e paraissent
à C et s'arrêtent.

+ Pharnace

+ Xipharès

Mithridate commence à parler en allant
à leur rencontre. Il se place entre eux, et les
prenant par l'épaule les amène à gauche

1

4 Pharnace
+ Mithridate
+ Xipharès

3) Pharnace va pour s'asseoir siège 4. Mithridate
l'arrête et lui désigne le siège 1. Pharnace y va.
Mithridate fait passer Xipharès devant lui au siège 4.

4) Xipharès s'assied en baissant la tête.

+ Pharnace

3 Xipharès
+ Mithridate

Fig. 29

MITHRIDATE (1)

Ah! c'est où je t'attends¹.

970 Tu ne saurais partir, perfide, et je t'entends.
Je sais pourquoi tu fuis l'hymen où je t'envoie :
Il te fâche² en ces lieux d'abandonner ta proie;
Monime te retient. Ton amour criminel
Prétendait l'arracher à l'hymen paternel.

975 ~~Ni l'ardeur dont tu sais que je l'ai recherchée,
Ni déjà sur son front ma couronne attachée,
Ni cet asile même où je la fais garder,
Ni mon juste courroux n'ont pu l'intimider.~~

(1) Traître, pour les Romains tes lâches complaisances³

980 N'étaient pas à mes yeux d'assez noires offenses :
Il te manquait encor ces perfides amours
Pour être le supplice⁷ et l'horreur⁸ de mes jours.
Loin de t'en repentir⁹, je vois sur ton visage
Que ta confusion ne part que de ta rage :
985 Il te tarde¹⁰ déjà qu'échappé de mes mains
Tu ne¹¹ courres me perdre et me vendre aux Romains.
Mais avant que¹² partir, je me ferai justice;
Je te l'ai dit (3)

SCÈNE II. — MITHRIDATE, PHARNACE,
XIPHARÈS, GARDES.

MITHRIDATE.

Holà! gardez (4) Du'on le saisisse (5)

Oui, lui-même¹³, Pharnace (Allez) de ce pas¹⁴
990 Qu'enfermé dans la tour on ne le quitte pas.

1. C'est où je t'attends : c'est là que je t'attends (emploi fréquent de où au XVII^e siècle). Cf. Bojard (I, III) : « Il ne faut plus qu'un pas, mais c'est où je t'attends »; 2. Il te fâche. Tour-
nure impersonnelle (tu es fâché). Il : cela (emploi limité aujourd'hui à des expressions
comme : il est vrai). Cette expression, comme la précédente, donne aux paroles de Mithridate
un tour familier et quelque peu brutal; 3. Dont : avec laquelle; 4. Recherché. Rechercher a
souvent, au XVII^e siècle, le sens de « tâcher d'obtenir l'alliance d'un peuple ou d'un roi » (cf.
plus haut Mithridate, v. 891), ou « rechercher une fille en mariage ». Cf. Iphigénie, v. 23 et le
Mariage forcé (II). Cf. Carrou; 5. Déjà : se rapporte à ma couronne attachée (il s'agit tou-
jours du bandeau royal); 6. Tes lâches complaisances : sens plus fort au XVII^e siècle. Cf. Molière,
le Misanthrope (II, v). « Les molles complaisances »; 7. Le supplice : ce mot n'était pas usé au
XVII^e siècle et n'avait pas un sens affaibli comme aujourd'hui; 8. L'horreur : l'objet d'hor-
reur. Cf. Britannicus (I, I); 9. Loin de t'en repentir : Les délices de Rome en devinrent l'horreur; 9. Loin de t'en
repentir... Cette construction ne serait plus correcte aujourd'hui (sujets différents dans les
deux propositions); 10. Il te tarde. Cf. plus haut : il te fâche; 11. Ne : ici expletif. Fréquent
au XVII^e siècle. Cf. Iphigénie, v. 673; 12. Avant que : avant de. Racine dit également avant que
de (Veuves avait déjà condamné avant que, toujours employé pourtant par Corneille et
Racine); 13. Oui, lui-même. Cette insistance marque l'hésitation des gardes, qui préparent leur
prochaine trahison; 14. De ce pas, dépend du participe enfermé.

1) Mithridate se précipite sur Pharnace, le prend par les épaules et le fait basculer sur sa jambe droite. Il le tient ainsi prêt à tomber.

2) Mithridate rejette brusquement Pharnace vers la gauche.

3) Mithridate remonte au milieu.

4) Deux gardes entrent par D et E et 2 autres par G et C.
Mithridate Xipharis garde
garde garde +
Pharnace + garde

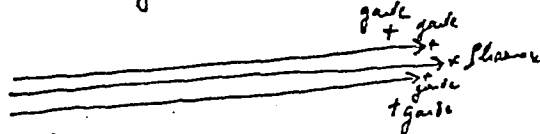
5) Les gardes regardent Pharnace.

6) Les 2 gardes de gauche vont se placer derrière Pharnace en lui mettant chacune une main sur l'épaule.
Mithridate Xipharis garde.
garde + garde

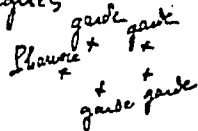
7) Pharnace poussé par les 2 gardes se dirige vers C.

FIG. 30

1) Pharnace et les 2 gardes sont arrivés à droite et passent entre les 2 gardes de droite



A ce moment Pharnace s'échappe aux deux gardes et revient en scène. Il est rattrapé par les deux autres gardes qui le tiennent par les poignets



2) Surprise de Mithridate. Effroi de Xipharès.

3) Mithridate se tourne brusquement vers Pharnace celui-ci entraîné par les quatre gardes sort avec eux par C et G.

Grand temps. Mithridate s'approche lentement de Xipharès qui baisse les yeux. Quand Mithridate est tout près de lui il parle.

Mithridate + Xipharès

4) Mithridate du doigt désigne la droite à Xipharès. celui-ci sort très lentement par C et G.

5) Mithridate regarde vers la gauche.

6) Il se tourne vers la droite.

ACTE III. SCÈNE IV — 59

PHARNACE (1)

Hé bien! sans me parer² d'une innocence vaine,
Il est vrai, mon amour mérite votre haine.
J'aime: l'on vous a fait un fidèle récit.
Mais Xipharès, Seigneur, ne vous a pas tout dit.
995 C'est le moindre secret³ qu'il pouvait vous apprendre:
Et ce fils si fidèle a dû vous faire entendre
Que des mêmes ardeurs dès longtemps enflammé,
Il aime aussi la Reine⁴ et même en est aimé.⁵ (3)

SCÈNE III. — MITHRIDATE, XIPHARÈS.

XIPHARÈS.

Seigneur, le croirez-vous⁶ qu'un dessein si coupable...

MITHRIDATE.

1000 Mon fils, je sais de quoi votre frère est capable.
Me préserve le ciel de soupçonner jamais
Que d'un prix si cruel vous payez⁷ mes bienfaits,
Qu'un fils qui fut toujours le bonheur de ma vie
Ait pu percer ce cœur qu'un père lui confiait
1005 Je ne le croirai point. Allez: loin d'y songer,
Je ne vais désormais penser qu'à nous venger. (4)

SCÈNE IV. — MITHRIDATE, seul.

Je ne le croirai point? Vain espoir qui me flatte!
Tu ne le crois que trop, malheureux Mithridate!
Xipharès mon rival? et, d'accord avec lui,
1015 La Reine aurait osé me tromper aujourd'hui?
Quoi? de quelque côté que je tourne la vue,
La foi⁸ de tous les cœurs⁹ est pour moi disparue?
Tout m'abandonne ailleurs? tout me trahit ici?
Pharnace, amis, maîtresse¹⁰ et toi, mon fils, aussi?¹⁰

1. Sans me parer: sans faire parade; 2. Le moindre secret: le moindre des secrets; 3. Et même en est aimé. Pharnace qui se croit trahi par Xipharès lance en partant ce dernier trait. Il se parait plus sur la scène; 4. Le croirez-vous. Le pronom neutre le représente et annonce la proposition complétive qui va suivre (qui sera ici inachevée); tournure latine; 5. Payez: pour payés (c'est un subjonctif mais dans les éditions anciennes l'è est d'ordinaire omis aux deux premières personnes du pluriel de l'imparfait de l'indicatif et présent du subjonctif); 6. Malheureux Mithridate. La jalousie de Mithridate peut être comparée avec celle d'Orouzmane, Zaire (I, v); 7. Aujourd'hui. Parle que, ce jour même il a donné à Xipharès une mission de

Fig. 31

3) Elle recule de deux pas à gauche.

2) Mithridate avance d'un pas vers elle.

3) Il vient à elle
Monime
+ Mithridate
[4]

4) Monime dit ses 3 vers en baissant la tête.

5) Un temps. Mithridate découvre la tête.
Elle lève les yeux vers lui.

ACTE III. SCÈNE V — 63

Je veux laisser¹ de vous jusqu'à votre mémoire.
Allons, madame, allons. Je m'en vais vous unir.

MONIME (1)

Plutôt de mille morts dussiez-vous me punir!

MITHRIDATE.

1095 Vous résistez en vain, et j'entends votre fuite².

MONIME.

En quelle extrémité, Seigneur, suis-je réduite³!
Mais enfin⁴ je vous crois, et je ne puis penser
Qu'à feindre si longtemps vous puissiez vous forcer.
Les dieux me sont témoins qu'à vous plaire bornée⁵,

1100 Mon âme à tout son sort s'était abandonnée.
Mais si quelque faiblesse avait pu m'alarmer⁶,
Si de tous ses efforts mon cœur a dû s'armer,
Ne croyez point, Seigneur, qu'auteur de mes alarmes⁷,
Pharnace m'ait jamais coûté les moindres larmes. (1)

1105 Ce fils victorieux que vous favorisez,
Cette vivante image en qui vous vous plaisez,
Cet ennemi de Rome, et cet autre vous-même,
Enfin ce Xipharès que vous voulez que j'aime⁸...

MITHRIDATE. (3)

Vous l'aimez?

MONIME (4)

Si le sort ne m'eût donnée à vous,

1110 Mon bonheur dépendait de l'avoir⁹ pour époux.
Avant que votre amour m'eût envoyé ce gage,
Nous nous aimions. 5 Seigneur, vous changez de visage¹⁰.

1. Je veux laisser, sans fort : je veux perdre jusqu'à votre souvenir (au XVII^e siècle, laisser la vie : perdre la vie. *Iphigénie*, V, vi); 2. J'entends votre fuite : je comprends vos faux-fuyants, vos détours. *Fuite* : feinte, détour. Cf. Pascal, *les Provinciales*. « Vous n'échapperez pas par ces biais »; 3. En quelle extrémité, seigneur, suis-je réduite : on disait alors réduire à, dans et en. Cf. Corneille : *Examen de Menteur* : « J'ai tâché de le réduire à nos usages et dans nos règles »; 4. Enfin : à la fin; 5. Bornée : bornant tous mes desirs à celui de vous plaire. Cf. *le Cid* (III, vi) : « Ne borne pas ta gloire à venger un affront »; 6. M'alarmer : alarmer ma vertu, mon sentiment du devoir; 7. Alarmes : trouble (étymologiquement : émotion causée par les ennemis); 8. Que vous voulez que j'aime. Monime, en avouant son amour, semble, avec beaucoup d'habileté, s'avoir aimé Xipharès, son fils préféré, que pour complaire à Mithridate; 9. Dépendait de l'avoir. Construction vieillie (elle a également été employée par Corneille). L'abbé Du Bos (*Recherches critiques sur le poète et la peinture*) raconte que Racine avait appris à la Champmeslé à baisser la voix en prononçant ces vers : « Si le sort ne m'eût donnée à vous... » et à jeter comme un cri d'angoisse : « Seigneur, vous changez de visage »; 10. Vous changez de visage. Expression souvent employée par Racine (*Britannicus*, II, III, *Bérénice*, I, IV; *Iphigénie*, IV, 1 etc.). L'abbé de La Porte (*Anecdotes dramatiques*) raconte que l'acteur Beaubourg, qui jouait Mithridate, était très laid; quand Monime (C¹⁰ Lecouvreur) lui dit cela, on cria du par-

F. 9. 32

SCÈNE V. — MITHRIDATE, MONIME, XIPHARÈS,
ARBATE, ARCAS,

GARDES, qui soutiennent Mithridate. (3)

MONIME.

Ah! que vois-je, Seigneur, et quel sort est le vôtre!

MITHRIDATE.

Cessez et retenez vos larmes l'un et l'autre. (2)
(Montrant Xipharès.)Mon sort de sa tendresse et de votre amitié¹

1650 Veut d'autres sentiments que ceux de la pitié;

Et ma gloire, plutôt digne d'être admirée,

Ne doit point par des pleurs être déshonorée.

J'ai vengé l'univers autant que je l'ai pu :

La mort dans ce projet m'a seule interrompu.

1655 Ennemi des Romains et de la tyrannie²,Je n'ai point de leur joug subi l'ignominie³;

Et j'ose me flatter qu'entre les noms fameux

Qu'une pareille haine a signalés⁴ contre eux,

Nul ne leur a plus fait acheter la victoire,

1660 Ni de jours malheureux⁵ plus rempli leur histoire.Le ciel n'a pas voulu qu'achevant mon dessein⁶,

Rome en cendres me vît expirer dans son sein.

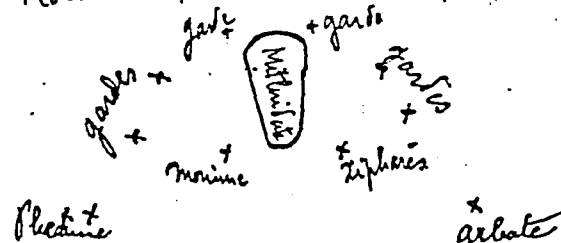
Mais au moins quelque joie en mourant me console :

J'expire environné d'ennemis que j'immole;

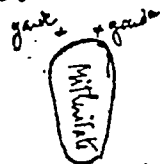
1665 Dans leur sang odieux j'ai pu tremper mes mains;

Et mes derniers regards ont vu fuir les Romains⁷.A mon fils Xipharès je dois cette fortune⁸ :Il épargne à ma mort⁹ leur présence importune.1. Amitté : amour, affection; 2. Des Romains et de la tyrannie : de la tyrannie des Romains;
3. Ignominie. A comparer avec le Mithridate de La Calprenède (V, v):Rome, à qui je ravis un superbe ornement
Ne me verra vaincu que par moi seulement.4. A signalés : rendus remarquables, fait remarquer. Cf. La Rochefoucauld, Maximes, 235 :
« Nous nous consolons aisément des disgrâces de nos amis, lorsqu'elles servent à signaler
notre tendresse pour eux. » (Cf. Lituré : signaler 5°); 5. Jours malheureux. Il s'agit des jours
malheureux (ceux qui étaient marqués à Rome par le souvenir de quelque grande défaite) où
toutes les affaires craquaient; 6. Achevant mon dessein. Construction aujourd'hui irrégulière (se
rapporte au complément direct me); 7. Et mes derniers regards ont vu fuir les Romains. Beau
vers, plein d'horizon et d'ampleur qu'on a rapproché (M. Nédan) du fameux vers de Hérode
Antoine et Cléopâtre; 8. Toute une mer immense où fuyaient des galères; 9. Fortune : ici
hasard heureux, chance. Cf. Dictionnaire de l'Académie, 1694 : « Il ne manque pas de mérite
mais il n'a pas de fortune »; 8. A ma mort : à moi mourant (mot abstrait remplaçant un nom
de personne).

1) Les gardes posent le bouclier à terre.
L'une d'entre eux s'agenouille en écartant
les deux autres restent debout au-dessus du
bouclier. Arbate et Phedime se mettent
à genoux à la suite des gardes.
La musique cesse.
Monime se retourne vers Mithridate.



2) Les deux gardes à la tête du bouclier
se baissent et soulèvent la tête du
bouclier. Mithridate se trouve ainsi
presque debout appuyé sur le bouclier.
Les deux gardes se placent dos à dos
derrière le bouclier et le soutiennent.



Monime et Xipharès s'agenouillent.

L. 9. 33

88 — MITHRIDATE

Fiez-vous aux Romains du soin de son supplice¹.
 Mais je sens affaiblir² ma force et mes esprits³.
 Je sens que je me meurs. Approchez-vous, mon fils⁽¹⁾.
 Dans cet embrassement dont la douceur me flatte⁴,
 Venez et recevez l'âme de Mithridate⁵ (2)

MONIME.

Il expire.

XIPHARÈS. (3)

Ah! Madame, unissons nos douleurs⁶,
 Et par tout l'univers cherchons-lui des vengeurs. (4)

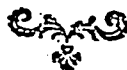
L. V. or.

Le Parthe, qu'ils gardaient pour triomphe dernier,
 Seul encor sous le joug refuse de plier;
 Allez le joindre. Allez chez ce peuple indomptable
 Porter de mon débris le reste redoutable.
 J'espère, et je m'en forme un présage certain,
 Que leurs champs bienheureux boiront le sang romain:
 Et, si quelque vengeance à ma mort est promise,
 Que c'est à leur valeur que le ciel l'a remise.
 (Mais je sens...) (1673).

Ces vers qui prolongeaient fâcheusement cette agonie déjà longue ont été supprimés par Racine; 2. Affaiblir : s'affaiblir; 3. Esprits : sens, sentiment; 4. Flatte : charme (cf. Cayrou : « ce dit en particulier de tout ce qui adoucit une peine, apaise un chagrin. » Dictionnaire de l'Académie, 1694 : « Flatter sa douleur : adoucir le sentiment de sa douleur. » V. Horace, v. 71); 5. L'âme de Mithridate. Ce vers rappelle deux passages de Virgile (IV, 652 et 684-685) :

Accipite hanc animam...
 — Extremus si quis super halitus erret,
 Ore loquar.

6. Unissons nos douleurs. Ce n'est là qu'un souhait et nous ne sommes pas fixés réellement sur le sort de Xiphars et Monime.



1) Mithridate tend les bras en avant et se dégage du bouclier. Monime et Xipharès se lèvent.

Xipharès prend les mains de son père et le guide vers ses épaules.

2) Mithridate se laisse tomber sur Xipharès qui le retient.

Lentement Xipharès en le tenant par les bras le fait revenir sur le bouclier lorsqu'il y est des deux gardes abaissent le bouclier et se mettent à genoux à la suite des autres gardes. — Musique — Monime parle alors.

3) Xipharès et Monime face au public.

4) Xipharès tend son bras droit à Monime qui lui tend le sien au-dessus de Mithridate couché.

Le rideau baisse lentement.

durée de la 2^{me} partie. 40 minutes.

mise en scène relevée
 par M. P. P. P.

1938.

Fig. 34

In this production, the various characters were conceived of as being very much of flesh and blood, not models of Greek and Asiatic statuary reciting poetry. Yonnel's staging called for much movement, particularly in act III, Scene i, when Mithridate's dreams of conquest animated him, and this was criticized by Emile Mas. He called it "'un chassé-croisé insupportable.'"²³³ He also did not approve of the use of a shield rather than a stretcher for carrying in the dying Mithridate. Champion preferred neither, pointing out that Racine's text refers to guards 'supporting' him as he enters, not actually carrying him.²³⁴ Despite the various criticisms of the costumes, décor, and staging, the 1937 (and 1938) performances were quite successful due to the interpretations of the characters, particularly that of Mithridate.

Unlike his predecessors, Yonnel did not emphasize one side of Mithridate's character at the expense of the other. Both the political figure and the lover emerged. He was not a barbaric ruler totally preoccupied with war, nor was he the smitten old fool whose loss of Monime was a foregone conclusion, but he did have a certain superiority which Yonnel underscored.²³⁵ In Yonnel's view, Mithridate could have been a plausible rival of Xipharès for Monime's love. And for the first time, this is how Mithridate was presented on the stage. Kemp saw him as "'un héros subtil, un Médicis, un Borgia, dans la force de l'âge,'"²³⁶ and Pierre Lièvre wrote in Le Jour of

²³³ Champion, V, 207.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. 121.

²³⁶ Champion, V, 208.

