The Pantomime Repertoire of the Théâtre des Funambules

Many aspects of the Théâtre des Funambules and its star performer, Deburau, suggest that they deserve significant critical attention from modern scholars: not only their contemporary notoriety, but also Deburau's subsequent influence on the history of mime.[1] Few would disagree with Patrick Berthier's recent comment, that this theatre 'mériterait à lui seul une nouvelle enquête de fond'.[2] If there has, as yet, been no such 'enquête de fond', it is largely because the subject poses some acute evidential problems. In addition to the usual difficulty when studying contemporary mime performance (there is very little record of the movement vocabulary and general techniques employed), there is virtually no extant evidence of the material aspects of production (such as music, costumes and staging in general). The theatre's records mostly disappeared after it was demolished in 1862 (along with a large part of the Boulevard du Temple) in the course of Haussmann's redesigning of the streets of Paris. The purpose of this article is to take a step in the direction Berthier recommends by considering the largest single source of extant material, plot synopses, in order to understand more about the theatre's repertoire in general, and about the nature of its pantomime performances in particular.

For most of its existence, the Théâtre des Funambules sent a plot synopsis to the censor for prior approval of a production. Some manuscript copies are now stored by the Archives nationales de France (hereafter A.N.F.). Another, larger collection of synopses is archived at the library of the Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques (hereafter S.A.C.D.). We owe this collection to Francisque Hutin (whose stage name was 'Francisque le jeune'), the actor and bibliophile who rescued these synopses from the theatre before it was demolished, depositing them with the S.A.C.D. in 1862.[3] Even though plot synopses are not a complete record of pantomimes at the theatre, even though we usually do not know who their authors were, nor who used them and for exactly what purpose, they nevertheless contribute to what is sorely lacking in studies of Deburau and the Théâtre des Funambules: a theatrical study, as opposed to a biographical one revolving around Deburau.[4]

This article will consider a short period of four years spanning the July 1830 Revolution, because the rapidly changing political landscape made more obvious the theatrical practices and aspirations of the Théâtre des Funambules. In order to fully appreciate the changes that freedom brought in July 1830, one has to bear in mind the official restrictions on the theatre's repertoire until then. The theatre owed its name to the nature of its first *autorisation* in 1813 which permitted only 'des tours de force et d'agilité telle que danse de corde, saut de trappe et force d'hercule'.[5] Nothing in this regulation precluded acrobats from speaking while they performed their act, so the theatre did, in fact, stage dramatic dialogue between performers walking on their hands or balanced on tight ropes. This is how the great Romantic actor Frédérick Lemaître began his career at the Théâtre des Funambules.[6] Two years later, the theatre was allowed to perform 'des pantomimes arlequinades sans sujet parlé ni dialogué'.[7] After years of appeals, the theatre was granted permission in 1828 to include one speaking role in each act or *tableau* of their *pantomimes-arlequinades*.[8] Important as these two extensions to their licence were, they seem like minor tinkering compared to the emancipation which came in August 1830 when the *Charte Constitutionelle* enshrined in law the general principle of freedom of expression. After years of straining against restrictions, the prospect of freedom must have been intoxicating. Censorship returned in 1835, but restrictions on the repertoire of theatres did not.[9]

We shall consider three synopses representative of three distinct eras in the theatre's existence and three sub-genres of pantomime: a *pantomime-arlequinade* from the mute era before March 1828, a partly spoken *pantomime-comique* from the subsequent hybrid era, and a spoken, sung and mimed *grande bêtise* from the era of freedom after the July Revolution in which only Deburau mimed. This star performer was unique in his theatre company for never taking on

speaking roles. Hence, as well as casting light on the nature of the pantomime repertoire at the Théâtre des Funambules, our examination of these synopses will suggest ways in which Deburau's increasing fame during the July monarchy derived from his unique position at the theatre.

1. The *pantomime-arlequinade*: a visual spectacle

The Théâtre des Funambules is often associated (by modern scholars and contemporary commentators alike) with one sub-genre of pantomime in particular: the *pantomime-arlequinade*, when in fact this sub-genre made up no more than a third of their repertoire.[10] Although no one, neither contemporaries nor modern critics, seems to realise as much, the reputation must derive from what one might call the golden age of the *pantomime-arlequinade*, a brief period of two years, Easter 1826 to Easter 1828, during which more were produced than either before or after.[11] The beginning of this golden age coincides with the year Deburau fully took over the role of Pierrot from his predecessor, Charigny,[12] while its end coincides with the permission granted to the theatre to include a speaking part in each production. This golden age of the *pantomime-arlequinade* inspired a golden age of critical attention, beginning with Nodier's flattering article in 1828 and continuing for several decades.[13] It is important, then, to understand the nature of this sub-genre if one is to understand the early reasons for the renown of the Théâtre des Funambules.