December 21, 1937 that "'la passion gronde dans son âme subtile et chimérique. L'homme du paufrage élevé apparaît dans sa majesté foudroyée, et l'analyse que fait Racine des complications de son âme s'expose avec lucidité dans son infini détail.'"²³⁷

Yonnel's particular conception of the rôle heightened the dramatic tension in the play and integrated the contrasting aspects, the complexities of the character into a unified whole. Although the outcome of the play was not obvious at the outset, Yonnel developed his character in such a way as to make him psychologically credible throughout. He used Racine's creation to forge his own figure. In order to complete his own conception, he absorbed the details the dramatist provided, and then gave to the audience an interpretation that showed his understanding of the text and upheld the feasibility of delineating the character in his particular way. His diction, it was said, illuminated the verse, revealing all the inherent musical beauty of the lines and the 'hidden' ideas they contained.²³⁸

Marie Bell's interpretation of Monime was both lauded and criticized. On the basis of the report appearing in Le Journal on December 21, 1937, Descotes wrote of Marie Bell: "à force de vouloir paraître sobre, pudique, elle se vit reprocher par certains de n'être que froide."²³⁹ Lièvre found that "'Marie Bell, dont les princesses raciniennes sont toujours remarquables, montre une Monime

²³⁷ Champion, V, 207-08.

²³⁸ Ibid., p. 208.

²³⁹ Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. 127.

qui n'est inégale ni à sa Junie ni à son Aricie, et exprime toutes les bienséantes délicatesses de ces figures et dit admirablement les beaux vers qu'elles prononcent,"²⁴⁰ and Antoine thought she was "'une amoureuse bien contemporaine.'"²⁴¹ Mas, however, although finding her a 'touching' Monime, felt she had not yet fulfilled her potential. Kemp elaborated on her vocal delivery, calling it still "'une récitation,'" and somewhat monotonous. He continued: "'le sentiment est juste; la pensée apparaît. Mais les nuances manquent de vivacité. Telles les couleurs d'un prisme qui, mollement agité, donne du gris.'"²⁴²

For critiques of the performances of Pharnace, Xipharès, and Arbate, we rely once again on Antoine, Lièvre, Mas, and Champion. De Rigoult, as Pharnace, was considered to be "de premier ordre" by Champion,²⁴³ and, according to Antoine, showing "'plus de force et d'autorité que d'habitude.'"²⁴⁴ In January, 1938, when Pharnace was played by Jean Martinelli, the latter was judged as "très à sa place"²⁴⁵ by Champion, with Mas wishing for "'plus de véhémence et de férocité dans les derniers vers de son rôle.'"²⁴⁶ Vidalin was a Xipharès "de superbe prestance."²⁴⁷ Balpétre, as Arbate, "'a magni-

²⁴⁰ Champion, V, 209.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

fiquement dit le grand récit qui précède la mort de Mithridate,"²⁴⁸
 according to Lièvre; Antoine concurred: "'Balpétré s'est fait
 applaudir dans le grand récit du V^e acte."²⁴⁹

After the four performances of Mithridate in 1938, the play was not presented again at the Comédie-Française until 1952, when the reprise was staged anew by Jean Yonnell, who retained the rôle of Mithridate. He did make certain changes in the mise en scène. In some scenes more action accompanied the dialogue, in others it was more restrained. In some dialogues there was evidence of a shift of emphasis: sometimes the character being spoken to reacted at a different point in the monologue, or in a different way; sometimes the speaker underscored different passages in different ways. Yonnell may have remembered the criticism of too much movement in Act III, Scene 1 of the 1937 version, for in the 1952 production it was much reduced. Also, certain cuts made in the 1937 version were reopened in 1952.

The mise en scène alone cannot reveal fully the interpretation given each of the rôles, and the contemporary critiques (newspaper reviews, most likely) are unfortunately not readily available as primary reference material. At some points the stage directions clearly showed an observance of Racine's lines: words and actions were at one; at other points, the motivations for the actions were not superficial, but were derived from a deeper conception of the rôle: this is what such a character could be expected to do in such

²⁴⁸ Champion, V, 209.

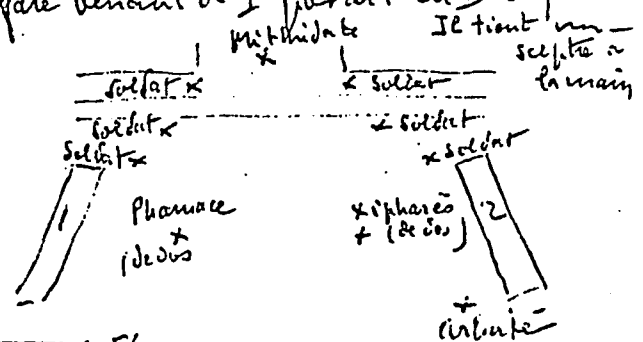
²⁴⁹ Ibid.

1. En coulisse cour lointain
fanfare - Phœdime parle sur la musique

2. - Mouine passe devant Phœdime
la fanfare s'est arrêtée -

3. - Mouine sort par A suivie de
Phœdime - Nouvelle fanfare -
Six gardes entrent du fond (3 à la
cour, 3 au jardin) - Xipharès et
Pharnace entrent de F viennent de
F. Ils descendent en scène, se
retournent dos au public, se mettent
un genou à terre -
Arbate entre de C et se met également
à genoux.

Mithridate sur la dernière note de la
fanfare venant de F paraît en D et parle.

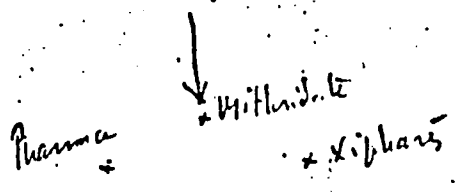


4 - A Pharnace -

5 A Xipharès -

6 Mithridate cède et se rend à marches
M et vient un peu au-dessus de
Pharnace et Xipharès -

Fig. 35
Act II,
Scene II.



ACTE III (1)

SCÈNE PREMIÈRE. — MITHRIDATE, PHARNACE,
XIPHARÈS

MITHRIDATE (2)

- 755 Approchez, mes enfants;³ Enfin l'heure est venue
Qu'il faut² que mon secret éclate³ à votre vue.
A mes nobles projets je vois tout conspirer⁴;
Il ne me reste plus qu'à vous les déclarer.
Je fuis⁵ : ainsi le veut la fortune ennemie.
- 760 Mais vous savez trop bien l'histoire de ma vie
Pour croire que longtemps soigneux⁶ de me cacher,
J'attende en ces déserts⁷ qu'on me vienne chercher.
La guerre a ses faveurs⁸, ainsi que ses disgrâces.
Déjà plus d'une fois, retournant sur ses traces,
765 Tandis que l'ennemi, par ma fuite trompé⁹,
Tenait après son char¹⁰ un vain¹¹ peuple occupé,
Et, gravant en airain ses frères¹² avantages,
De mes États conquis enchainait les images,
Le Bosphore m'a vu, par de nouveaux apprêts,
770 Ramener la terreur du fond de ses marais,
Et, chassant les Romains de l'Asie étonnée¹³,
Renverser en un jour l'ouvrage d'une année¹⁴.
D'autres temps, d'autres soins¹⁵. L'Orient accablé
Ne peut plus soutenir leur effort redoublé.
- 775 Il voit plus que jamais ses campagnes couvertes

1. Approchez, mes enfants. Var. : • Venez, princes, venez. • La correction de Racine révèle mieux le caractère dissimulé de Mithridate. Comparer ce début de scène avec Rodolphe, III, III, et Britannicus, IV, II; 2. Qu'il faut : où il faut; 3. Eclate : se manifeste de façon brillante; Mithridate a déjà parlé deux fois de son dessein; 4. Conspirer : concourir, être d'accord; 5. Je fuis. Avec plein de fermeté. Cf. le Portrait d'Émile (Grand Condé) dans La Bruyère; 6. Soigneux : soigneux; 7. En ces déserts : la Chersonèse Taurique, qui était une région désertique; 8. La guerre a ses faveurs... Cf. Rivarol : • La guerre est le tribunal des rois et les victoires sont ses oracles •; 9. Par ma fuite trompé... Plutarque dit, en effet, dans la Vie de Pompée, que Mithridate était plus difficile à vaincre quand il fuyait que quand il combattait; 10. Tenait après son char... Dans ses trois vers il s'agit des triomphes romains (le char est le char des triomphateurs; l'airain est l'airain des tables sur lesquelles on gravait les victoires et qu'on déposait au Capitole. Les images enchainées sont les statues personnifiant les nations soumises et les levées conquis); 11. Vain : ici qui n'a pas de fond, dépourvu de valeur ou de sérieux (statin sans : vide, d'ou sans fondement). Cf. Cayrou, op. cit.; 12. Frères. Sens étymologique : frères (fratris); 13. Étonnée. Sens étymologique : frappée comme par un coup de tonnerre (astanare); 14. Renverser en un jour l'ouvrage d'une année : vers d'allure corrélienne. Cf. Hilde : • L'agique perit labor irritus erri •; 15. D'autres temps, d'autres soins. Le XVII^e siècle n'oloyait l'article indéfini où nous l'omettons. Cf. le Misanthrope, v. 27 : • Et si par un malheur en avais fait autant. »

1) Le rideau de la scène D est fermé -
Au bas des marches M, au milieu,
légèrement détaché, on place un
fauteuil X. Mithridate seul devant X

Mithridate.

2 - Il regarde alternativement vers J et C

3 - Pharnace entre de J et Xipharès
de C - Mithridate leur fait signe
de s'asseoir -

Pharnace s'assoit sur 1
Xipharès sur 2
puis Mithridate sur X -

Fig. 36

SCÈNE V. — MITHRIDATE, MONIME, XIPHARÈS,
ARBATE, ARCAS,
GARDES, qui soutiennent Mithridate.

MONIME (1)

Ah! que vois-je, Seigneur, et quel sort est le vôtre!

MITHRIDATE

Cessez et retenez vos larmes l'un et l'autre.
(Montrant Xipharès.)

Mon sort de sa tendresse et de votre amitié¹
1650 Veut d'autres sentiments que ceux de la pitié;
Et ma gloire, plutôt digne d'être admirée,
Ne doit point de leurs pleurs être déshonorée.
J'ai vengé l'univers autant que je l'ai pu :
La mort dans ce projet m'a seule interrompu.

1655 Ennemi des Romains et de la tyrannie²,
Je n'ai point de leur joug subi l'ignominie³;
Et j'ose me flatter qu'entre les noms fameux
Qu'une pareille haine a signalés⁴ contre eux,
Nul ne leur a plus fait acheter la victoire,
1660 Ni de jours malheureux⁵ plus rempli leur histoire.
Le ciel n'a pas voulu qu'achevant mon dessein⁶,
Rome en cendres me vit expirer dans son sein.

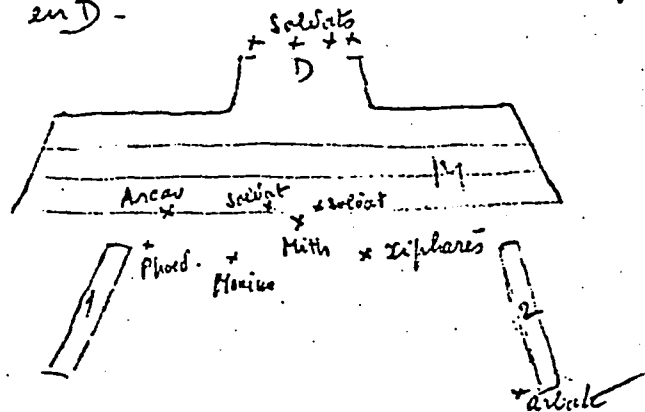
Mais au moins quelque joie en mourant me console :
J'expire environné d'ennemis que j'immole;
1665 Dans leur sang odieux j'ai pu tremper mes mains;
Et mes derniers regards ont vu fuir les Romains⁷.
A mon fils Xipharès je dois cette fortune⁸ :
Il épargne à ma mort⁹ leur présence importune.

1. *Amitié* : amour, affection; 2. *Des Romains et de la tyrannie* : de la tyrannie des Romains;
3. — *Ignominie*. A comparer avec le *Mithridate* de La Calprenède (V, v):

Rome, à qui je ravis un superbe ornement
Ne me verra vaincu que par moi seulement.

4. *A signalés* : rendus remarquables, fait remarquer. Cf. La Rochefoucauld, *Maximes*, 235 :
« Nous nous consolons aisément des disgrâces de nos amis, lorsqu'elles servent à signaler
notre tendresse pour eux. » (Cf. Littré : signaler 5°); 5. *Jours malheureux*. Il s'agit des jours
néfastes (ceux qui étaient marqués à Rome par le souvenir de quelque grande défaite) où
toutes les affaires cessaient; 6. *Achevant mon dessein*. Construction aujourd'hui irrégulière
(se rapporte au complément direct me); 7. *Et mes derniers regards ont vu fuir les Romains*. Beau
vers, plein d'horizon et d'ampleur qu'on a rapproché (M. Médan) du fameux vers de Heredia
(*André et Clopâtre*) : « Toute une mer immense où fuyaient des galères »; 8. *Fortune* : ici
hasard heureux, chance. Cf. *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, 1694 : « Il ne manque pas de mérite
mais il n'a pas de fortune »; 9. *A ma mort* : à moi mourant (mot abstrait remplaçant un nom
de personne).

1 - Toujours sur la musique entrent
de D venant de F;
Xipharès qui descend les marches M
et vient se placer à droite,
Arcas qui vient se placer à gauche,
Mithridate soutenu par deux soldats
qui tiennent par les épaules - Tous trois
descendent lentement les marches M,
Quatre soldats qui se placent au fond
en D -



Monime parle lorsque la musique cesse -
Phodime et Arcas se mettent à genoux -

Fig. 37.

88 — MITHRIDATE

Fiez-vous aux Romains du soin de son supplice¹.
 Mais je sens affaiblir² ma force et mes esprits³.
 Je sens que je me incurs. Approchez-vous, mon fils!⁽¹⁾
 Dans cet embrassement dont la douceur me flatte⁴,
 Venez et recevez l'âme de Mithridate⁽²⁾

MONIME

Il expire. (3)

XIPHARÈS

Ah! Madame, unissons nos douleurs⁵,
 Et par tout l'univers cherchons-lui des vengeurs. (5)

1. Ver.

Le Parthe, qu'ils gardaient pour triomphé dernier,
 Seul encor sous le joug refuse de plier :
 Allez le joindre. Allez chez ce peuple indomptable
 Porter de mon débris le reste redoutable.
 J'espère, et je m'en forme un présage certain.
 Que leurs champs bienheureux boiront le sang romain :
 Et, si quelque vengeance à ma mort est promise,
 Que c'est à leur valeur que le ciel l'a remise.
 (Mais je sens...) (1673).

Ces vers qui prolongeaient fâcheusement cette agonie déjà longue ont été supprimés par Racine: 2. *Affaiblir* : s'affaiblir; 3. *Esprits* : sens, sentiment; 4. *Flatte* : charme (cf. Cayrou : « se dit en particulier de tout ce qui adoucit une peine, apaise un chagrin. » *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, 1694 : « Flatter sa douleur : adoucir le sentiment de sa douleur. » V. *Horace*, v. 71); 5. *L'âme de Mithridate*. Ce vers rappelle deux passages de Virgile (IV, 652 et 684-685):

Accipite hanc animam...
Extremus et quis super halitus errat,
Ore legem.

6. *Unissons nos douleurs*. Ce n'est là qu'un souhait et nous ne sommes pas fixés réellement sur le sort de Xipharès et Monime.

1 - Xipharès vient tout près de Mithridate.

2 - Il se laisse tomber dans les bras de Xipharès, puis il tombe en arrière en se tenant au bras gauche de Xipharès

Monime + Xipharès
 Mithridate

Monime et Xipharès se mettent à genoux de chaque côté de Mithridate.

3 - Elle se relève.

4 - Il se relève.

5 - Par dessus le corps de Mithridate il lui tend la main qu'elle prend - Rideau.

1. Rappel sans bouger

Fig. 38

a situation. These interpretations, coordinated with a suitable staging, had to be guided by Yonnel's overall conception of the play and its characters, and molded into a unified totality.

The costumes for this production were quite striking and attractive, but did not adhere as closely to historically-correct styles as the earlier production had. They seemed to be designed more for the visual interest and impact rather than for immediate identification with the past, that is, with antiquity. Judging by the floor plan, it appears that the 1952 stage set may possibly have reduced the playing area, while at the same time creating the illusion of more spaciousness. Props were at a minimum, and the many entrances/exits provided for in the scenery, afforded considerable variety for the traffic patterns on the stage.

The 600th performance of Mithridate at the Comédie-Française took place at the matinée of Thursday, May 21, 1953. The program book for that occasion contained an unsigned article which spoke of the early success of this play, and briefly discussed its later lack of sustained popularity. A large part of the blame, it was felt, could be placed on the scant attention paid in the schools to this play (as compared with Andromaque or Polyeucte, for example). What was the reason for this?

Il y a quelques longueurs dans la pièce. Mais ces longueurs mêmes fourmillent de beautés. Et d'autre part, le troisième acte est l'un de ceux dont la force dramatique serait la plus sensible à de jeunes lecteurs et Mithridate se termine dans un rythme passionné, par des scènes pathétiques dont aucune autre tragédie de Racine n'a dépassé la grandeur.²⁵⁰

The article was concluded with this paragraph:

Nous assistons là à un de ces phénomènes inexplicables dont est jalonné l'histoire du théâtre et qui font craindre aux comédiens de paraître défier le sort en osant faire appel d'une mystérieuse décision des Dieux Inconnus. Jean Yonnel et ses camarades ont pourtant voulu tenter une fois encore cette aventure, et, quoi qu'il advienne, ils auront fait, eux, au cours des répétitions, l'épreuve renouvelée de l'enthousiasme²⁵¹ exaltant de cette oeuvre admirable.

The credits for the staging, for the décor and costume designs, and for the music being the same for the reprises of 1956 and 1960 as they had been for 1952, it seems safe to assume that the productions did not change in any substantial way, taking into account, of course, the individual differences in interpretation that changes in the cast could have brought. The play was given six times in 1961, and two times in 1962. There have been no performances of Mithridate at the Comédie-Française since then.

In brief, we find that the degree to which the costumes and décor, direct reference to the text, and prevalent theatre arts concepts affected rôle interpretation varied through the centuries, shifting in emphasis from one element to another, as the following summary shows. In the late seventeenth century, costumes and décor, which were as "regal" as the characters of the plays only by coincidence, and were dictated by tradition, had only a superficial bearing on the rôle interpretation (which in itself was strictly limited to bombastic declamation accompanied by stylized gestures). In the eighteenth century the development of new dramatic theories and the gradual advent of costume reform led away from the fossil-

²⁵¹ n. pag.

ized staging and decoration used in the seventeenth century theatre, and slowly induced changes in rôle interpretation, with efforts directed towards greater naturalness and a closer reading of the text for greater observance of nuances in character. These pursuits were followed by an increasing interest in individual performers and performances in the nineteenth century. This interest often reflected a reordering of priorities and proved detrimental to a real appreciation of the playwright's creation; it was also a factor that did not necessarily contribute to appreciable gains or advances in rôle interpretation. The costumes themselves were not very influential in terms of rôle interpretation despite the tremendous interest in local color that had surfaced. In the twentieth century, views on rôle interpretation became increasingly individual (fostered by the new freedoms gained by stage directors), with results that revealed not only changed concepts of rôles but also, as in the case of Mithridate, altered the balance of the play by a rethinking of the interpersonal relationships. Thus, an accent was placed on finding new but valid meanings in the text and, as regards the classical play in particular, on removing it from the realm of purely ancient (and therefore "outdated") tragedy by bringing out its universal applicability (particularly inherent in Racine's plays). The implementation of these new theories or individual conceptions operated primarily but not exclusively on the psychological level; without intending self-contradiction, the décor and costumes, though modernized, were still meant to provide and maintain an atmosphere of antiquity, to convey a certain sense of time and place. Mithridate has moved through three centuries of productions, re-

flecting many of the myriad changes that have manifested themselves
in the course of the development of the theatre.

CHAPTER V

GUIDELINES FOR A CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION OF THE RÔLES IN
MITHRIDATE

Having given the history of past productions of Mithridate, we now come to the present or, as it were, to the future. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the guidelines that might be followed in the theatre today in search of interpretations of the rôles in Mithridate. Essentially, they are the director's conception of the play, and the costumes and décor designed for the production. For the former, the process of arriving at a conception as well as the results of such a process for this writer will be discussed; for the latter, the director's influence on the designer will be shown, as well as the influence of the designs on rôle interpretations.

There is no one "correct" way of conceiving and directing a play, yet there are certain points on which most all directors will agree in a discussion of their art. To arrive at our own conception of the play, we shall begin by presenting briefly the various steps taken prior to the actual stage direction of a play.

The director must define the main action of the play, then decide on the style with which he will convey the meaning of the text. This includes establishing a certain atmosphere in which the characters will be presented and the plot developed. Harold Clurman notes in On Directing (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. 33, that the best production method is found through "what the author has actually written: his plot line and his dialogue. The director then translates his understanding of the material into stage language." Once the central action has been determined, it is the director's

task to arrive at a suitable characterization for each personage. Clurman suggests finding the prime motivation of that character ("stated from the character's own viewpoint") and related to the main action,²⁵¹ and then his outward characteristics.²⁵² Both aspects are found chiefly in the script, but can depend on the actors' appearance and on the director's imagination.²⁵³

John Gassner, in Producing the Play, summarizes play analysis in the following manner: finding the spine of the play--(what is being done), which leads to why this is done--(characterizations), leading in turn to how it is done--(problems of stage action). This analysis, once completed, is followed by a determination of the visual components: make-up, costumes, settings, and lighting, all conceived in terms of the style determined upon.²⁵⁴

Rather than attempting a comprehensive literary appraisal of the play, we will try to give an overview with sufficient details from whose contextual whole the elements needed for characterization can be drawn and summarized.

What is the main action of Mithridate? Racine states in his preface that it is Mithridate's death "qui fait l'action de ma tragédie." While not exactly an action (until the very end), it most definitely is the catalyst for action. The play begins with the (false) report of Mithridate's death, which precipitates the

²⁵¹ Clurman, p. 74.

²⁵² Ibid., p. 76.

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 117.

²⁵⁴ Producing the Play, rev. ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1953), pp. 4-5.

action and, even more, reveals to us the relationships among the main characters. We learn that Mithridate has been conquered by his long-time enemies, the Romans, with whom the elder son, Pharnace, sympathizes, and whom Xipharès opposes. The two brothers not only disagree on this military front, but are rivals in love as well. Pharnace has proposed marriage to Monime (Mithridate's intended bride, already declared "queen"): Monime tells this to Xipharès, begging him to help her. Xipharès then makes known to her his own feelings, held secret for a long time. Despite Monime's explanation that to marry him would completely dishonor the memory of her father (slain by Romans), Pharnace suspects another reason for her refusal, and when news of Mithridate's return to Nymphaeum reaches them (Scene iv), he urges Xipharès that, knowing each other's secret inclinations (and their father's volatile nature), they at least not betray each other (Scene v). This is a summary of the first act. The foundation for the courses of action that will be pursued in the remaining acts has been laid. With Racine, we are always in medias res at the very beginning.

Pharnace's and Xipharès' motivations are seen in their very reactions to Mithridate's death, and later, to his return. While the initial motivations of each character can be reduced to simple terms, plot complications set in as the secrets that every character has are gradually revealed, and affect the actions of the other characters. These revelations, along with the inconstancy of character that is Mithridate's, serve to build the plot into a rather intricate construction. The first secret we learn is that Pharnace is on the side of the Romans; the second, that both brothers love Monime.

Both secrets, when revealed to Mithridate, will have dire consequences, as do all secrets that he penetrates. Once the secret of Mithridate's escape and return is made known to all, the repercussions of this and the earlier disclosures begin. Monime is motivated by a sense of duty to honor her father's memory and to keep the promise of her hand in marriage to Mithridate despite her hidden love for Xipharès. Mithridate's return means, for her, unwilling obedience, compliance with his wishes. For Xipharès, who supports Mithridate's great name and cause, and loves Monime, Mithridate's return means emotional torment caused by necessary suppression of his love for Monime; he still remains faithful to Mithridate, however. For Pharnace, motivated by a desire for power in alliance with Rome as well as Monime's hand, it means a setback in his political aspirations and lost opportunity for winning Monime. From the very beginning of the play we feel the presence of Mithridate who has not yet set foot on the stage. A description of his character precedes his actual appearance. The domination of this personage should be felt even in his absence. In the first act Xipharès speaks of Mithridate's courage and jealousy, Pharnace of his terrible nature when unhappy or opposed in any way, his jealousy, his masked hatred, deceptiveness and ruses. All of these characteristics will be substantiated as the plot unfolds. Everything must revolve about Mithridate. His death, his life, are at the very center of the play. Mithridate, of course, knows two motivating forces: a desire for revenge on and conquest of Rome, and love (for Monime). Soon enough he learns Pharnace's secrets (from Arbate) and his suspicions regarding Monime's sentiments toward the trai-

torous son will be aroused. Anxious to sound out Monime's sentiments, Mithridate only finds fresh fuel fed to the fire of his jealous spirit when Monime responds to his expressions of love and eagerness to wed (after a year's delay) only with a show of respectful obedience and reluctance. Without giving Monime a chance to deny it, he indirectly accuses her of returning Pharnace's affection, and asks Xipharès to help him turn Monime's heart in his favor (while he goes off to prepare for the imminent departure of his ships). Xipharès, at first also believing that Monime loves Pharnace, is astonished when he realizes that she in fact returns his own love. From this state of ecstasy he is plunged into despair when Monime tells him they must forever be apart and follow not the dictates of their hearts but of filial obligation and loyalty. The revelation of this secret is terrible for Xipharès (and for Monime), but the more pivotal moment will come when Mithridate himself learns this state of affairs. In the great monologue of Act III, Mithridate unveils his hitherto secret plans of the conquest of Rome and his wish that Pharnace marry the Parthian princess so as to cement his alliance with her father's country. Pharnace, naturally opposed to both plans, tries to change his father's mind, but meets opposition to the point of being arrested. Furious for being punished for loving Monime as well, his parting thrust is directed at Xipharès: Pharnace accuses Xipharès of being as guilty as himself in the matter of love for the queen. The queen returns that love, adds Pharnace. Mithridate's early suspicions of rivalry in love are doubly confirmed in the case of Pharnace and, despite his words to Xipharès to the contrary, aroused in regard to Xipharès.

Beset on all sides by seeming duplicity, Mithridate is determined to find out the truth--by deceptive means. He rationalizes his behavior: "S'il n'est digne de moi, le piège est digne d'eux. / Trompons qui nous trahit" (l. 1030-31). His cunning is "rewarded" with a stunning blow when Monime, vehemently denying love for Pharnace and innocently believing Mithridate's expressed wish that she marry Xipharès, says they have loved each other for a long time. Hiding his true initial reaction, Mithridate gives vent to his jealous rage now that his worst fears are confirmed.

The first and second acts of Mithridate have supplied us with the expository details, the third has brought all the secrets out into the open (the most terrible secret saved for last), and prepared us for the critical situation presented in the fourth act. In this act Monime begins to suspect Mithridate's real intentions and thinks of the danger in which she may have so unwittingly placed Xipharès' life. Her fears are confirmed with the arrival of Xipharès who knows that Mithridate has been informed of their mutual love by an unknown person. Discovering, to his horror and despair, that it was none other than the unsuspecting Monime who made the revelation, Xipharès, ever the loyal son, says he will die, and urges her to marry Mithridate. Monime, however, refuses either to cause his death or marry the man responsible for both their misfortunes, and begs Xipharès to flee to safety. The fourth scene of Act IV is a poignant and most revealing scene for Monime. Here, with greatest dignity, when Mithridate again calls her to the altar, she acknowledges that she owes him respect for his position, but shows that self-respect will not allow her to give herself to someone who

stooped to such base deception. Reaffirming Xipharès' fidelity to Mithridate, she says his death would be unjust, and a great loss for Mithridate. As for herself, she would prefer death to marriage to Mithridate. She leaves.

Mithridate can scarcely believe his eyes and ears; unforgiving, his anger returns, and he resolves to 'immolate' "trois ingrats à la fois" (l. 1386). Second thoughts come to him before he can act; he reconsiders what Xipharès means to him and thinks he will save him and Monime for each other. However, news of Pharnace's treachery then reaches him, and assumption of Xipharès' equal blame when the latter is reported to have mixed with the rebels renews Mithridate's resolve for the fatal punishment of his two sons as well as of Monime.

When the fifth act opens we learn that Monime had attempted suicide by hanging, and is distraught at remaining alive since she believes that Xipharès is dead. When Arcas arrives with the poison sent by Mithridate, she is grateful for the certain opportunity it gives her for an end to her woes and the expiation of Xipharès' death. In the last moment Arbate hurries in, prevents Monime from drinking the poison, and goes on to explain in a long monologue all the military events that have led to Mithridate's stabbing himself when faced with defeat, and concludes with the news that Xipharès is victorious and very much alive. Realizing for the last time Xipharès' unswerving fidelity, Mithridate has ordered that Monime be saved. The dying Mithridate has had his last change of heart, and surrounded by the grieving Xipharès, Monime, Arbate, Arcas, and guards, he gives all he has, his empire, his throne--and his queen--

to his deserving son. Xipharès and Monime join in extolling Mithridate's greatness as he dies. The "action" of the play has been accomplished.

In the preceding aperçu of the plot we have cited the motivations of the four major characters. We sense almost immediately the positions the two brothers take; we can sympathize easily with Xipharès, in view of his obvious loyalty to Mithridate and apolitically-motivated love for Monime. He must be a sympathetic character, young but brave, strong yet tender, less aggressive than Pharnace but not weak in spite of that, and self-sacrificing out of strength of character, not for lack of it. Pharnace, introduced in a negative light from the start, must be presented as the impatient usurper, the sly, devious, power-hungry, dishonorable young man that he is. The two sons, in fact, reflect in nascent form, the two sides of their father's personality. Mithridate is torn between his roles of warrior (a life-long occupation), father, and lover. He can be gentle when he chooses (although most often this is a forced attribute); he is more in his natural element when the ruthlessness of the warrior is on the surface. Whatever his mood, whichever aspect of his character is dominant at any given moment, there is usually an undercurrent of jealousy, ready to explode at the slightest provocation. This extreme sensitivity should be made evident. Mithridate has long been accustomed to having things his way, and woe betide the individual who dares oppose him. His rôle is a very difficult one to fill; the portrayal should not be equally balanced between the two aspects of his character, for then both lose some of their force, and one of his essential characteristics is, after all,

his vacillation and unpredictable shift of mood and self-image. The warrior should, I feel, be the predominant characteristic of Mithridate's personality. If there is no one general direction in which his character seems to move, he loses the forcefulness that should definitely be his birthright.

Monime, while not the changeable character Mithridate is, has hidden strengths and weaknesses which must be made to appear as an integral part of her character, and not a theatrical contrivance. She does indeed stand in contrast to her surroundings. She is the honorable, dutiful young woman she appears to be, but her acquiescence to Mithridate and her acceptance of the situation in which she finds herself do not stem from weakness of character. Her inner strength is great, her sense of duty strong. It takes self-sacrifice to tell Xipharès they can never be together, and it takes immense courage plus self-esteem to refuse Mithridate's hand after her discovery of his deception. The gentleness of her spirit and her fortitude are not in conflict. Her personality is not split or unbalanced. Her qualities complement each other, making of her a whole person, not dividing her as the two sides of Mithridate's character divide (and, in a sense, weaken) him. Just as the discordancy of Mithridate's character must be felt, so must the equilibrium that Monime possesses. With their opposing personalities, Mithridate and Monime provide an interesting contrast and necessary tension in the play.

The action of Mithridate is primarily interior. Yet, different directors may choose to emphasize different aspects of the play in order to bring it across the footlights. Depending on the director's

viewpoint and on which aspect of the play he may choose to emphasize, the conceptualization and final realization of the décor will vary.

Today's audience would probably not be interested in a play whose chief quality lay in the beauty of its poetic text, unless that interest were more an intellectual curiosity about the seventeenth-century theatre. In order to present a production valid in the eyes of today's audience, it would be necessary to relate elements of the text to our current reality. Fidelity to Racine's text is of utmost importance; yet, it should be possible, without distortion, to interpret it in the light of eternal or contemporary values. On the one hand, the stage setting can be stark (without being entirely depressing) so as to heighten the contrast between Monime and her surroundings and to focus on her unhappiness. On the other hand, without losing a sense of the human tragedy involved, Mithridate can also be played against a background reflecting Oriental opulence if the director and designer choose to see the castle as more than a stronghold. Then, both the eyes and ears would be held by the beauty to which they are exposed. Despite the many references to the sea throughout the play, it need not necessarily be in full view, for when in Scene iv of Act I Phaedime comes in, announcing that "toute la mer est de vaisseaux couverte," must the audience in fact witness the arrival of the ships in the background, or, seeing the sea but no ships on it can it assume that the port itself is not seen from this angle within the castle? Since the text is so expressive, cannot the verbal rather than pictorial image suffice, and be relied upon to communicate the proximity of the castle to the

sea? It would even be possible to have practically no scenery, with spotlights highlighting certain areas of the stage, their placement depending upon the characters' groupings and movements. This method could be particularly effective for the interior monologues (of which Mithridate has three). Yet another plan for setting the stage would be the one suggested by Bettina L. Knapp in Jean Racine: Mythos and Renewal in Modern Theatre (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1971), on p. 149. Discussing the symbolism of the sea, she writes:

. . . the entire mise en scène could be built upon this water image. Flashed on screens, heard from all parts of the theatre, felt at times in droplets or smelled by means of dank odors, the sensations aroused could vitalize each aspect of the play, the characters of the protagonists and the acerbity of the events. The rhythms too could play a primordial role in marking the atmosphere with fright, anger, calm, and ebullience. The words themselves could be enunciated according to the patterns aroused by the sea, in harsh or relaxed tones, dense or transparent imagery, pure or murky innuendos. All the senses could be activated in this way, ushering in a chaotic world, that of the unconscious.

The castle-fortress at Nymphaeum, while never actually described by Racine is, we know, right at the port. Not the principal seat of government for Mithridate, it might not offer all the comforts of a royal palace. The only reason Mithridate has stopped off there at all is to quickly marry Monime and go right back to his ships to set sail for Rome and resume combat. Monime feels the place to be particularly alien to her, having been brought up in quite a different atmosphere. Here is a very rough masculine world, where the harsh realities of struggles for military and political power prevail, where little attention is given to understanding and

accommodating the gentle and refined spirit of an Ionian princess. With the setting I envision, we are back in antiquity; the splendor that was, however, would be reflected more in the poetic beauty and elegance of the text than in the grandeur of the architecture and stage furnishings. The first major objective of the production would be to bring today's audience into contact with that world of long-ago and to show what the human element had in common with today's world, to underscore the universality of feelings however different their verbal expression may be. The psychological development conceived for personages living in the first century B.C. was acceptable in Racine's time, and remains plausible today. One way to concentrate the audience's attention on the inner conflicts and emotions is to understate the décor, thus underscoring the dialogue which expresses these feelings. The second major objective, therefore, would be to place an emphasis on eliciting the beauty of Racine's poetry, and on making obvious its remarkable ability to encompass and reflect in his play the wide spectrum of human character and sentiment extant in real life.

These two objectives are those of the director. The designer, accepting this view of the play must, in visual terms, create the atmosphere that coincides with the one created with the words.²⁵⁵ The director usually sets the stage in his mind's eye, and makes concrete suggestions to the designer as to the implementation of

²⁵⁵ It goes without saying that in order to follow as well as possible the director's intentions regarding the designs of all the visual elements of a production, the designer must carefully read and absorb the play he is illustrating, noting any and all references the playwright makes to these elements.

his ideas. While the director will guide his actors to the desired interpretation in terms of character development, the sets and costumes will make it possible for the actors to feel that they are essentially "in" the world their characters are meant to inhabit. Accommodation and adaptation to the physical surroundings provided by the designer will strengthen the mental interpretation of the rôle that finally manifests itself in the total, unified form the audience sees and hears. While they should be essentially pleasing to the eye, the sets and costumes must never exist in their own vacuum: "les décors et les costumes ne sont pas là pour eux-mêmes. . . leur beauté n'est pas leur raison d'être."²⁵⁶

The influence upon actors and actresses of the costumes worn by them has been both negative and positive through the centuries, and can still wield the same power, although in a somewhat different manner. Beginning with the early "costumes" for classical plays which did little more than bestow the outer trappings of nobility upon the performers, doing so with little or no regard for the actual character and setting involved, we have come to our present era where each costume is specially designed for each individual personage and should, ideally, reflect and support his character. A costume which does not do so, risks destroying part of the illusion intended to be created for the audience. The costumes for Mithridate in Racine's time may not have transported anyone to Asia Minor mentally, but at least the stylization was the accepted norm. Today, a lack of coordination between the director's concept of the

²⁵⁶ Gaston Baty, Rideau baissé, 1949 ed. (n.p.: Bordas, 1948), p. 194.

play and the costume (and set) designer is much more noticeable, and can undermine the intended interpretation, whether the sets and costumes be elaborately detailed or abstracted for a more "timeless" interpretation; it is essential, in any event, that they be supportive of the chosen interpretation. "The old idea of approaching the design of a play on the basis of content, story line, and period setting is not enough. One must also design a play from the point of view of the director's and the author's plan or scheme for projecting the story onto the stage."²⁵⁷ For a production of Mithridate in our time we must keep in mind that the setting is that of antiquity, the literary style that of the seventeenth century, and that the audience belongs to the twentieth century. Therefore, we must dress our characters in the garb of their time, place them in an environment familiar to them, have them speak their lines with all the refinement with which their author imbued their speech and attributed to their person, and then suggest the permanence of the diverse aspects of human nature they embody. The décor should be a supportive background (neither self-effacing nor unobtrusive), which helps create and sustain the cold and cheerless atmosphere in which the protagonists live while the true drama we observe is played out in their hearts and minds.

Whatever views the director holds about the desired interpretation of a classical play, he would do well to heed Baty's advice. The latter wisely points out (in Rideau baissé) that the classical tragedy of the seventeenth century should not be presented in a ver-

²⁵⁷ Douglas A. Russell, Stage Costume Design. Theory, Technique, and Style (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1973), p. 236.

sion that copies the original production, for today's audience is not yesterday's audience; given the same stimuli, it reacts differently. He does suggest, however, attempting to recapture an outlook on the play by today's audience comparable to the outlook on the play by the audience of Racine's time.

Une pièce classique n'est pas un texte sur lequel on se penche pour le disséquer comme sur un cadavre. C'est un être toujours vivant en qui nous voulons intensifier la palpitation de la vie. Aussi la mise en scène d'un classique n'est-elle jamais définitive. A mesure que le public se modifie, il faut agir différemment sur lui pour le réaccorder avec l'auteur.²⁵⁸

To sum up the role, the very essence of the director, including his influence on the designs created for a production, we turn once more to Baty.

Le poète a rêvé une pièce. Il en met sur le papier ce qui en est réductible aux mots. Mais ils ne peuvent exprimer qu'une partie de son rêve. Le reste n'est pas dans le manuscrit. C'est au metteur en scène qu'il appartiendra de restituer à l'oeuvre du poète ce qui s'en était perdu dans le chemin du rêve au manuscrit.

Pour le tenter, il réglera le jeu, non plus seulement dans les répliques, mais dans leurs prolongements, harmonisera l'ensemble de l'interprétation, rythmera le mouvement de chaque tableau. Par le costume, par le décor, par la lumière, et s'il y a lieu par la musique et par la danse, il créera autour de l'action le milieu matériel et spirituel qui lui convient, l'ambiance indescriptible qui agira sur les spectateurs pour les mettre en état de réceptivité, pour les rapprocher des acteurs, pour les accorder avec le poète. Il s'agit pour lui de réaliser sur la scène le songe d'un univers expressif et cohérent et de provoquer dans la salle une hallucination collective.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Baty, p. 181.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 219.

CHAPTER VI

COSTUMES AND DÉCOR DESIGNED FOR A CONTEMPORARY PRODUCTION OF
MITHRIDATE

In the preceding chapter it was determined that the interpretation of rôles in Mithridate is in greatest measure influenced by the director's conception of the play, and that costumes and décor are a deciding factor as well. Having presented the director's viewpoint, we shall now proceed to explain the two basic factors which are involved in the designing of costumes and décor. The first influence is the director's conception, and this presupposes, therefore, a reciprocal relationship: while that conception serves as an inspirational factor for the designer (as was pointed out earlier), the designer in turn illustrates the director's conception, thus uniting the two main elements that determine the ultimate interpretation of the play. The second influence to which the design of the costumes and décor is subject, is the principles of (modern) design for costumes, scenery, make-up, and lighting. Once these principles have been explained, I shall show how they may be applied to illustrate literary conceptions in the form of actual design ideas, and I shall add my own designs of costumes and décor which I feel could be valid in a contemporary production of Mithridate.