The form of the French *pantomime-arlequinade* was far less fixed than the contemporary English Harlequinade,[14] but it did nevertheless have recognisable characteristics. As the name suggests, it required a set of *Commedia dell'arte* roles (see Plate 1).

PLATE 1 HERE. CAPTION: Scene at the Théâtre des Funambules, probably from a *pantomime-arlequinade*. Wood cut by Tony Johannot in Jules Janin, *Deburau; Histoire du Théâtre à quatre sous* (Paris: C. Gosselin, 1832), p. 302. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

At the Théâtre des Funambules there were never more than four: Arlequin, Colombine, Cassandre, and the Franco-Italian role of Pierrot, but sometimes there were as few as one (either Arlequin or Pierrot). Some aspects of the plot, too, were reminiscent of the *Commedia dell'arte*: rivalry for Colombine's love, a fair amount of slap-stick violence and comic chases. Other aspects were more analogous to early nineteenth-century British pantomime, such as the one or more supernatural events which always occurred, involving the appearances of fairies or the magical transformation of characters. The plot synopses and the response of spectators suggest that there was relatively little need for detailed narrative mime, or detailed portrayal of character in mime. Overall, the *pantomime-arlequinade* was not a strongly narrative or character-based form of theatre, but a visual spectacle.

A typical example before March 1828 is *La Magie Infernale, ou Les Épreuves d'Arlequin, Pantomime Arlequinade à Grand Spectacle Orné de Décors, Transformations, Changements à Vue etc.*[15] It is a three-act play with two parallel plots coming together in the final scene. In one plot, Colette loves Colin, but her father, Cassandre disapproves. He instructs his valet, Pierrot (played by Deburau) to watch over her. Unknown to Cassandre, Pierrot uses the opportunity to woo her. Colette and Colin retaliate with a well-tried piece of *Commedia dell'arte* stage business:[16] they persuade Pierrot to hide in a bag, so that when Cassandre is told that his daughter is alone with a hidden lover, he assumes it is Colin and beats the bag mercilessly. In the second plot, Monlac is hunting in the forest with his servant, Arlequin. When he aims his gun at a bear, it turns into a beautiful woman, and a fairy announces that the woman is destined for him on condition that he pass a series of ordeals. He fails the first, and is duly turned to stone by the fairy. On his master's behalf, Arlequin does better with the next ordeal, saving a young maiden, Alfrède, from a fire-breathing dragon. His master is thereby released from the spell. Monlac tries harder with his next

ordeal, fires Cupid's arrow at just the right target, and the play ends with marriage between him and Alfrède, and Colin and Colette. The concluding words of the synopsis are reminiscent of Pierrot's lot in the French *Commedia dell'arte* tradition as the whipping-boy: 'Tout le monde est joyeux, à l'exception de Pierrot'.

The extended title immediately indicates that it takes more than Arlequin to make a *pantomime-arlequinade*, since the sub-genre was also characterised by all kinds of stage effects. It is a 'grand spectacle' by virtue of the frequent large-scale special effects, such as the Fairy's exit in a chariot drawn by lions in Act 1, scene 9, the huge, multi-headed, fire-breathing dragon in Act 2, scene 8, and devils jumping out of fiery pits in Act 3, scene 13. The Théâtre des Funambules was reputed to have especially effective stage machinery and skilful stage managers that meant that a play made up of as many as thirty *tableaux* and containing many such 'spectacles' would be performed at a fast pace in less than two hours.[17]

The subtitle also refers to 'changement à vue', a term still in use today to mean a rapid, apparently miraculous change of scenery in full view of the audience, without the curtain falling.[18] *Pantomimes-arlequinades* were full of these, and *La Magie Infernale* is no exception. Thus, the welcoming inn transforms into a huge, thorny rosebush in Act 1, scene 13, and later turns into an ornamental garden. Monlac uses the talisman given to him by the fairy to turn the stage into 'une caverne sombre' in Act 3, scene 11, and then Cupid fires an arrow out of the cave, miraculously turning it into a heavenly Temple of Hymen in the last scene where the lovers marry.

The next term in the subtitle, 'transformations', refers to a sudden change in costume or appearance of a character (the same word is used in a more restricted sense in contemporary English pantomime).[19] In Act 1, scene 9, the bear hunted by Monlac transforms into a beautiful woman; in Act 1, scene 13, Monlac thinks he need pay no heed to an old woman, until she turns into the fairy who then turns him into a statue; a reverse transformation in Act 2, scene 11 subsequently turns him back into flesh and blood: 'les trois statues changent de couleur et reprennent leur premier habillement'. As the visual effect in this last example suggests, transformations often required a high degree of technical skill, either by the stage manager or the actor himself or herself. Deburau was said by his contemporaries to have been adept at preparing his own transformations.[20] His skill in this respect may have been related to his responsibility for looking after the theatre's props, specified in the 'article additionnel' of his contract.[21]

As successful as this form of theatre was for the first two years of Deburau's career as the sole Pierrot in the company, productions were far less common after Easter 1828 when the theatre was allowed to use one speaking character in each performance. Thus, although mute mime theatre was vital to Deburau's early fame and the early reputation of the Théâtre des Funambules, it lost ground to spoken theatre as soon as regulations allowed.

2. The introduction of a single voice

Like all the pantomimes performed at the Théâtre des Funambules after Easter 1828 and before the July Revolution, *La Chasse aux Filles, Pantomime-Comique Mêlée de Paroles et de Danses en Six Tableaux* (1829) includes one speaking role in each *tableau* or act.[22] This inevitably changed the form of the performance considerably. There is another feature, however, which also makes this work different to the theatre's earlier repertoire: its graphic treatment of the politically and ethically sensitive subjects of slavery, despotism and rebellion. Just how sensitive is clear from the unprecedented extent of the cuts required by the censor.[23] No previous plot synopsis for a production at the Théâtre des Funambules attracted the red pen of the censor so much.

The action of *La Chasse aux Filles* takes place on the Island of Kos (under Ottomon control during the nineteenth century). There are two parallel plots which come together midway through the play. One plot concerns Zéïla, a captured French woman who has become the

favourite of the Sultan Ali-Pouff, and her husband, Célicourt, who wants to infiltrate the harem and liberate her. The other plot concerns Sabord and his fellow pirates who also plan to gain entry to the palace, but this time to steal Ali-Pouff's treasure. Their strategy for doing so involves dressing up as women and taking part in the Sultan's annual 'chasse aux filles' in which every woman on the island has to hide in the forest and be stalked by the Sultan's slaves who capture any whom they think will be to the Sultan's liking. In the cast list, Deburau appears as 'Blanc-Pif, Vizir (Pierrot)', and it is his job to protect the harem from intruders. In fact, he uses his privileged access to try to seduce Zéïla.

The combination of Célicourt trying to free his wife, Blanc-Pif trying to seduce her, and Ali-Pouff appearing when least expected produces a lot of hiding, disguise, pursuit and punishment. Blanc-Pif allows Zéïla to escape the harem on condition she meet him in the forest. Having escaped, she meets Célicourt instead, and by chance they also meet Sabord who realises that he and Célicourt are old school friends. Zéïla and Célicourt escape to the pirate boat. The pirates successfully pass themselves off as women, are duly captured in the 'chasse aux filles' and taken to the palace. Célicourt and Zéïla are captured by the Sultan's slaves and they, too, find themselves back in the palace. The captured women and the 'grotesque' pirates in drag dance a ballet before the Sultan, until from beneath their costumes the pirates pull out their guns and force the Sultan to sign a decree of abdication. The play ends with general rejoicing by all except Ali-Pouff and Blanc-Pif.

This comic play has some features in common with the frenetic action of *pantomimes-arlequinades*: the farce, the disguise, the slap-stick. However, in its original, uncut form, it has political and moral overtones which make it quite different, and they manifest themselves most strongly through the speaking actor. In scene 4, for example, Sabord explains orally and in great detail why he plans to rob Ali-Pouff, concluding: 'sa garde est peu nombreuse, elle n'est pas fort aguerrie et la crainte de faire trop de dépenses lui maintient pas de troupes sur pied'. All but the first clause was cut, however, presumably because avarice has no particular generic place in an oriental set piece, and would therefore encourage spectators to think of examples closer to home of bad, niggardly government.