Design for the stage is an extremely complex matter, for there are so many independent and interdependent factors to be considered. In reducing design to its basic components we are in no way attempting to minimize its complex nature, but rather to render more apparent its use and integral function in a production. Condensing the exposition of these principles by no means does full justice to

them or to the designer, yet does attempt to clarify a vital part of the theatre art often shrouded in an aura of mystery, due to its often necessary dependence on an overall, innate artistic sensibility.

Douglas A. Russell, in Stage Costume Design: Theory, Technique, and Style, writes of the principles of design, citing eight of them: unity, harmony, contrast, variation, balance, proportion, emphasis, rhythm.²⁶⁰ These principles are achieved through the application of the elements of design, which are, as Russell states, "line, shape, measure, mass, position, color, and texture."²⁶¹

Let us consider what the functions of the costumes are; from this perspective, application of the principles will be facilitated. In fulfilling the objectives of the director, the costumes usually establish (to whatever degree called for) the following: (1) the geographic and historical setting of the play, (2) the time of day, (3) the social and economic status of the characters, as well as their importance within the play, (4) occupations, (5) the age of the characters, (6) the relationships among the characters. Although the main characters in Mithridate are not all engaged in the same type of activity, and although they have come to Nymphaeum at different times from different places, their costumes, while varied, should not be in such extreme contrast to one another as to be visually disturbing. The locale will be defined, in part, through the basic lightness of the clothing; the characters should have no

²⁶⁰ Russell, pp. 72, 73, 75, and 76.

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 71.

need to dress for much protection from the elements while living at Nymphaeum. They find themselves in a relatively mild climate.

Although Racine did not observe historical facts or chronology when "pairing off" Monime and Xipharès,²⁶² we must assume that the play takes place in 63 B.C., when the real Mithradates VI Eupator died. For historical effect, their costumes will be inspired by the styles of antiquity worn in Asia (for the men) and in Greece (for the women). Here, particularly, the elements of fabric texture and design and costume shape will be applied so that the principles of design are carried out in the (designs of the) costumes. Although the designer must be familiar with period costumes, it is generally not advised that he actually duplicate them, for the theatre must seek to create the illusion of reality without recourse to the original model. The designer cannot merely clothe the actor, he must costume him. Elimination of detail and heightening of contrasts is often needed for visual clarity. Simplification is also often required, since certain period costumes are not easily worn by those unaccustomed to their cut, fit, shape. Unless hampered movement is expressly desired, the actor must not be restricted in his movements by an already unfamiliar costume. The costumes for Mithridate will not reveal a particular time of day; lighting will indicate it. In terms of the costuming, the noble birth of the principal characters will be reflected chiefly in the richness of the fabric of those costumes. The costumes for Mithridate, Pharnace, and Xipharès will give evidence of their principal

²⁶² Monime was, in fact, one of Mithradates' concubines, executed by him in 71 B.C. Xiphares, Mithradates' son by the concubine Stratonice, was executed by his father in 65 B.C.

occupation. Returning from the wars, Mithridate should show his fatigue and the effect of his immediate past experiences, but by Act III, Scene 1, he should be dressed regally. He may be readying himself for a quick departure, but he does intend to go through the marriage ceremony with Monime first.

Costumes are particularly conducive to illustrating the relationships among the characters, an element of prime importance in realizing the director's conception of Mithridate. In order to play up the enmity between the two brothers, contrasting colors could be used in their costumes, whereas colors that coordinate well should be used for Xipharès and Monime. The costumes of Monime and Mithridate must look well together, yet each must be effective in its own right and maintain the individual strength of each character. Berneice Prisk recommends the use of blue, green, and violet, "cool colors," for tragedy, "because they suggest a dignity and spiritual quality. . . . Generally, one color should dominate in a costume, with one or two other colors used as accent."²⁶³ The costumes must, naturally, suit the figure of each character (and actor!), and their colors must go well with the décor.

Monime has been at Nymphaeum (with Phoedime) for a year, but there seems to be no reason why she cannot still be wearing her native Grecian attire. Its simple, classic lines are reflective of her quiet dignity, purity, and grace. Border ornamentation and fibulae (ornamental pins) may add accents and a regal note to her costume. Pharnace, whom we first see in the third scene of Act I, had come from

²⁶³ B. Prisk and Jack A. Byers, The Theatre Student: Costuming (New York: Richard Rosen Press, 1970), p. 24.

Pontus a week prior to the events occurring at the beginning of the play, and is now on the point of returning to Pontus, wishing to take Monime with him as his bride. Not necessarily dressed in battle regalia, his costume should, however, give evidence of his imminent travel plans. A cloak intended for wear out-of-doors could give this impression. After an absence from several scenes, Pharnace, when he is again on stage, may either retain his first costume (minus the cloak), or be differently garbed, since enough time could have elapsed for him to change his clothing once he saw that his plans for departure were foiled. Xiphareès, who had arrived (from Colchos) at Nymphaeum later than his brother, is not planning to leave soon. His costume should be that of a young prince and soldier, but not that of a soldier about to set out for battle or a long sea voyage. Although he is brave and valiant, we must remember that it is Pharnace who is the more aggressive of the two. While Mithridate's nobility will be borne out in his attire, the temperamental aspect of his nature cannot be. However, just as he so often hides his true feelings under a mask of equanimity, so his costume can provide that façade, that better side of him which he prefers to show, cloaking his inner turmoil.

A character chart indicating which character appears in which scene is normally drawn up by the costume designer for each production. Thus, for Mithridate we have the chart given on the following page. It shows at a glance the possibilities for costume changes (if they are warranted), and reminds the designer of which groupings, particularly in terms of colors, he must consider when designing the costumes. For Monime and Phaedime there is no need for costume changes throughout the play. During Act I, Scene v Monime has obviously done nothing to prepare

Character	Act I					Act II						Act III						Act IV							Act V						
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5		
MONIME		x	x	x		x			x	x	x						x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x		
PHOEDIME				x		x												x	x	x					x	x	x	x	(x)		
MITHRIDATE							x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x					x	x	x	x						x
PHARNACE			x	x	x	x						x	x																		
XIPHARES	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	x	x					x											x	
ARBATE	x					x	x																x	x			x	x	x		
ARCAS																								x		x	x		x		
GARDES						x						x																		x	

Fig. 39

CHARACTER CHART FOR MITHRIDATE

for Mithridate's welcome, as we may judge by Phoedime's words that open Act II (which immediately follows the first act). While opportunity for changing her costume is given by Scenes ii and iii of Act II (when she is not on the stage), I do not think she is obligated to do so; she does wear the bandeau received from Mithridate, and that should suffice in view of her feelings regarding the whole situation. When Mithridate first appears on stage, he has just come from his ship, and he is tired: "laissez-moi reposer un moment" (line 434). For this reason, even though he is the central figure, it is not through his costume that he should draw attention to himself. After leaving Monime with Xipharès for Scene vi of Act II, he may go to change his clothing. Reappearing in Act III, Mithridate can cut a more elegant and powerful figure, exhibiting, along with his imposing personality, a costume reflecting his own grandeur. Act IV would call for no costume changes for Mithridate. We would certainly assume that on his way out to fight the Romans at the end of Act IV, he takes helmet and arms with him. When he is helped in for the last scene of Act V, Mithridate may still be wearing his helmet. Pharnace should wear the same costume throughout the play, but I would recommend a cloak as well for him in Acts I and II. Xipharès, too, requires no costume changes, except for the very last scene when he should be wearing some armor and carrying, but not wearing, his helmet (out of respect for the dying Mithridate). Arbate, Arcas, and the guards require no costume changes.

All the principles of design on which costume design is based, as already cited, hold true for the design of décor as well, and the elements of line, shape, space, and color in particular are important in expressing these principles. As with costumes, the

décor also serves to establish the setting of the play, in geographical and historical terms, and to determine the social status of the characters. In addition, it seeks to establish a mood, an atmosphere in which the drama will unfold. When the curtain goes up, even before a single word of dialogue is spoken, the audience must know where it is. Samuel Selden, in Stage Scenery and Lighting, outlines (and describes) the "seven requirements of the stage setting." He states that "the designer should aim to make his setting: (1) expressive (2) attractive (3) projectile (4) simple (5) utilitarian (6) practicable (7) organic."²⁶⁴ Besides the purely artistic aspects of scene design and the concern for proper visual interpretation of the literary conceptions of a play, the set designer must take into consideration "the law of sight lines. The need for keeping the setting and action within the audience's range of vision is one of the most fundamental requirements with which the designer has to deal."²⁶⁵ Since the décor to be presented here is not designed for a specific theatre, it must be understood that the problem of sight lines cannot really be treated, nor can the floor plan and drawing of the stage set as seen through the proscenium by our imaginary audience be drawn to true scale, as they would be for a real production.

The décor I propose as the setting for Mithridate would not bear the unmistakable stamp of an Asiatic court in the first century

²⁶⁴ S. Selden and Hunton D. Sellman, Stage Scenery and Lighting, rev. ed. (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1936), p. 19.

²⁶⁵ Gassner, p. 316. The quote is drawn from "Designing the Play," by Mordecai Gorelik, one of many essays contained in Gassner's book.

B.C., but its large proportions would single it out as being more than the abode of a humble citizen of Nymphaeum. The open, outdoor balcony would attest to the warmth of the climate, and the fluted columns separating the two balconies might give a slight hint of antiquity. The walls, painted to simulate marble, would be bare. The central door would appear to be made of thick wood, with a gilded design, a quasi coat of arms above it. Ornamentation of all doorframes, most elaborate for the central one, would be in marble. The two benches would be of carved wood, covered with cushions. The balustrade of the interior balcony would be of carved marble, lending some interest to the otherwise austere main hall of the castle. The use of marble would reflect the wealth of the castle's owner, but also provide a cold, somewhat forbidding atmosphere. Rather than emphasizing claustrophobic conditions, I wish to emphasize the vast dimensions of the chamber in contrast to the insignificance, loneliness, and helplessness felt by Monime. No matter how large the hall and, we would judge, the rest of the edifice is, she still feels trapped. Her cage is large, but it is still a cage. The sea which is so near, offers her no means of escape, but only brings to her her "captor." Only the sky will actually be visible beyond the balcony, not the sea, since the two-story height of the hall will effectively block out all view of it. The castle-fortress at Nymphaeum is massive and secure; Monime refers to it as "ces lieux éloignés de l'orage" (line 260). This décor is symmetrical, is essentially simple but not lacking in variety, provides for traffic patterns in the staging that would seem logical to the viewer, sets a background, sustains the mood necessary for the unfolding of the

tragedy, and is a constant factor in the world of changing emotions.

Decisions regarding the make-up to be worn by the actors and actresses are usually made after the costumes have been designed and the plans for the lighting established. Besides observing basic principles governing application and use of stage make-up in general, the make-up artist must take into consideration the facial shape and features of individual performers, the characters they portray, and the proximity of the audience to the stage. The chief functions of stage make-up are to make the performers visible to the audience under the existing lighting conditions, and to help project a certain character and emphasize certain physical characteristics of that personage. Since different gel colors will have different effects on the face, make-up must be worked out in very careful consideration of the colors and intensities of the lighting scheme. Make-up must also be coordinated to reflect the same image of a character that is projected by the costume he wears. Just as costumes should help an actor to identify with the character he is portraying, so too make-up should support the feeling of being truly "inside" the character. Granted, an actor cannot (and should not) rely on make-up alone to transform him (since the inner feeling for the character must precede the outer manifestation), but proper make-up will help the actor to adapt to and adopt the reality called for in the play he is performing.

According to Richard Corson, in Stage Makeup (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967, 4th edition), p. 7, there are six determinants of physical appearance, all of which are considered in order to arrive at a make-up design suited to each character. They are:

heredity, race, environment, temperament, health, and age. Mithridate should be made up to look "weathered," to reflect his forty years of exposure to the elements on the battlefields. He should also be given striking, strong features, emphasizing the eyes, given to piercing glances, and his hair and short beard should be predominantly white: "Jusqu'ici la fortune et la victoire mêmes / Cachaient mes cheveux blancs sous trente diadèmes" (l. 1039-40). Xipharès should, as one has usually come to expect of a hero, be handsome. Pharnace may also be handsome, but something of the sinister aspect of his character should be introduced through the make-up as well. Both brothers would have short, dark hair, conceivably in ringlets, perhaps with a cord worn around the head. Monime's make-up should be paler than that of the male characters. Hers is not necessarily a fragile beauty; her face should reflect her basic calm and her nobility of spirit. Her hair should be very dark brown, drawn back from her forehead, coiled in the back, and banded in one or two places with ornamental braided cord. Monime's bandeau must be made of basically stiff material--possibly jeweled brocade--worn on her brow, and tied back under her hairdo. The bandeau must have some degree of pliability to it since Monime does attempt to hang herself with it. Phaedime's make-up should also be pale, and she may be attractive, though less so than Monime. Her hair should be arranged in a style similar to that of Monime, but less elaborately and with less ornamentation. Arbate's make-up should give him a sedate, dignified appearance, showing him to be an older man. His hair and short beard could be gray. The make-up worn by Arcas and the guards would be basically functional, as opposed to being an

element of specific characterization.

After the construction of the décor, the lighting for a play is worked out. Lighting illuminates the stage and the actors on it, singling them out as necessary. It creates a certain mood, a certain atmosphere. It also indicates the time of day and the outdoor conditions which must be suggested. A. Feder notes that "lighting techniques" vary, depending on the style of drama being presented. Referring to the classical drama, he states that with the simplification of the décor over the years, the scenic designer has been limited to expressing the visual aspects of these plays through "the use of form and color. In applying light to that form, time and space can be forgotten. Instead, light can be used arbitrarily to heighten the interpretation of the play as the director wishes it."²⁶⁶ As Roussillon writes, lighting gives the décor its life and its soul.²⁶⁷ Colors must be decided upon not only in terms of what they may represent by themselves, but in relation to what effects they have on the color and texture of the décor and costumes, and on the make-up; see Fig. 40. These colors, their intensity, the types of illumination, and the direction and position the lights are set up in are all interacting elements of this very difficult stage art. It has come a long way since the practice of illumination by candlelight known to the theatre-goers of the seventeenth century was prevalent. The same principles of design that

²⁶⁶ Feder's essay, "Lighting the Play," is included in J. Gassner's Producing the Play. The quote is taken from p. 355.

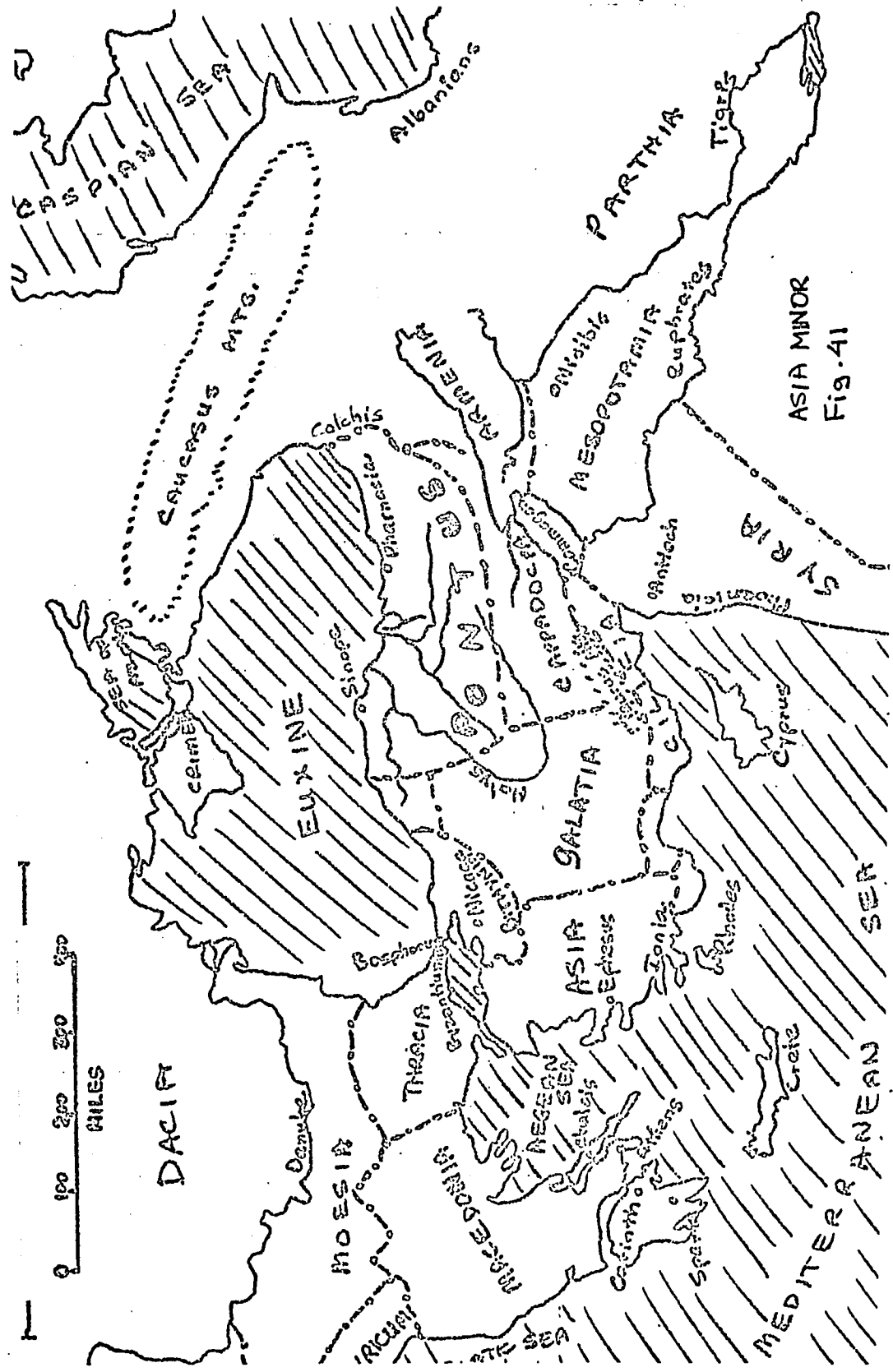
²⁶⁷ Bernard Roussillon, "Habiller la Pièce," L'illustre théâtre, No. 1 (Winter 1954-1955), p. 47.

Basic Color	Under Blue Light	Under Red Light	Under Green Light	Under Yellow Light	Under Amber Light	Under Purple Light
Red	becomes Purplish	becomes Enriched	becomes Tinged with Green, or Brownish	becomes Yellowish	is barely changed, is slightly dulled	becomes Enriched, but Bluish
Green	becomes Blackish	becomes Blackish	becomes Enriched	becomes Yellowish	becomes Tinged with Yellow	becomes Blackish
Blue	becomes Enriched	becomes Blackish	becomes Blackish	becomes Greenish	becomes Blackish	becomes Enriched, but Reddish
Yellow	becomes Brownish	becomes Reddish or Orangish	becomes Greenish or Yellow-Green	becomes Enriched	becomes Enriched	becomes Grayish-Pink
Purple	becomes Bluish	becomes Reddish	becomes Brownish	becomes Brownish	becomes Reddish	becomes Enriched

Fig. 40

COLOR CHANGES UNDER COLORED LIGHTS

This chart is a composite of information given by Agnes B. Young in Stage Costuming (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 142, and by Madeline Schonberger in J. Gassner's Producing the Play, p. 410.



ASIA MINOR
Fig. 41



Fig. xvii. Bronze statuette of Mithradates VI Eupator (ca. 87 B.C.) British Museum. Short Thracian rider's chiton, wide belt and lion helmet and skin worn rather than a himation.

Fig. 42

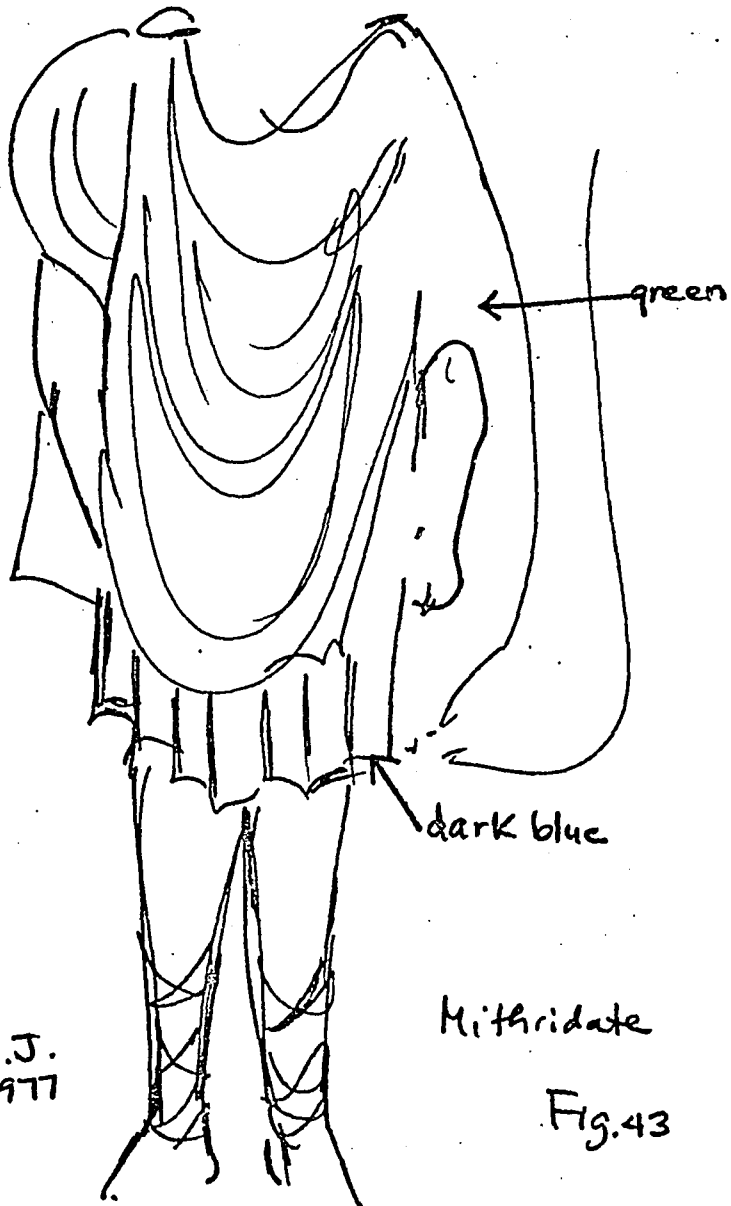
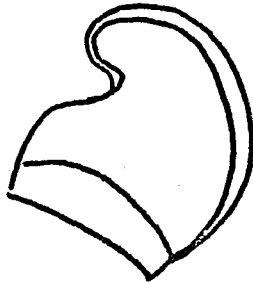
This plate is taken from Ancient Greek Dress, by Evans and Abrahams.

are used in scene and costume design are applied to stage lighting.

The changes in color of the background sky in my décor for Mithridate should be almost imperceptible during each act, with more noticeable changes occurring between Acts II and III, III and IV, and IV and V. The beginning of the play need not coincide with daybreak, but the lighting should indicate morning; the end of the play should not take place too late in the day; sunset would be a suitable and overtly symbolic time. Considering the location of Nymphaeum, I envisage the castle facing south, and would, therefore, have the lighting show, however subtly, the effect created by the passage of the sun's rays from east to west (from stage right to stage left). The diffused light of morning would give way to a more intense light as the day progressed, one that would, however, never reach peak brilliance. If we were to rely only on the light coming in through the balcony, no matter how lovely and authentic the effect would be, the stage would be poorly lit indeed. Even though tragedy is most often performed on rather dark stages, the darkness need not be the prevailing feature here. Therefore, plans for a reasonably well but far from brightly-lit stage should be drawn up. There may be some shadows in upstage corners and doorways, so that the lighting does not seem wholly unnatural, given its meager "natural" source of illumination.

The following pages will show my actual designs for costumes and décor for Mithridate for a contemporary production of this play.

Mithridate



V.L.J.
1977

Mithridate

Fig. 43

Mithridate



Mithridate

VL.J.
1977

Fig. 44

Mithridate



light
blue →

Monime

K.L.J.
1977

Fig.45

Mithridate

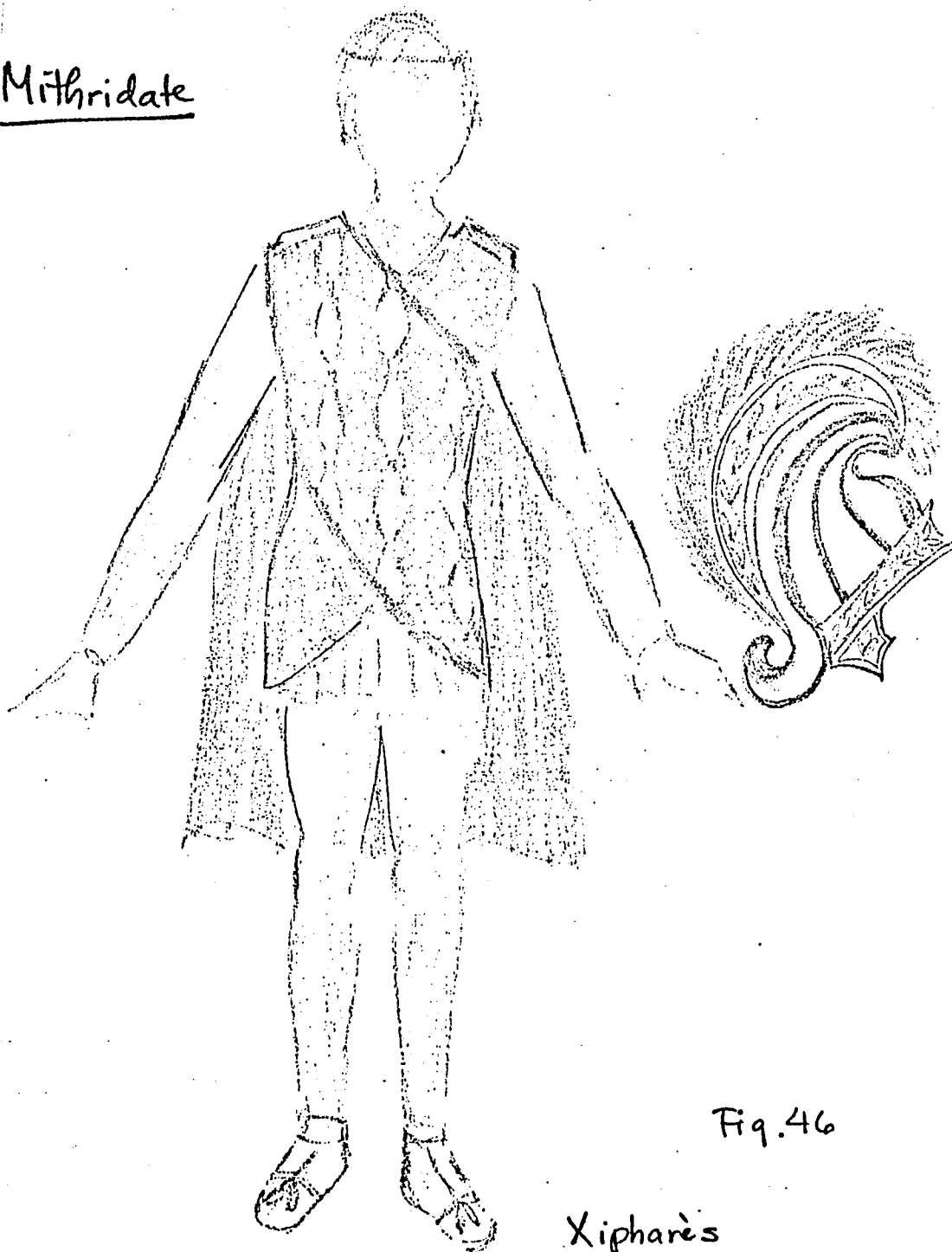
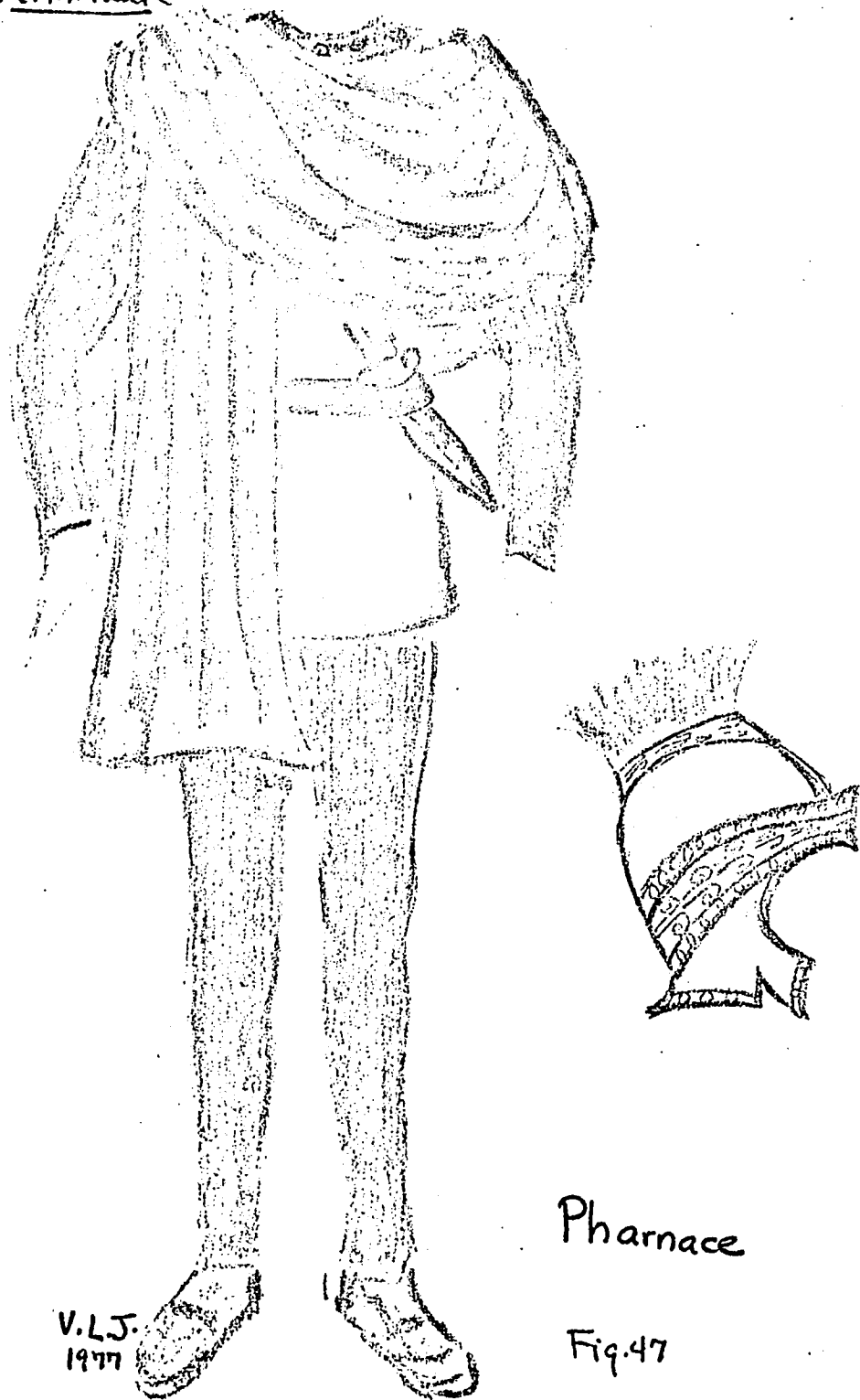


Fig. 46

Xipharès

V.L.J.
1977

Mithridate



Pharnace

Fig.47

V.L.J.
1977

Mithridate



V.L.J.
1977

Arbate

Fig. 48

Mithridate



beige, with
brown trim
border

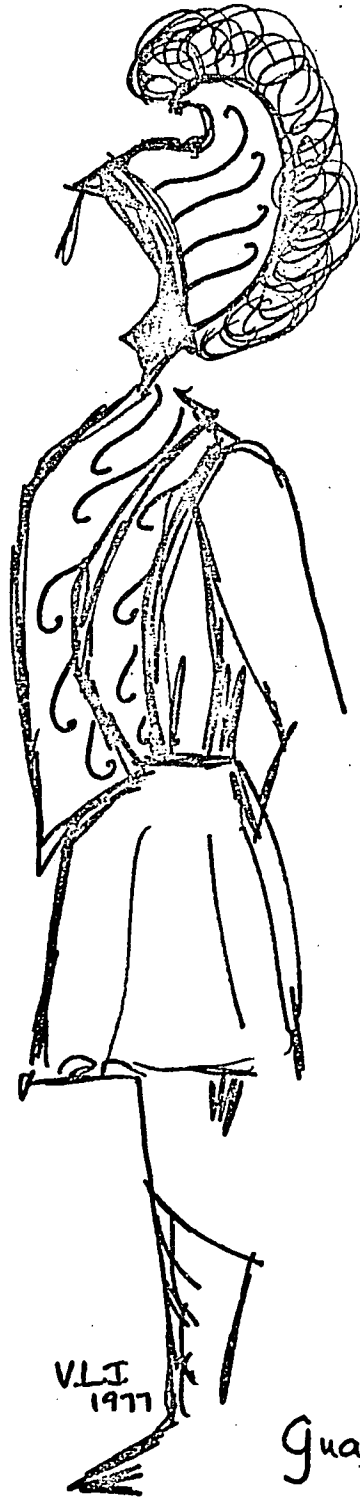
V.L.J.
1977

Fig. 49
Phoedime



V.L.J.
1977

Arcaas



V.L.J.
1977

Guard

Fig. 50

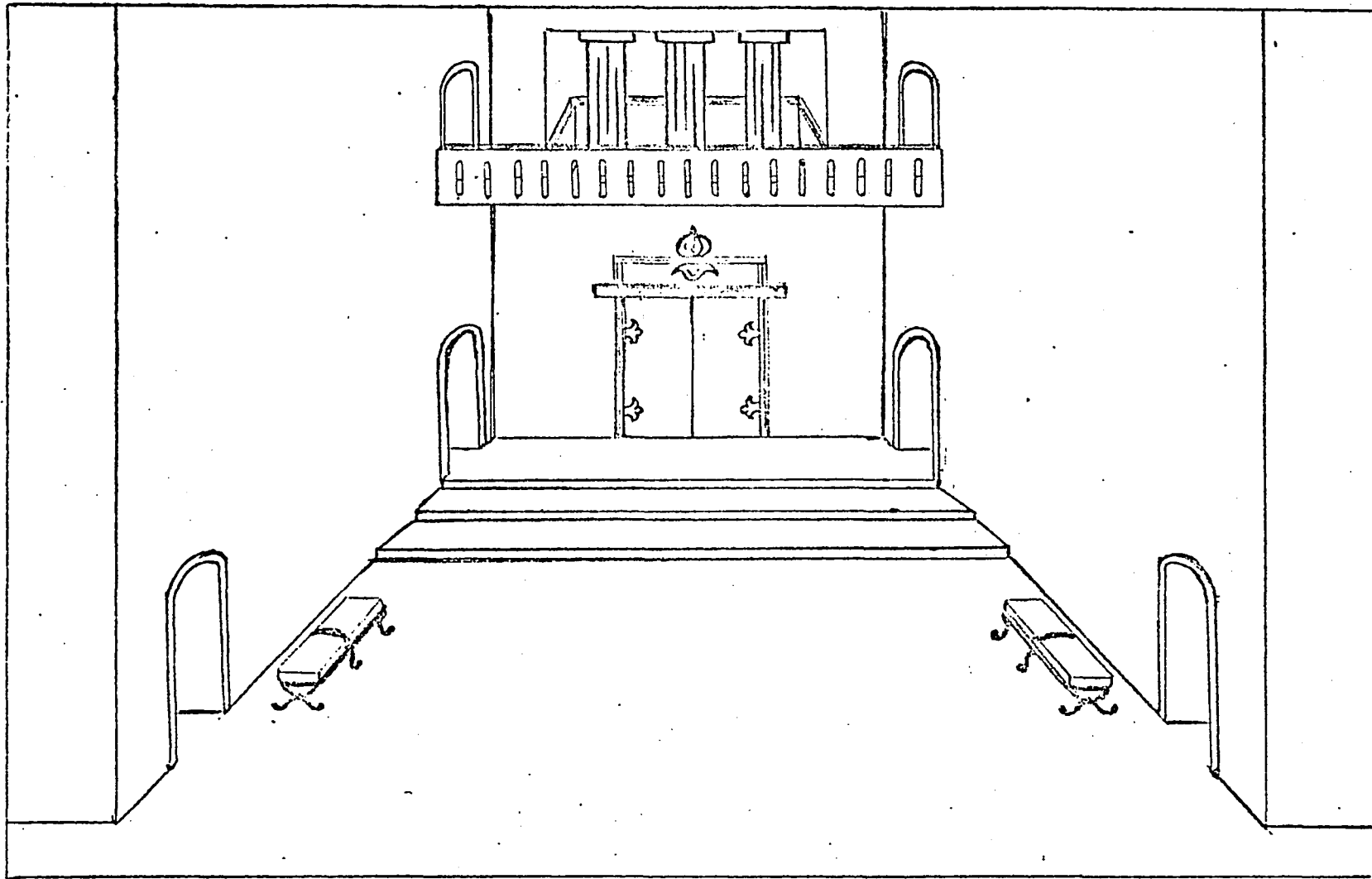


Fig. 51. Décor for Racine's Mithridate

V.L.J. 1977

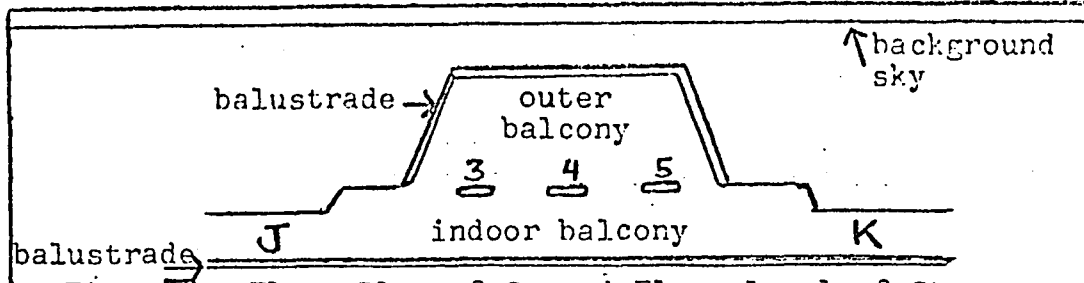


Fig. 51. Floor Plan of Second Floor Level of Stage.

Nos. 3, 4, 5 are columns.

J and K are passages, corresponding in position to passages E and F on stage level, with arched doorways.

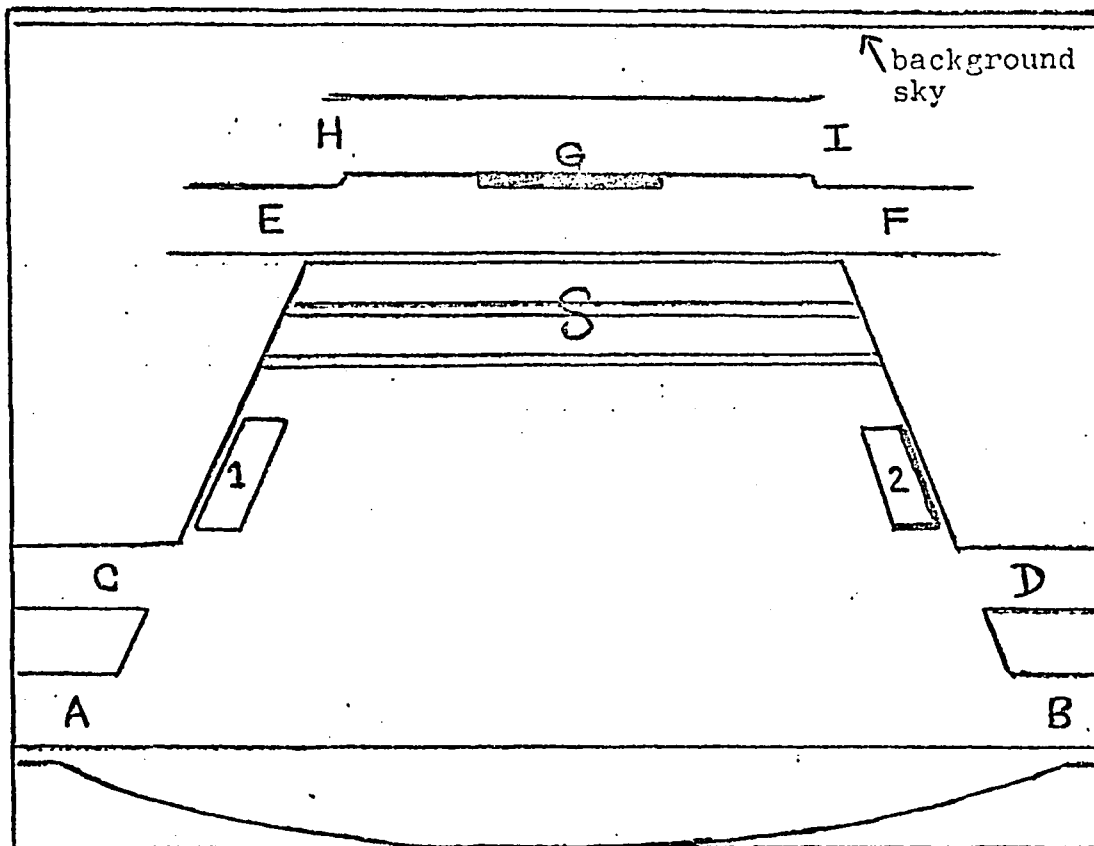


Fig. 52. Floor Plan of Stage.