In the last scene, a lot of Sabord's address (again, spoken) to Ali-Pouff, insisting he sign a decree of abdication, is cut: 'Allons, décide-toi ou ~~je proclame ta déchéance, et je t'emmène à Tunis pour te faire voir du pays~~. Nous faisons feu sur toi et les tiens.' The change makes Sabord sound more like a conventional pirate and less like a political rebel. A later intervention by the censor has the same consequence: in the last moments of the play when Ali-Pouff first refuses, then signs his decree of abdication, the cut leaves only Ali-Pouff's refusal:

> Ah! tu refuses! Amis, feu sur ces rebelles! ~~Signe-moi ce traité. Et songe bien que faute par toi de l'exécution d'un seul de ses articles, je te rendrai une seconde visite qui te coutera plus cher que celle-ci. *Musique*. Le Pacha a pris le traité et au moyen d'une plume et d'un petit encrier de poche que lui a présenté l'un des lieutenants de Sabord, il l'a signé et le rend au corsaire qui le lève en l'air en s'écriant.~~ Tout le monde se jette la face contre terre. La Décharge générale a lieu. Zéïla a couru dans les bras de Célicourt et Sabord s'écrie: 'Amis, vive Tunis et nous aussi!'. ~~Ali-Pouff est resté interdit encore à l'avant-scène. Blanc-Pif n'a pas bougé de son siège et conserve son air piteux. Zéïla a couru dans les bras de Célicourt. Les esclaves se sont jetés la face contre terre. Tableau final~~. Fin.

Left uncut, this scene ends with the overthrow of a cruel and unjust despot by a pirate who has cited 'le peuple' and taxation as reasons for his actions, and who does so by peaceful, quasi-legal means, without injury to others. It is slightly unclear, but the 'décharge général' must be the pirates shooting in the air in celebration. When cut, however, Ali-Pouff refuses to abdicate and the pirates behave in the lawless and immoral way that one might expect of their type, apparently

killing everyone except Célicourt and Zéila. Uncut, the rebellion has a certain dignity and legitimacy; cut, it descends into violence and chaos.

The largest section of the play which is censored is the whole of the third act or *tableau*, a slave market scene. It starts with a line-up of the women for sale which, in isolation, could create comedy from the way they are described almost as theatrical, visual types: 'la première est bossue, la 2e est bancale, la 3e borgne, la 4e bourgeonnée, la 5e manchote, et la 6e décrépite, courbée par un grand âge et négresse.' The realism of the rest of the scene, however, makes one interpret this classification of humanity as callous rather than comical. The way this is achieved is predominantly verbal, not visual, and therefore could not have been achieved before the introduction of a speaking voice in 1828. Sabord's clinching turn of phrase which seals the sale of woman number one, the hunchback, to a ship owner is 'faites porter votre fret au navire pour 4 grouses ou cinq francs, quarante centimes, monnaie de France […] C'est solide', as he slaps her on the back. For the sale of number two, the tottering old lady, it is 'vous le savez, tout ce qui cloche ne tombe pas'. And so on through the six women, until he ends his auction with a job lot of three children roped together 'comme un fagot ambulant' for the relatively high price of '2 séquins, vu leur croissance présumée'. What makes this scene even more unsettling is that it is not just a slave trade, but a sex trade, as Sabord's concluding smugness reveals: 'vous voyez, camarades, que je sais dorer la pilule aux amateurs du sexe'.

Another, shorter allusion to slavery was cut from scene 17. The pirates disguise Blanc-Pif as a black slave, darkening his face by smearing it with tobacco.[24] The contrast before and after would have been stark, if we remember that according to the cast list, Deburau was in his Pierrot role when he played the part of Blanc-Pif, and hence would have been wearing his characteristic white face make-up. He is not called 'Blanc-Pif' for nothing; it is a meta-theatrical reference to the white face that Pierrot always has (see Plate 2).

PLATE 2 HERE. CAPTION: Draner (Jules Renard), Deburau in costume but retaining his white face make-up. Watercolour, date unknown but nineteenth century and after Deburau's death. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

All the more hilarious, then, if his ever-present white face turns black for a time. Comical, also, is the moment in the following scene when his disguise is uncovered by Ali-Pouff who only wipes off half the blackness, leaving Blanc-Pif with one white cheek and one black cheek. Effective as this episode is, censorship causes it to be replaced with the pirates making Blanc-Pif wear a mask of unspecified colour, and then Ali-Pouff taking it off entirely.

There are, then, two aspects of this *pantomime-comique* which were excluded from the performance: politically subversive remarks, and depictions of slavery. Both pose questions which are difficult to answer given the lack of extant documentary evidence of productions at the Théâtre des Funambules. One can, however, understand the first aspect, political subversion, by reference to a more general contemporary context. The weakening of the Restoration was accompanied by widespread contemporary socio-political and moral criticism made more openly than before on Parisian stages.[25] Censors reacted strongly to the unruly provocations of Romantic writers; they were 'littéralement obsédés par l'esprit romantique naissant'.[26] In English and American popular drama, Ottoman despotism was equated with the suppression of emerging democracy.[27] There are also more specific analogies with performances in Parisian theatres. In 1827, the Paris Opéra-Comique attempted to stage Carafa's *Masaniello, ou Le Pêcheur Napolitain*, based on the seventeenth-century armed revolt against the Spanish in Naples but were prevented by the censor.[28] A year later (and one month before *La Chasse aux Filles*), the Paris Opéra was permitted to stage Auber's version of the same story, *La Muette de Portici*, the censor making clear in his report that this version is more acceptable than Carafe's because of the strong, sentimental focus on the new character, the eponymous Fenella. She is seen as an effective distraction from the subversive implications of the play.[29] Part of her sentimental effect

derives from the fact that she is a lone mute character expressing herself in mime and dance in an otherwise wholly sung opera. The official reactions to these two versions of the Masaniello story are complementary: while the addition of a miming actor to Auber's version was perceived by the censor to have diluted a provocative theme, the addition of speaking role to *La Chasse aux Filles* provoked the censor to an unprecedented degree. In these cases, it would seem that subversion in words worried the censor more than subversion in mime.

The second matter excluded from *La Chasse aux Filles*, slavery, should also be seen in its contemporary context. It does not look out of place in the litany of potent themes one could find staged in the six theatres of the Boulevard du Temple, affectionately known by contemporaries as 'Le Boulevard du crime' for its tendency towards villainous characters and heinous plot lines. In 1828, a journalist at the recently founded *Figaro* newspaper listed its excesses: 'parricides, infanticides, vols sur les grands Chemins, effractions, assassinats, rapts, faux en écriture publique et privée, séquestration de personnes, fabrication de fausse monnaie, tous les délits, tous les crimes ont été exploités par la muse du boulevard'.[30] The striking depiction of slavery in *La Chasse aux Filles* would have appealed for the same reasons that all such scandalous themes appealed.

The role of Sabord would have had an additional attraction. He is a double-edged character, a dazzling yet disturbing Romantic anti-hero. He is not only a bandit and an outlaw capable of provoking feelings of revulsion in the audience, but also a powerful dissident and rebel who can use his freedom in admirable ways. Since he is a slave trader, he implicitly rebels against the old foe, Britain. It was the British who finally imposed the abolition of the slave trade on France in the Treaty of Paris in 1815, meaning that defeat and national humiliation became inextricably bound up in the French popular imagination with the British and with abolitionism.[31] By trading in slaves, Sabord implicitly defies the dictates of the victor. He mentions Britain explicitly, in fact, when he compares his slave market to British practices: 'Voyez, seigneurs, admirez! Ceci vous représente le beau sexe à l'enchère, comme cela se pratique en ces parages et quelquefois encore au sein de la Grande Bretagne'. Here, he gives credence to the widespread view that the perfidious British enforced abolition but continued the slave trade in clandestine fashion, that British motives were mercantile rather than humanitarian.[32]

The nationalist overtones of Sabord's actions and comments would have struck a chord with the working-class section of the audience at the Théâtre des Funambules. *La Chasse aux Filles* was not the first or only pantomime to cater for nationalistic tastes. In *Le Retour, ou La Fille du Vieux Chasseur*, staged the same year, the appearance and mannerisms of the actor playing the eponymous old hunter were deemed deeply suspect by the censor. The actor wore an old green uniform and took snuff in such a way as to provoke an immediate and vociferous response from the audience of 'Vive l'Empéreur!'. The Napoleonic overtones caused a disturbance in the theatre, leading to police intervention, the forced withdrawal of the pantomime, and a month's prison term combined with a 100 Franc fine for the actor playing the old hunter.[33] In contrast to the example above of the *Muette de Portici*, here it is mime, not words, which were subversive.