A and B are passages in the foreground.

C, D, E, F are passages with arched doorways.

G is the main door, with passages H and I leading to it.

S are broad but shallow steps.

Nos. 1 and 2 are benches set parallel to the walls.

Historically, the Ionic chiton was a draped garment usually made of linen, whose border motifs were often geometric. Sleeves were formed by the pinning together of the edges of the material down from the neck on each side. In contrast was the Doric chiton, a woolen, draped, sleeveless garment with an overfold of variable length. We do not know Phaedime's origins (which might well also be Ionian); a Doric chiton is given her for the purpose of variety. Monime's costume includes a himation for greater elegance and to add to the dignity of her bearing, to help elicit from the actress not only a graceful carriage called for by her chiton, but a regal one as well.

There was no strict, set type of attire prescribed for kings of Asia Minor, and so Mithridate's costumes do not reflect the style of a distinct place and period; rather, they seek to convey at first his immediate past experiences and later in fuller measure the strength of his character and the prestige of his position.

The costumes of Pharnace and Xipharès do not conform strictly to the Phrygian influences one might expect, but have been designed with some of the license a designer may assume is his as long as he does not violate the conception of the director and the dramatic intent of the play.

These costumes should help the actors and actresses wearing them return into the past and add conviction to their interpretation of their rôle. The way in which an actor wears a costume does make a statement about his character. Just like costumes, décor can inspire interpretations which, without these costumes or décor, would not have been thought of by the actor.

To show how the décor, as I have designed it, would be utilized, the following notes on the entrances and exits of the performers are presented. This is by no means intended to be a résumé of the staging I would propose; it is, however, a written (rather than diagramed) explanation of the traffic patterns on the stage. And traffic patterns are definitely not to be confused with staging. All letter references are to entrances/exits shown on the floor plan of the stage, Fig. 52.

Act I

Scene i: Xipharès and Arbate are in the main hall.

Arbate leaves via C.

Scene ii: Monime enters via D.

Scene iii: Pharnace enters via A.

Scene iv: Phoedime runs in from J, remains on the indoor balcony;

leaves via K.

Monime leaves via F.

Scene v: Pharnace and Xipharès leave via C.

Curtain falls, rises immediately.

Act II

Scene i: Monime enters via K, walks on slowly; Phoedime hurries in, also via K, stops, surprised to see Monime there.

A fanfare is heard.

Monime and Phoedime leave via K.

Scene ii: Fanfare dies out. Pharnace, Xipharès, Arbate hurry in from A as G opens and Mithridate enters.

Pharnace and Xipharès leave via C.

Scene iii: Arbate leaves via C.

Scene iv: Monime enters via B.

Scene v: Xipharès enters via C.

Mithridate leaves via G.

Scene vi: Monime leaves via D.

Curtain falls. Interval between acts.

Act III

Scene i: Mithridate, Xipharès, Pharnace are in the main hall as the curtain rises. (Xipharès and Pharnace seem to have come from A and C.)

Scene ii: Guards enter via E and F.

Pharnace is taken out via E.

Scene iii: Xipharès leaves via A.

Scene iv: (Mithridate remains in the main hall.)

Scene v: Monime enters via B.

Monime leaves via D.

Scene vi: (Mithridate remains in the main hall.)

Curtain falls. Interval between acts.

Act IV

Scene i: Monime and Phoedime are in the main hall.

Scene ii: Xipharès enters via A.

Xipharès leaves via B.

Scene iii: Phoedime leaves via B.

Scene iv: Mithridate enters via G.

Monime leaves via D.

Scene v: (Mithridate remains in the main hall.)

Scene vi: Arbate enters via G.

Scene vii: Arcas runs in from F.

Arcas leaves via D.

Mithridate and Arbate start to leave via G as the curtain falls.

Curtain falls, rises immediately.

Act V

Scene i: Monime runs in from B, Phoedime following her.

Scene ii: Arcas runs in via G.

Scene iii: Arbate runs in via G.

Arcas hurries out via G.

Scene iv: (Monime, Arbate, Phoedime are in the main hall.)

A fanfare is heard.

Scene v: Mithridate is helped in via G; Xipharès and Arcas follow. Phoedime may stay.

As has been stated before, the drama of Mithridate is interior; it is what happens in the hearts and minds of the protagonists that matters. We learn of their feelings through the words they speak, through the way they speak them. The story of Mithridate, while engaging members of an ancient nobility, still deals with universal emotions that can be understood across all social strata. The beauty of the poetic line has an intellectual as well as emotional appeal; my staging would seek to promote appreciation and understanding on both planes, in a setting intended to be conducive to such appreciation. While the use of abstract or fractional scenery could permit greater emphasis on the words, it could also conceivably be a source of ambiguity that some theatre-goers do find disturbing. Very elaborate settings, on the other hand, may be equally detri-

mental to a production. As Louis Becq de Fouquières wrote in the late nineteenth century: "Le spectateur, dont les magnificences de la mise en scène captivent les yeux, n'est plus dans un état de conscience susceptible de goûter, soit la beauté littéraire de l'oeuvre représentée, soit la profondeur et la vérité psychologique des passions qu'elle met en jeu."²⁶⁸ I have chosen, therefore, to set the stage in a way designed to appeal immediately to the visual sense of the audience without diminishing its receptivity to the qualities of the literary work by avoiding the extremes of ambiguity and opulent exactitude. Modern settings are often not copies of actual reality. Mithridate does exist on a psychological plane, and it is this psychological reality, the very essence of the play, that I wish to exteriorize through suggestive décor and lighting.

²⁶⁸ Louis Aimé Victor Becq de Fouquières, L'Art de la mise en scène. Essai d'esthétique théâtrale (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1884), p. 20.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The chief aims of this study have been (1) to compile evidence regarding costumes and décor and to establish the milieu in which they were developed, (2) to explain how the existing theatre conditions and critical views of the play and playwright influenced these visual aspects of production through the years, (3) to determine to what extent rôle interpretation was influenced by costumes and décor, (4) to establish my own conception of the play with an explanation of the process by which it was arrived at, (5) to design costumes and décor for a production in our time, based on my conception and on the principles of design.

For the historical and anecdotal background, a wide variety of sources was consulted, ranging from (firsthand) contemporary accounts to long after-the-fact analyses. My own views of the play and the costumes and décor I have designed for it were worked out in accordance with present-day guidelines for directors and designers.

No single interpretation is a definitive one. There can be different ways of interpreting Racine's plays, of bringing them to life for a modern audience, each way having its own certain validity. However, Racine's emphasis was on the words and how they were spoken. A newer approach might be more meaningful to today's audience, but it may well distort the original thrust of the play. This is not to say that Racine's plays ought to be presented as museum pieces, played in the style of the seventeenth century, but a different approach ought to underscore the same qualities Racine intended to emphasize. The greatness of a new production should not lie in a

distortion of the play, in the shifting of its center. This change may produce interesting theatre, but it does not preserve what for me is paramount in the treatment of Racine's plays, and that is, the integrity of his work.

The best interpretation of Racine, both in the designing of the visual aspects (i.e. of the costumes and décor) as well as in the acting, should stem from Racine's literary creation. His words alone, open as they are to all the variations in interpretation both possible and suitable to the creative talents of those involved in the production of a play, nevertheless remain the best indicators of an interpretation suitable to Racine's own spirit in any given age.

APPENDIX A

PERFORMANCES OF RACINE'S MITHRIDATE (at the Comédie-Française, Paris, unless otherwise specified)

1680-1700¹

For each year a list of specific dates of performances is given, as well as the name of the play which appeared on the same program with Mithridate, and its author.

1680²

Sept. 10 Mariage de Rien (Montfleury)

Oct. 26 Baron de la Crasse (Poisson)

On Sunday, August 4, 1680, Mithridate and Le Souper mal apprêté were presented at the Hôtel de Bourgogne.³

1681

Jan. 20 Fâcheux (Molière)

May 17 Baron de la Crasse

June 30 Deuil (Hauteroche)

Sept. 19 Amour médecin (Molière)

Sept. 21 Amour médecin

1682

May 2 Cocu imaginaire (Molière)

June 6 Amour médecin

Dec. 12 Cocu imaginaire

1683

Apr. 28 Avocat sans étude (Rosimonde)

Sept. 7 Semblable à soi-même (an "intermède of l'Ambigu comique) (Montfleury)

Dec. 15 Semblable à soi-même

1684

July 6 Fragments de Molière (Champmeslé)

- Aug. 5 Carrosses d'Orléans (La Chapelle)
 Sept. 25 Médecin malgré lui (Molière)
 Nov. 14 Précieuses ridicules (Molière)

1685

- June 15 Notaire obligé (Dancourt)
 Sept. 12 Héroïne (author?)
 Sept. 28 Amour médecin
 Nov. 8 Cocu imaginaire
 Nov. 21 Mariage forcé (Molière)

La Champmeslé played the rôle of Monime in 1685.⁴

Cast for June 15 performance:⁵

"Demoiselles

Monime.....Channeslé, ou le Comte,
 Phedime.....Poisson...ou Guiot

Hommes

Mitridate...Channeslé, ou la Tuillerie
 Xiphares....Baron, ou Dauvilliers
 Pharnace....la Tuillerie ou Guerin
 Arbate.....Hubert...ou Raisin L.
 Arcas.....Beauval, ou Raisin L."

1686

- Jan. 9 Précieuses ridicules
 May 16 Merlin Dragon (Desmares)
 May 20 Merlin Dragon
 July 31 Renaud et Armide (Dancourt)
 Sept. 4 Florentin (Champmeslé)
 Oct. 10 Médecin malgré lui
 Oct. 31 Fâcheux
 Dec. 30 Baron de la Crasse

1687

- Jan. 25 Baron de la Crasse

- May 15 Badaud (author?)
 July 16 Après-souper des auberges (Poisson)
 Aug. 11 Après-souper des auberges
 Sept. 22 Comtesse d'Escarbagnas (Molière)
 Oct. 13 Carrosses d'Orléans
 Nov. 8 Titapapouf (la Longchamp)
 Nov. 29 Deuil

1688

- Mar. 17 Amour médecin
 June 1 Faux Gascon (Jacques Raisin)
 Aug. 9 Coupe enchantée (Champmeslé & La Fontaine)⁶

On March 1 Barthélemy Gourolin, sieur de Roselis appeared at Versailles for the first time in the rôle of Mithridate.⁷

1689

- May 4 Souper mal apprêté (Hauteroche)
 July 28 Répétition (Baron)
 Aug. 18 Florentin
 Nov. 14 Concert ridicule (Brueys & Palaprat)
 Dec. 30 Angélique et Médor (Dancourt)

1690

- Apr. 12 Veau perdu (Champmeslé)
 July 16 Eté des coquettes (Dancourt)
 Sept. 9 Ballet extravagant (Palaprat)

1691

- July 5 Carrosses d'Orléans
 Sept. 1 Ombre de Molière (Brécourt)
 Oct. 6 Ecole des jaloux (Montfleury)

1692

- Feb. 6 Après-souper des auberges
 May 22 Gazette de Hollande (Dancourt)
 July 26 Impromptu de garnison (Dancourt)
 Oct. 20 Noce de village (Brécourt)
 Nov. 20 Impromptu de garnison

In 1692 M. Pierre Trochon replaced M. Michel Baron in the rôle of Mithridate.⁸

1693

- Aug. 27 Mariage forcé
 Oct. 1 Précieuses ridicules
 Nov. 23 George Dandin (Molière)

1694

- May 8 Ballet extravagant
 June 23 Précieuses ridicules
 Aug. 19 Mots à la mode (Boursault)
 Sept. 6 Sérénade (Regnard)
 Sept. 21 Deuil
 Oct. 6 Vendanges (Dancourt)
 Dec. 2 Cocu imaginaire
 Dec. 6 Précieuses ridicules
 Dec. 17 Plaideurs (Racine)

1695

- Jan. 25 Cocher supposé (Hauteroche)
 June 20 Baron de la Crasse
 Aug. 2 Tuteur (Dancourt)
 Sept. 1 Foire de Besons (Dancourt)

1696

- Jan. 14 Florentin
 Mar. 31 Deuil
 July 31 Soeurs rivales (de Visé)
 Oct. 22 Eaux de Bourbon (Dancourt)

1697

- Feb. 1 Vendanges de Suresnes
 May 12 Lourdaud (de Brie)
 Aug. 3 Lotterie (Dancourt)
 Nov. 28 Cocher supposé

1698

- May 7 Je vous prends sans vert⁹ (Champmeslé)
 May 31 Vendanges de Suresnes¹⁰
 July 29 Moulin de Javelle (Dancourt & Michault)
 Sept. 23 Médecin malgré lui
 Nov. 29 Mari retrouvé (Dancourt)

1699

- Jan. 24 Sicilien (Molière)
 June 24 Amour médecin
 July 20 Crispin médecin (Hauteroche)
 Oct. 26 Entêtement ridicule (author?)
 Dec. 29 Ballet extravagant

1700

- Mar. 7 Grondeur (Brueys & Palaprat)
 Apr. 29 Vendanges de Suresnes¹¹
 June 12 Mariage forcé
 June 14 Amour médecin

- June 16 Florentin
 July 15 Fête de village (Dancourt)
 Dec. 5 Gros Lot de Marseille (author?)

There evidently was a court performance of Mithridate on April 17, 1700. M. Philippe Poisson was to play the rôle of Xipharès.¹²

1701-1720¹³

For each year, the number of performances given is cited.

1701 - 7	1705 - 2	1709 - 5	1713 - 6	1717 - 7
1702 - 4	1706 - 2	1710 - 5	1714 - 4	1718 - 7
1703 - 3	1707 - 4	1711 - 3	1715 - 5	1719 - 11
1704 - 1	1708 - 9	1712 - 7	1716 - 3	1720 - 7

January 4, 1708 Françoise Quinault (wife of Hugues Denesle), known as Mlle Quinault Denesle, made her début in the rôle of Monime.¹⁴

March 15, 1708 Clavel (brother of Fonpré's widow) performed the rôle of Mithridate.¹⁵ He was not a member of the troupe of the Comédie-Française.

June 10, 1712 François de la Traverse, sieur de Sévigny made his second début in Mithridate, seventeen years after he retired from the theatre. "Sévigny était fort grand et n'avait aucun talent."¹⁶

May 14, 1717 Mlle Adrienne Lecouvreur made her début in the rôle of Monime.¹⁷ Later in the eighteenth century the latter was played by Mlle Hippolyte Clairon. In the eighteenth century Mithridate was played by M. Michel Baron, M. Beaubour,¹⁸ M. Brizard,¹⁹ and by M. François-Joseph Talma.²⁰ Baron also played the rôle of Xipharès.²¹

1721-1729²²

For each year, the number of performances given is cited.

1721 - 8	1724 - 9	1727 - 4
1722 - 5	1725 - 3	1728 - 5
1723 - 1	1726 - 1	1729 - 1

June 29, 1722 Anne-Maurice Lenoir, sieur de la Thorillière appeared for the first time as Xipharès.²³

April 15, 1723 Pierre Guichon, sieur Dubreuil made his début in the rôle of Xipharès.²⁴

Pierre-Jacques Duchemin played Xipharès (apparently in 1724).²⁵ Incidentally, the following year he became the husband of La Duclos, thirty-eight years his senior.

March 21, 1724 Dumirail made his (third) début in the rôle of Mithridate.²⁶

April 8, 1728 Drouin de Bercy made his début in the rôle of Mithridate.²⁷

June 9, 1729 Banières appeared in the rôle of Mithridate for the first time.²⁸

1730-1750²⁹

For each year, the number of performances given is cited.

1730 - 1	1734 - 2	1738 - 4	1742 - 4	1746 - 3
1731 - 5	1735 - 0	1739 - 0	1743 - 6	1747 - 1
1732 - 0	1736 - 2	1740 - 3	1744 - 1	1748 - 0
1733 - 5	1737 - 4	1741 - 2	1745 - 0	1749 - 0
				1750 - 0

One of the débuts of Marie-Madeleine or Jeanne-Catherine Gaussem, known as Mlle Gaussin, was in the rôle of Monime in 1731.³⁰

Dubois, who made his début in 1736 (in another rôle), also played Xipharès (possibly in 1736).³¹

July 2, 1740 M. Rousselet made his début in the rôle of Mithridate,³² and appeared again as Mithridate in 1752.³³

On January 19, 1740 Mithridate and Le Fat puni were presented at the court of Versailles.³⁴

1751-1799³⁵

For each year, the number of performances given is cited.

1751 - 0	1757 - 4	1763 - 2	1769 - 1	1775 - 0
1752 - 1	1758 - 1	1764 - 0	1770 - 2	1776 - 0
1753 - 3	1759 - 0	1765 - 4	1771 - 0	1777 - 0
1754 - 1	1760 - 2	1766 - 1	1772 - 2	1778 - 3
1755 - 3	1761 - 3	1767 - 3	1773 - 5	1779 - 2
1756 - 2	1762 - 1	1768 - 0	1774 - 2	1780 - 1

1781 - 4	1786 - 1	1791 - 0
1782 - 4	1787 - 0	1792 - 0
1783 - 2	1788 - 3	1793 - 1
1784 - 2	1789 - 1	1794-1799 - 036
1785 - 0	1790 - 0	

In late 1757 or early 1758, Jean-Baptiste Britard, known as Brizard, "fut encore plus applaudi dans les rôles de Brutus et de Mithridate."³⁷

M. Vanhove (1744-1803) had played the rôle of Mithridate.³⁸

Mlle Hus (d. 1805) and Mlle Raucourt (1750-1815) had played the rôle of Monime.³⁹

1800-1837⁴⁰

For each year, the number of performances given is cited.

1800 - 0	1806 - 3	1812 - 3	1818 - 0
1801 - 6	1807 - 9	1813 - 2	1819 - 0
1802 - 6	1808 - 3	1814 - 0	1820 - 0
1803 - 5	1809 - 2	1815 - 0	1821 - 1
1804 - 4	1810 - 1	1816 - 0	
1805 - 5	1811 - 0	1817 - 2	1822-1837 - 0

Mlle Duchesnois played the rôle of Monime in the early nineteenth century.⁴¹

August 26, 1806 Leclerc made his début in the rôle of Mithridate.⁴²

May 20, 1807, Mainvielle made his début in the rôle of Xipharès.⁴³

During Napoleon's stay at Fontainebleau, Mithridate was performed there on October 23, 1807 with the following cast: Mithridate: Saint-Prix; Monime: Mlle George; Pharmace: Lafon; Xipharès: Damas; Arbate: Desprez; Phoedime: Mlle Patrat; Arcas: Varenne.⁴⁴

The "Comédie ayant reçu l'ordre de se rendre en partie à Erfurt, pour y jouer pendant le séjour de l'Empereur..."⁴⁵ left Paris on September 19, 1808 to make the trip to Erfurt (Saxe). While there, the company gave fifteen performances, including Mithridate.⁴⁶

Mithridate and Le Tambour Nocturne were performed on August 14, 1812. It was a "spectacle gratis, la veille de la fête de S. M. l'Empereur et Roi."⁴⁷

On March 16, 1820, the Odéon presented Mithridate, with Mme Eric-Bernard making her début in the rôle of Monime. Mithridate was included in reprises in 1824 at the Odéon.⁴⁸

Talma performed in the rôle of Mithridate for the first time on March 24, 1821, at the first performance of Mithridate given at the Opéra-Comique.⁴⁹ He appeared a second time, now at the Théâtre-Français, five days later.

1838-1852⁵⁰

For each year, the number of performances given is cited.

1838 : 4 (total)

Jules Janin prepared Rachel for the rôle of Monime in which she made her début October 16.⁵¹ Madame J.-I. Samson gives the same date.⁵² Hervey⁵³ mentions, however, as do Laugier⁵⁴ and Mesnard,⁵⁵ that Rachel appeared in the rôle on October 5. Hervey provides a day-by-day list of receipts of the Théâtre Français for performances Rachel took part in. His information is drawn from "La Comédie-Française depuis 1830," (no date, no author). A critical quote in the feuilleton of "La Presse" would further confirm the October 5th (rather than the 16th) date, for it is dated October 7, 1838. From 1838 to 1855 Rachel performed sixty-three times in Mithridate.⁵⁶

M. Joanny appeared as Mithridate with Rachel as Monime--(dates unspecified).⁵⁷ (In later years M. Maubant took over the title rôle.)

1839 - 6
1840 - 8
1841 - 5
1842 - 4
1843 - 5
1844 - 2

1845 : 5 (total)

Sept. 14 First appearance (in rôle cited):
Pharnace : M. Maubant

1846 - 2
1847 - 1

1848 : 2 (total)

May 7 First appearance:
Mithridate : M. Maubant

1849 - 3
1850 - 1
1851 - 5
1852 - 4

1853-1855⁵⁸

Specific dates of performances are given, as well as the name of the play(s) presented the same day.

1853 : 3 (total)

May 13 Souvenirs de voyage and Les lundis de Mme

1854⁵⁹

June 8 George Dandin and Stances à Corneille

Sept. 26 La Comédie à Ferney and La famille Poipace (?)

Dec. 28 Io and Le verre d'eau

1855

Mar. 5 Le médecin malgré lui and La joie fait peur

Mar. 11 Le moineau de Lesbie and La joie fait peur

July 16 Souvenirs de voyage and Un caprice

1856-1901⁶⁰

Specific dates of performances as well as the name of the play(s) which appeared on the same program with Mithridate are given where possible, otherwise just the number of performances presented that year is cited. Sources permitting, names of actors and actresses who appeared for the first time in a particular rôle of Mithridate are shown. (These are not necessarily stage débuts.) Full casts, as well as other pertinent data for a given year are specified where possible.

1856-1861 - 0

1862

Dec. 22 First appearance:
Pharmace : M. Laroche
Xipharès : M. Worms

1863 - 2

1864 - 0

1865

Oct. 21 (reprise)

Dec. 21 Stances à Racine

Mlle Favart appeared in the rôle of Monime.

1866 - 1
1867 - 0
1868 - 1

1869

Dec. 21 First appearance:
Xipharès : M. Prud'hon

Two hundred thirtieth anniversary of Racine's birth.

Costumes worn in the 1860's were designed by Albert.

1870 - 0
1871 - 1
1872-1878 - 0

1879 : 6 (total)

Feb. 7 (reprise)

cast

Mithridate.....M. Maubant⁶¹
Monime.....Mme Sarah Bernhardt
Pharnace.....M. Dupont-Vernon
Xipharès.....M. Mounet-Sully
Arbate.....M. Martel
Phoedime.....Mlle Fayolle
Arcas.....M. Richard

1880-1881 - 0

1882 : 6 (total)⁶²

July 10 (reprise)

Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard

First appearance:
Monime : Mlle Adeline Dudley

cast (partial listing)

Mithridate.....M. Sylvain
Monime.....Mlle Adeline Dudley
Pharnace.....M. Dupont-Vernon
Xipharès.....M. Garnier

1883-1887 - 0

1888 : 3 (total)⁶³

Sept. 12 (reprise)

First appearance:

Xipharès : M. Albert-Lambert

cast

Mithridate.....M. Maubant

Monime.....Mlle Dudley

Pharnace.....M. Dupont-Vernon

Xipharès.....M. Albert-Lambert

Arbate.....M. Martel

Phoedime.....Mlle Frémaux

Arcas.....M. Villain

The performance was given in honor of both M. Maubant, who was thinking of retiring, and the young Lambert.

1889 : 4 (total)

Dec. 21 Les Plaideurs

Mlle Hadamard replaced Mlle Dudley in the rôle of Monime, since the latter was ill with influenza.

Two hundred fiftieth anniversary of Racine's birth.

1890 : 2 (total)

Aug. 10 George Dandin

Mithridate.....M. Silvain

Monime.....Mlle Hadamard

At the Théâtre National de l'Odéon Mithridate was presented five times in 1890.

1891

Dec. 17

1892-1894 - 0

1895 : 6 (total)⁶⁴

Aug. 2 (reprise)

cast (partial listing)

Mithridate.....M. Silvain

Monime.....Mlle Marguerite Moréno

Pharnace.....M. Leitner

Xipharès.....M. Albert Lambert

1896 - 0

1897 : 3 (total)⁶⁵

cast (partial listing)

Mithridate.....M. Silvain
 Monime.....Mlle Dudlay
 Pharnace.....M. Jules Leitner
 Xipharès.....M. Albert-Lambert

1898-1899 - 0

1900 : 5 (total)⁶⁶

Apr. 8 First appearance:
 Phoedime : Mlle Delvair

Sept. 23 First appearance:
 Pharnace : M. Fenoux

At the Théâtre National de l'Odéon Mithridate was presented three times in 1900.

1901 - 0

1902-1977⁶⁷

Specific dates of performances as well as the name of the play(s) which appeared on the same program with Mithridate are given where possible, otherwise just the number of performances presented that year is cited. Sources permitting, names of actors and actresses who appeared for the first time in a particular rôle of Mithridate are shown. (These are not necessarily stage débuts.) Full casts, as well as other pertinent data for a given year are specified where possible.

1902

Dec. 21 (eve.) Les Plaideurs and Le Mémoire (première)

First appearance:
 Monime : Mme L. Silvain
 Arbate : M. Ravet
 Arcas : M. Falconnier

Two hundred sixty-third anniversary of Racine's birth.

Dec. 28 (mat.) Le Mémoire and Les Plaideurs

1902 cast

Mithridate.....M. Silvain
 Monime.....Mme L. Silvain
 Pharnace.....M. Leitner
 Xipharès.....M. Albert-Lambert
 Arbate.....M. Ravet
 Phoedime.....Mme Delvair
 Arcas.....M. Falconnier

1903 : 3 (total)

At the Théâtre National de l'Odéon Mithridate was presented four times in 1903, including a performance on November 19 and on December 21. The latter performance featured M. Albert Lambert and Mlle Maille in the cast.

1904-1907 - 0

1908

Dec. 21 (reprise)

Les Plaideurs

First appearance:

Phoedime : Mlle Madeleine Roch

cast

Mithridate.....M. Silvain
 Monime.....Mme Louise Silvain
 Pharnace.....M. Leitner
 Xipharès.....M. Albert Lambert fils
 Arbate.....M. Ravet
 Phoedime.....Mlle Madeleine Roch
 Arcas.....M. Falconnier

Two hundred sixty-ninth anniversary of Racine's birth.

1909

Jan. 14 (mat.) Les Romanesques
 Jan. 21 (mat.) Les Romanesques
 Sept. 6 Le Malade imaginaire
 Sept. 19 (eve.) Le Malade imaginaire

1909 cast

Mithridate.....M. Silvain
 Monime.....Mme L. Silvain
 Pharnace.....M. Leitner
 Xipharès.....M. Albert-Lambert
 Arbate.....M. Ravet
 Phoedime.....Mme Roch
 Arcas.....M. Falconnier

1910-1911 - 0

1912Feb. 22 (mat.) Monsieur de Pourceaugnac

First appearance:

Phoedime : Mlle Even

Feb. 29 (mat.) Monsieur de Pourceaugnac1912 cast

Mithridate.....M. Silvain
 Monime.....Mme L. Silvain
 Pharnace.....M. Leitner
 Xipharès.....M. Albert-Lambert
 Arbate.....M. Ravet
 Phoedime.....Mlle Even
 Arcas.....M. Falconnier

1913Dec. 21 Les Plaideurs

Two hundred seventy-fourth anniversary of Racine's birth.

1914-1917 - 0

1918Feb. 7 First appearance:
Arcas : M. AlcoverJune 20 (mat.) Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard

First appearance:

Phoedime : Mlle Guintini

July 14 (free mat.) Poésies-Hymnes and Le médecin malgré luiOct. 10 (mat.) Le MisanthropeOct. 17 (mat.) Le Misanthrope

1918 cast

Mithridate.....M. Silvain
 Monime.....Mme L. Silvain
 Pharnace.....M. Leitner
 Xipharès.....M. Albert-Lambert
 Arbate.....M. Ravet
 Phoedime.....Mlles Even, Guintini
 Arcas.....M. Alcover

1919 - 0

1920 : 4 (total)

Mithridate.....M. Desjardins⁶⁸
 Monime.....Mme Segond-Weber⁶⁹

1921 - 1

1922 - 0

1923 - 1

1924 - 3

1925 - 0

1926 - 1

1927 : 2 (total)

First appearance:

Xipharès : M. Maurice Donneaud

1928 : 6 (total)

First appearance:

Phoedime : Mme Madeleine Barjac

Arcas : M. Marcel Le Marchand

May 7 La Nuit d'Octobre

M. Silvain's fiftieth anniversary at the Comédie-Française. He played the rôle of Mithridate.

Dec. 21 Les Flaideurs

Two hundred eighty-ninth anniversary of Racine's birth.

1929 - 2

1930 : 1

First appearance:

Phoedime : Mlle Henriette Barreau

1931 - 0

1932 : 2 (total)

First appearance:

Arcas : Jean Valcourt

Dec. 21 Les Plaideurs

First appearance:

Mithridate : M. Raphaël Albert-Lambert fils

Two hundred ninety-third anniversary of Racine's birth.

1933 - 2

1934 - 1

1935

Mithridate.....M. Albert-Lambert

Jan. 10

Jan. 17

1936 - 0

1937 : 7 (total)

Dec. 16 (reprise)

cast

Mithridate.....M. Jean Yonné

Monime.....Mlle Marie Bell

Pharnace.....M. de Rigoult

Xipharès.....M. Robert Vidalin

Arbate.....M. Théophile-Louis-Antoine Balpétre

Phoedime.....Mlle Henriette Barreau

Arcas.....M. Jean Valcourt

mise en scène : M. Jean Yonné

décor : M. Louis Sué

costumes : Mme Marie-Hélène Dasté

1938 : 4 (total)

In January Jean Martinelli replaced M. de Rigoult
as Pharnace.⁷⁰

1939-1951 - 0

1952 : 8 (total)

Dec. 1 (reprise)

cast (partial listing)

Mithridate.....M. Jean Yonné

Pharnace.....M. Jean Davy

Xipharès.....M. Jean Marais

Arbate (?).M. Jacques Eyser

mise en scène : M. Jean Yonnel
décor and costumes : M. Yves Brayer
music : M. André Jolivet

1953 : 27 (total)

May 21⁷¹ (mat.) La Coupe Enchantée (by Champmeslé and La Fontaine)

600th performance of Mithridate

cast

Mithridate.....M. Jean Yonnel
 Monime.....Mme Annie Ducaux
 Pharnace.....M. Jean Davy
 Xipharès.....M. Paul-Emile Deiber
 Arbate.....M. Jacques Eyser
 Phœdime.....Mme Geneviève Martinet
 Arcas.....M. Jean-Pierre Helbert

mise en scène : M. Jean Yonnel
décor and costumes : M. Yves Brayer
music : M. André Jolivet

Also appearing in 1953 performances:
 Xipharès : M. Jean Marais

1954-1955 - 0

1956 : 9 (total)

Oct. 4 (reprise)

mise en scène : M. Jean Yonnel
décor and costumes : M. Yves Brayer
music : M. André Jolivet

1957 - 2

1958 - 7

1959 - 7

1960 : 6 (total)

Dec. 1 (reprise)

mise en scène : M. Jean Yonnel
décor and costumes : M. Yves Brayer
music : M. André Jolivet

1961 - 6

1962 : 2 (total)

René Arrieu appeared in the rôle of Pharnace.⁷²

1963-1977 - 0

PERFORMANCES OF RACINE'S MITHRIDATE AT THE COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE⁷³

<u>Reign/Regime</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Number of Performances</u>
Louis XIV	1680-1700	98
	1701-1714(1715) ⁷⁴	62
Louis XV	1715-1773(1774)	161
Louis XVI	1774-1788(1789)	24
Revolution and First Republic	1789-1793	2
<u>First Republic</u>	1794-1798	--
Directory and Consulate	1799-1804	21
Empire	(1804)1805-1814	28
<u>Restoration:</u>		
Louis XVIII; Return of Napoleon, Second Abdication	(1814)1815	--
<u>Second Restoration</u>		
Louis XVIII	(1815)1816-1824	3
Charles X	(1824)1825-1830	--
Louis-Philip I	(1830)1831-1848	44
Second Republic	(1848)1849-1851	9
<u>Second Empire:</u>		
Napoleon III	(1851)1852-1870	23
<u>Third Republic</u>		
Regime of National Assembly	1871-1875	1
(Third Republic)	(1875)1876-1940	93
	1940-1943	--
Fourth Republic	1944-1958	53
Fifth Republic	(1958)1959-present ⁷⁵	22

PERFORMANCES OF RACINE'S PLAYS AT THE COMEDIE-FRANCAISE, PARIS

Plays	First Perf. ⁷⁶	First Perf. at C-F ⁷⁶	1680-1700 ⁷⁷	1701-1750 ⁷⁸	1751-1800 ⁷⁸	----- 1701 ⁷⁸ -1800 ⁷⁶	1801-1850 ⁷⁸	1851-1900 ⁷⁸	----- 1801-1900 ⁷⁷	1901-1966 ⁷⁶
<u>La Thébaïde</u>	1664	1680	7	8	--	8 8	--	2 ⁷⁹	2	3
<u>Alexandre</u>	1665	1682	22	3	--	3 3	--	1 ⁸⁰	1	--
<u>Andromaque</u>	1667	1680	116	204	86	290 296	285	162	447	486
<u>Les Plaideurs</u>	1668	1680	143	352	150	502 507	262	312	574	138
<u>Britannicus</u>	1669	1680	86	171	115	286 289	207	130	337	419
<u>Bérenice</u>	1670	1680	54	44	34	78 78	6	18	24	263
<u>Bajazet</u>	1672	1680	67	119	59	178 184	127	35	162	95
<u>Mithridate</u>	1673	1680	98	182	67	249 249	100	65	165	132 ⁸¹
<u>Iphigénie en Aulide</u>	1674-1675	1680	95	220	125	345 348	289	44	333	48
<u>Phèdre</u>	1677	1680	121	264	157	421 424	300	142	442	366
<u>Esther</u>		1721	--	8	--	8 8	113	38	151	72
<u>Athalie</u>		1716	--	94	108	202 209	149	106	255	109
TOTALS:			809			2570 2603			2893	2131

PERFORMANCES OF RACINE'S PLAYS AT THE COURT⁸²

Plays	Louis XIV 1680-1700	1700-1715	Louis XV	Louis XVI	First Empire
<u>La Thébaïde</u>	1	1			
<u>Alexandre</u>	6	1			
<u>Andromaque</u>	14	9	17	4	7
<u>Les Plaideurs</u>	14	8	18	6	1
<u>Britannicus</u>	19	9	25	4	3
<u>Bérénice</u>	6	1	1	3	1
<u>Bajazet</u>	20	6	23	5	5
<u>Mithridate</u>	18	7	15	4	2
<u>Iphigénie</u>	7	8	16	4	6
<u>Phèdre</u>	18	12	22	9	4
<u>Esther</u>					2
<u>Athalie</u>			10	3	3
Total.....	123	62	147	42	34

The compiler of the chart above explained that it did not extend beyond the first Empire because in 1814 the regular custom of court performances virtually ceased, and the occasional visits by the princes of the Bourbon line to the theatre were recorded too inadequately to allow such a list to be drawn up with any degree of accuracy. He is able to add the following information regarding court performances: under the Restoration there were fourteen performances, no play by Corneille, of Racine only Les Plaideurs, and of Molière only Le Misanthrope and Les Précieuses Ridicules; under Louis-Philip there were eleven performances, including Horace, Athalie with the choruses (twice), Le Misanthrope, Le Mariage forcé,

Le Malade imaginaire (twice); under the second Empire there were eleven performances given by the Comédie-Française in the imperial residences, excluding Corneille and Molière, and including one performance of Les Plaideurs at Compiègne on the first of December, 1855. This original compilation was made in 1873.

FOOTNOTES TO APPENDIX A

¹ Based on detailed information found in H. C. Lancaster's "The Comédie Française 1680-1701. Plays, Actors, Spectators, Finances," The Johns Hopkins Studies in Romance Literatures and Languages, Extra 17 (1941), 23-196.

² The Comédie-Française was founded in 1680, although it did not acquire that name until April 18, 1689.

³ S. Chevalley, "Les derniers jours de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne," Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre, 17^e année, No. 4 (October-December 1965), p. 405.

⁴ Mas, p. 91.

⁵ H. C. Lancaster, "Actors' roles at the Comédie Française according to the Répertoire des comédiens français qui se peuvent jouer en 1685," The Johns Hopkins Studies in Romance Literatures and Languages, 47 (1953), 4.

⁶ Lancaster cites only Champmeslé, but Mas, who goes by Joannidès, notes on p. 116 in Appendix A of La Champmeslé, that Charles Chevillet de Champmeslé collaborated with La Fontaine on this one-act comedy.

⁷ Lemazurier, I, 530.

⁸ J. Racine, Mithridate (Paris: Gustave Barba, 1856), p. 2.

⁹ or: ...verd, according to Mas

¹⁰ Lancaster explains in a footnote on p. 207 that he has taken these performances of Vendanges "as an abbreviation of Vendanges de Suresnes, but it is possible than [sic] Dancourt's earlier and less popular Vendanges was meant in these instances."

¹¹ Same as footnote 10, above.

¹² Based on information in folder no. 43, taken from the file, "Comédie-Française, Règlements, ordres et lettres des premiers gentilshommes de la Chambre, 1700-1790," a subdivision of "Comédie-Française, Règlement divers, 1680-1816," found in the Archives de France.

¹³ Based on the ledger, État du répertoire, found in the Bibliothèque de la Comédie-Française.

¹⁴ Lemazurier, II, 330.

¹⁵ Lancaster, Sunset, p. 14.

¹⁶ Lemazurier, I, 542.

- 17 Mesnard, III, 11.
- 18 Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. 115.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Goldmann, Jean Racine, p. 154.
- 21 Lamothe-Longon, p. 34.
- 22 Based on Etat du répertoire, hereafter cited as E.d.r.
- 23 Lemazurier, I, 549.
- 24 Ibid., 246.
- 25 Ibid., 248.
- 26 Ibid., 251.
- 27 Ibid., 152.
- 28 Lemazurier, II, 365.
- 29 Based on E.d.r.
- 30 Lemazurier, II, 228.
- 31 Lemazurier, I, 239.
- 32 J. Racine, Petite Bibliothèque des Théâtres (Paris: Bélin, 1787), p. xvii.
- 33 Ibid., p. xviii.
- 34 S. Chevalley, "La Saison théâtrale 1739-1740 à la Comédie-Française," Revue d'histoire du théâtre, 19^e année, No. 1 (January-March 1967), p. 67.
- 35 Based on E.d.r.
- 36 The Comédie-Française was closed from September 3, 1793 to May 30, 1799. See C. G. Etienne and A. Martainville, Histoire du Théâtre-Français depuis le commencement de la révolution jusqu'à la réunion générale, 4 vols. in 2 (Paris: Barba, 1802).
- 37 Lemazurier, I, 170.
- 38 Arnault, n.p.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Based on E.d.r.

- 41 Roubine, p. 82.
- 42 Lemazurier, II, 407.
- 43 Eugene Laugier, Documents historiques sur la Comédie-Française (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1853), p. 79.
- 44 Ibid., p. 120.
- 45 Ibid., p. 127.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid., p. 160.
- 48 P. Porel and G. Monval, L'Odéon, histoire administrative, anecdotique et littéraire du second Théâtre-Français, II (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1882), pp. 27 and 50.
- 49 Talma, Réflexions de Talma sur Lekain et l'art théâtral (Paris: Auguste Fontaine, 1856), p. 92.
- 50 Based on E.d.r. and on A. Joannidès, La Comédie-Française 1902 (Paris: Plon, 1903).
- 51 Janin, p. 133.
- 52 J. I. Samson, Rachel et Samson (Paris: P. Ollendorff, 1898), p. 74.
- 53 C. Hervey, The Theatres of Paris (Paris: Galignani, and London: John Mitchell, 1846), p. 97.
- 54 E. Laugier, De la Comédie-Française depuis 1830 (Paris: Tresse, 1844), p. 115.
- 55 Mesnard, III, p. 12.
- 56 Gaston Bonnefont, La Comédie-Française (Paris: Ed. Monnier, 1884), p. 138.
- 57 Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. 115.
- 58 Based on information found in Représentations et Recettes journalières des Théâtres Impériaux in the Archives de France.
- 59 E.d.r. notes five performances for this year.
- 60 Based on E.d.r.; on costume sketches in the Collections de la Comédie-Française; on vols. 5, 6, 7 of C. Gueullette, Répertoire de la Comédie-Française (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1889, 1890, 1891); on A. Joannidès, La Comédie-Française de 1680-1900 (Paris: Plon, 1901); Joannidès, La Comédie-Française 1901 (Paris:

Plon, 1902); Joannidès, La Comédie-Française 1902 (Paris: Plon, 1903); Joannidès, La Comédie-Française 1904 (Paris: Plon, 1905); on Les Annales du Théâtre et de la Musique: 5^e, 8^e, 14^e, 15^e, 16^e, 17^e, 21^e, 26^e années; and on Lyonnet, Dictionnaire des comédiens français--specifically for December 21, 1865.

⁶¹ Goldmann, Jean Racine (p. 156) cites M. Sylvain as performing in the rôle of Mithridate.

⁶² Joannidès, in La Comédie-Française de 1680-1900, p. 363, and E.d.r. cite six performances, while Annales, 8^e année, p. 106, cites five for "Nombre de représentations pendant l'année." This 'Number of performances' does not seem to include the first performance of Mithridate in a given year when the latter is a reprise. The practice of numerical exclusion of the reprise is not consistent throughout the tabulations of the Annales, however (witness agreement of the three sources for 1879, the year of a reprise).

⁶³ Joannidès, in La Comédie-Française de 1680-1900, p. 368, and E.d.r. cite three performances, while Annales, 14^e année, p. 75, cites two. See footnote for 1882.

⁶⁴ Joannidès, in La Comédie-Française de 1680-1900, p. 376, and E.d.r. cite six performances, while Annales, 21^e année, p. 77, cites five. See footnote for 1882.

⁶⁵ Joannidès, in La Comédie-Française de 1680-1900, p. 378, and E.d.r. cite three performances, while Annales, 23^e année, p. 97, cites four.

⁶⁶ Joannidès, in La Comédie-Française de 1680-1900, p. 382, and E.d.r. cite five performances, while Annales, 26^e année, p. 78, cites three.

⁶⁷ Based on E.d.r.; Champion's La Comédie-Française; Joannidès' La Comédie-Française 1902, La Comédie-Française 1909, La Comédie-Française 1912, La Comédie-Française 1918--all at Plon, in Paris, in 1903, 1910, 1913, 1919 respectively; Annales: 28^e, 29^e, 34^e, 35^e, 38^e, 39^e années; and on documentary evidence found in the Bibliothèque de la Comédie-Française.

⁶⁸ Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. 119.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 126.

⁷⁰ Champion, V, 209.

⁷¹ This performance was given in the Salle Richelieu of the Comédie-Française. The cast listing is taken from the program for that performance. Mithridate was part of the "Principales Créations et Reprises de la saison d'hiver 1952-1953," according to the program.

⁷² La Comédie-Française. 1680-1962, Catalogue de l'exposition au

Château de Versailles (Paris: Ministère d'état--affaires culturelles, 1962), p. 171.

73 Information is based on E.d.r.; A. Joannidès, La Comédie-Française de 1680-1900; Jean Racine, The Complete Plays of Jean Racine, trans. Samuel Solomon (New York: Modern Library, 1967), Vol. II.

74 It is not possible to indicate accurately how the total number of performances should be divided in any given year where there was a changeover in reign or regime. To avoid the ambiguity that so often plagues charts of this kind due to the frequent overlap of "historical" dates, the calendar year is used as the basis for counting the number of performances and alongside that date is given (in parentheses) the date that shows the actual historical extent of a reign or regime where the two time categories do not coincide.

75 The statistics given extend through the spring of 1977.

76 Information is based on The Complete Plays of Jean Racine, trans. by S. Solomon, Vol. II, p. xli.

77 Information is based on Joannidès and Solomon (i.e. figures coincide).

78 Information is based on Joannidès, Comédie-Française de 1680-1900, p. xvi-xvii.

79 only two acts (according to Mesnard, VIII, 610).

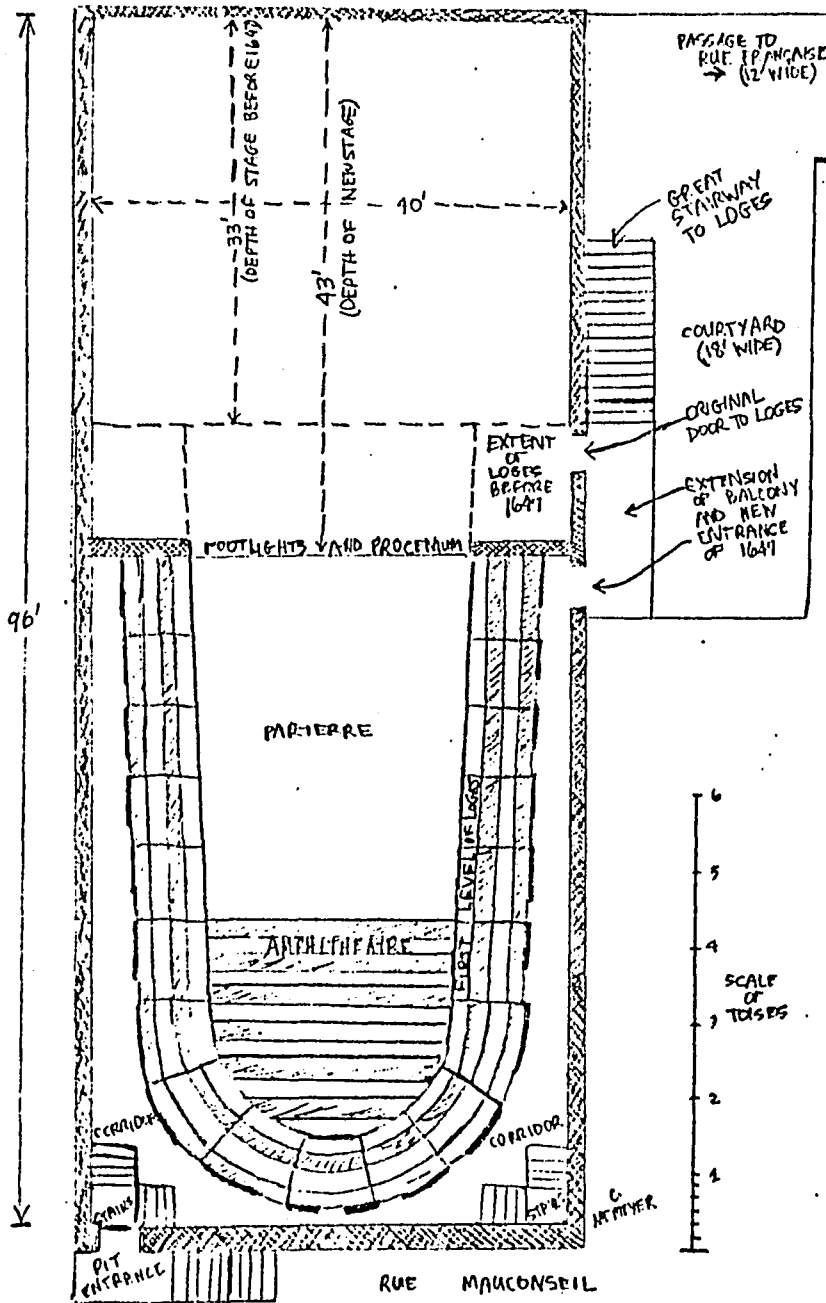
80 the first three acts (according to Mesnard, VIII, 610).

81 Between 1901 and 1966 there were 131, not 132 performances of Mithridate. This (smaller) figure has been confirmed by Madame Sylvie Chevalley, Archiviste-Bibliothécaire of the Comédie-Française (based on the unpublished Etat du répertoire).

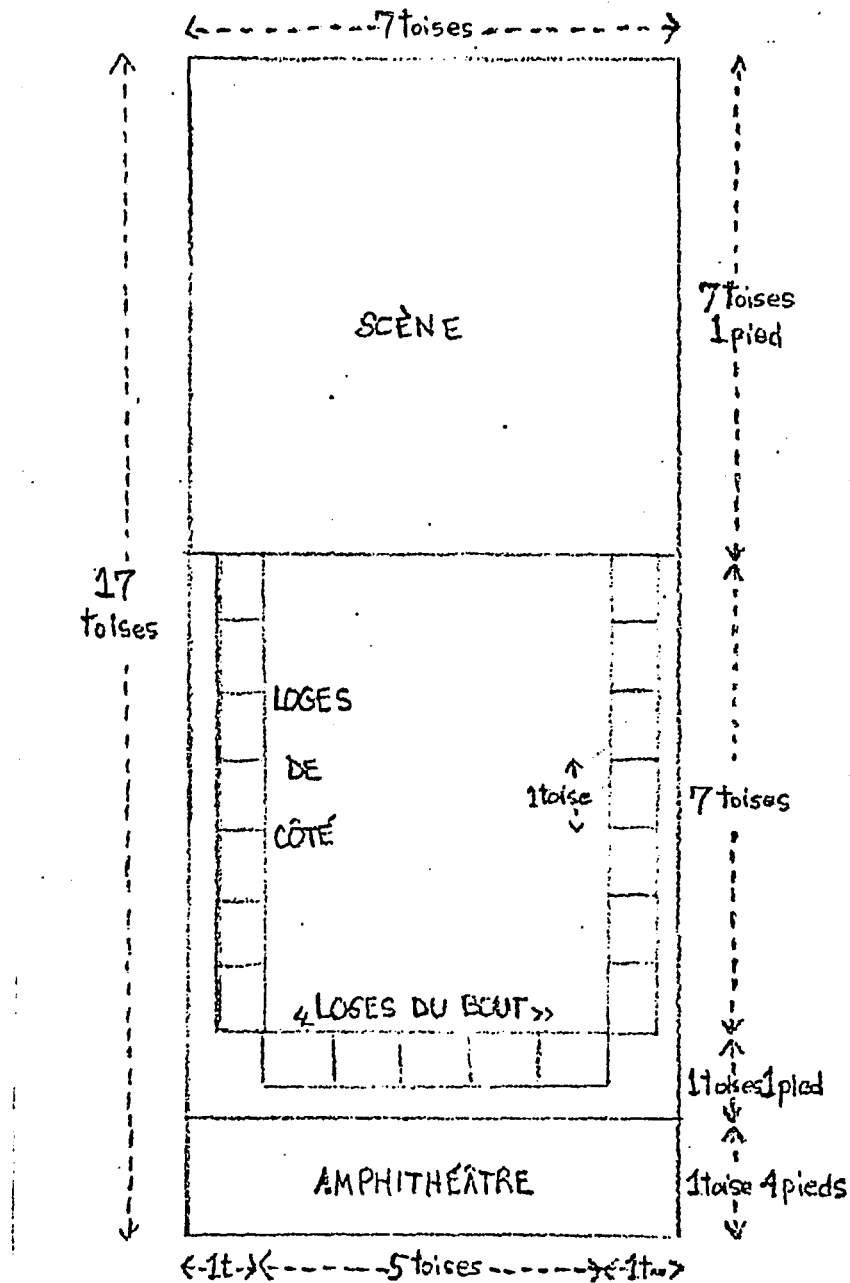
Note: Consult A. Joannidès, Comédie-Française de 1680-1900, p. xvi-xvii for decade by decade listing of number of performances of all of Racine's plays, 1680-1900. A mathematical error is made in that chart: Britannicus: total number of performances is 709, changing grand total to 6272.

Note: S. Solomon notes the plays by Corneille and Molière that were the most performed at the Comédie-Française for the period 1680-(July 31,) 1966 and cites the number of performances for each as follows: Le Cid (1,471), Horace (863), Le Menteur (825), Cinna (742), Polyeucte (708), Rodogune (455), Nicomède (371), Tartuffe (2,746), L'Avare (2,135), Le Médecin Malgré Lui (2,080), Le Misanthrope (1,815), Les Femmes Savantes (1,707), Le Malade Imaginaire (1,648), L'Ecole des Maris (1,566), L'Ecole des Femmes (1,417), Les Précieuses Ridicules (1,240).

⁸² Information is based entirely on Eugène Despois' compilation in Oeuvres de J. Racine, ed. Paul Mesnard, III, 610.



An Original Grand Plan, Reconstructing the Hotel de Bourgogne from Dumant and the Remodeling



[le Théâtre de l'Hotel de Bourgogne]

p.231 Revue de la société d'histoire du théâtre "L'André I"
 14^e année no.3 (juillet-sept. 1962)
 Paris

MEMBERS OF THE TROUPE OF THE HÔTEL DE BOURGOGNE IN 1673¹

MM. Hauteroche	M ^l les Beauchateau
La Fleur	Poisson
Poisson	D'Ennebaut
Brécourt	Brécourt
Champmeslé	Champmeslé
La Thuillerie	Beauval
La Thorillière	La Thuillerie
Baron	
Beauval	

¹ Bert-Edward Young, Michel Baron. Acteur et Auteur Dramatique (Paris: Albert Fontemoing, 1905), pp. 70-71.

APPENDIX C

LOCATION OF THE COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE : 1680 - 1799¹

- 1680 - 1689 The Comédie-Française is at the Théâtre Guénégaud (rue Mazarine).
- 1689 (April 18)² Inauguration of the house³ on the rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-des-Prés (present rue de l'Ancienne Comédie) (Building was designed by the architect François d'Orbay.)⁴
- 1770 The Comédie-Française moves to the "salle des Machines" at the Tuileries.
- 1779 Construction of a new theatre begins on the site of the former hôtel de Condé; plans by Peyre and de Wailly. (present Odéon)
- 1782 (April 9) House is inaugurated under the name of "Théâtre-Français."
- 1789 The "Théâtre-Français" is renamed the "Théâtre de la Nation."
- 1790 The theatre in the rue de Richelieu becomes known as the "Théâtre-Français de la rue de Richelieu."
- (1791) (Some actors from the Théâtre de la Nation go over to the Théâtre-Français de la rue de Richelieu.)
- (1799) "C'est là que se réunirent, en 1799, les éléments de l'Ancienne Comédie épars depuis six ans. Napoléon allait organiser définitivement la Comédie-Française."⁵

¹ Jean Monval, La Comédie-française. (Paris: Henri Laurens, 1931), pp. 6-7.

² A. M. Nagler, A Source Book in Theatrical History (1952; New York: Dover, 1959), p. 285.

³ According to Nagler (p. 285), the stage was a sloping one, measuring 41 feet deep, 54 feet wide, with six flat wings on each side. "The acting area--not wider than 15 feet at the front and 11 feet at the rear--was railed off against the benches by balustrades." The auditorium was 71 feet long, and U-shaped.

⁴ Nagler, p. 285.

⁵ Monval, p. 7.

MEMBERS OF THE FIRST¹ TROUPE OF THE COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE²

MM. De Champmeslé	M ^{mes} De Champmeslé
Guérin	Guérin
De la Grange	De la Grange
Verneuil	Guyot
Rosimont	Du Croizy
Du Croizy	Dupin
Hubert	De Brie
Beauval	Beauval
Baron	Baron
Raisin	d'Ennebaut
Hauteroche	Raisin
La Thuillerie	Lecomte
Poisson	
De Villiers	
Danvilliers	

¹ On p. 3 of the work cited below, Bonnefont wrote: "Le théâtre de la rue Richelieu n'a pris le nom de Comédie-Française que le 18 avril 1689, mais ses origines sont plus anciennes." He must have referred to the members of the troupe at this time, for the troupe of 1680 was slightly different in its composition.

² Gaston Bonnefont, La Comédie-Française (Paris: Ed. Monnier, 1884), pp.113-14.

APPENDIX D

THEATRES ESTABLISHED IN FRANCE, 14th - EARLY 18th CENTURIES¹

KINGS OF FRANCE	YEARS	THEATRES
Charles VI	(before) 1398	Théâtre au Bourg. S. Maur.
	1402	Théâtre à la Trinité.
François I	1540	Théâtre à l'Hostel de Flandre.
Henry II ²	1548	Théâtre à l'Hostel de Bourgogne.
.....	(about) 1560.....Collège de Reims.Collège de Boncourt.
Henry III	1577	(Comédiens Italiens): Théâtre à l'Hôtel de Bourbon. <u>Le Gelosi</u> .
	1584	Théâtre à l'Hôtel de Cluni, <u>supprimé</u> .
	1588.....Comédiens François, <u>supprimés</u>(Comédiens Italiens): Nouvelle Troupe. <u>supprimée</u> .
Henry IV	1596	Théâtre à la Foire S. Germ. <u>autorisé</u> .
	1600	Théâtre à l'Hôt. d'Argent au Marais.
Louis XIII	1629	Comédiens de l'Elite Royale.
Louis XIV	1650	Troupe de Molière, au Fauxbourg S. Germ. sous le nom de l'illustre Theatre.
	1658	Troupe de Molière, au Petit-Bourbon, le 3. Novembre.
	1660.....Troupe de Molière au Palais Royal, sous le nom de La Tr. de Monsieur.Opéra. Th. à l'Hôtel de Guénégaud par Perrin.Comédiens Espagnols, au Petit-Bourbon.
	1661.....Troupe de Mademoiselle ³Troupe Dauphine, jusqu'en 1666.
	1662	Nouvelle Troupe de Comédiens Italiens.

THEATRES ESTABLISHED... cont.

KINGS OF FRANCE	YEARS	THEATRES
Louis XIV	1665	Troupe de Molière, sous le nom de Troupe du Roi, au mois d'Août.
	1673.....	Troupe du Théâtre du Marais et Troupe du Roi réunies sous le nom de Troupe du Roi, à l'Hôtel de Guénégaud.(Opéra): academie royale de Musique.
	1677	Théâtre des Bamboches au Marais
	1680.....	(Comédiens Italiens): seule.Troupe Royale & Troupe du Roi, réunies à l'Hotel de Guénégaud, sous le titre de <u>Comédiens du Roi</u> , avec 12000 livres de pension.
	1684	Comédiens du Roi, en leur Hotel, rue des Fossés Saint Germain.
	1697	(Comédiens Italiens): <u>supprimés</u> .
Louis XV	1716.....	(Théâtre des Foires): à la Foire Saint Laurent.(Comédiens Italiens): Nouv. Troupe du Duc d'Orleans.
	1723	(Comédiens Italiens): Tr. du Roi.

¹ Information taken from a chart in P. F. G. de Beauchamps, Recherches sur les théâtres de France, Depuis l'année onze cens soixante-un, jusques à present. (Paris: Prault père, 1735), n.p. Most original spelling is retained.

² François' name cannot be attached to the year 1548 as the original chart shows, because Henry II (whose name is omitted there) was crowned in 1547.

³ "Mademoiselle" is Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

APPENDIX E

TABLEAU OF HENRI-LOUIS LEKAIN'S PERFORMANCES IN MITHRIDATE
(1752-1778)¹

YEAR	RÔLE	CITY	NO. OF PERFORMANCES
1752-53	Xipharès	Paris	3
1753-54	"	"	1
1754-55	"	"	1
1755-56	"	Paris.....3 Versailles.....1	
1756-57	"	Paris	3
1757-58	"	"	3
1758-59	"	"	1
1760-61	"	"	2
1761-62	"	"	2
1762-63	"	"	1
1763-64	"	Paris.....2 Fontainebleau.....1	
1764-65	"	Nancy	1
1765-66	"	Paris	4
1766-67	"	"	1
1768-69	Pharnace	"	1
1769-70	"	"	1
1771-72	"	Paris.....2 Versailles ("cour")...1	
1772-73	"	Paris.....3 Versailles ("cour")...1	
1773-74	"	Paris	4
1777-78 (Tues. April 8 -Sat. Jan. 24)	"	Versailles	1

¹ Olivier, pp. 203, 205, 208, 211, 214, 217, 220, 225, 227, 229, 231, 233, 235, 237, 239, 240, 243, 245, 246, 253.

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