3. Only Deburau mimes

The freedom of expression enshrined the *Charte Constitutionelle* of August 1830 implicitly abolished the restrictions imposed on each theatre to perform specific genres. This led to pantomime becoming an even more mixed genre than it had been since March 1828. Instead of one speaking part in each mimed act or *tableau*, all the actors spoke or sang, except Deburau who continued to perform only in mime (see Plate 3).

PLATE 3 HERE. CAPTION: Deburau perhaps miming 'I speak' not long after the July Revolution freed the Théâtre des Funambules from the obligation to perform in mime.

Frontispiece from Jean-Baptiste Ambs-Dalès, *Petite Histoire d'un Grand Acteur; Histoire de Deburau* (Paris: Au Théâtre des Funambules, 1832). Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Remarkably, the mute Deburau was given the lead role (with the longest stage time) in one of the earliest extant synopses of the post-July Revolution period, *Robert le Pauvre Diable, où La Bouteille à l'Encre, Grande Bêtise en une Demi-Douzaine de Petits Actes* (1832).[34] How extraordinary that a non-speaking, non-singing actor should top the bill of a play dominated by speaking and singing roles, especially since the irrepressible contemporary vogue was for vaudeville song, not mime. As a consequence, the generic identity of this play is curiously hybrid, which is doubtless why it is not entitled 'pantomime', but 'grande bêtise'.

Robert le Pauvre Diable is a parody of the first French *grand opéra*, *Robert le Diable* (music by Meyerbeer, libretto by Scribe), first performed 21 November 1831, and still being performed six weeks later when the Théâtre des Funambules staged its parody. It is, in fact, an exceptional parody in that it was more explicit, sustained and mocking than any before at the Théâtre des Funambules.[35] In retrospect, parodying one of the most successful operas in the history of the Académie royale de musique required such an exceptional approach.

The opera itself is a tempered version of the medieval myth.[36] In the opera, Robert Duke of Normandy (father of William the Conqueror) is a young and irresponsible man who becomes the plaything of good and evil forces. He is in love with the daughter of the King of Sicily, Isabelle. Unknown to him, his father is a demon who is determined that Robert recognise him as his father, and so takes the form of a mysterious knight called Bertram. He convinces Robert to use magic to win Isabelle's heart rather than participate in the tournament at which she is the winner's prize. In the scene of the ballet of the nuns (famous in its own right in the history of ballet), Robert accepts the magic branch. He uses it to gain access to Isabelle, but she persuades him to rid himself of it. At a loss to know how to win her hand, Bertram offers him the magical powers if he signs an oath of filial devotion. He hesitates, the clock strikes midnight, and Bertram is drawn down to hell before he has managed to persuade Robert.

The parody is a burlesque version in which the courtly life of kings, princesses and knights is reduced to village life. In the opera, the demon Bertram takes the form of a mysterious knight, while in the parody he is a travelling medical quack, Latrame. The character Robert is not the awe-inspiring knight that he is in the opera; although he carries a knight's halberd, Deburau mostly plays him as a young man of no identifiable profession with a ready laugh and a jealous desire to marry Mirabelle (Isabelle in the opera). He is so generally put-upon by events that we understand by the end of the play why he is the 'pauvre Robert' of the title. In the opera, Robert is so incensed at the beginning of Act 1 that Raimbaut should sing an account of the legend of Robert, son of the devil, that he almost has him hanged. In the parody, the same story is a thinly veiled allegory depicting Robert as the bastard son of a wilful shepherdess who took a fancy to an errant knight, and the singer merely has a drum broken over his head. In the opera, Robert loses his armour and weapons at the end of Act 1 in a game of cards with the demon. In the parody, he loses his trousers, and instead of leaving the stage in defiance and in dignity, he runs away in his shirt tails, hotly pursued by the others in what seems like a typical *pantomime-arlequinade* chase. The ballet of the nuns in the opera is unflatteringly transposed into the ballet of the mummies in Act 4, scene 2 of the parody. So the parody continues, constantly finding burlesque equivalents of the original plot and characters. During the Restoration, the Théâtre des Funambules did not stage this kind of sustained and explicit parody of a work from the Paris Opéra. Parody, like song, is an expression of freedom which was repressed during the Restoration but exploited after the July Revolution.

In this play, Mime and visual theatre generally do not lose out to verbal techniques of parody. They are approximately equal in importance. There is another way, however, in which mime loses the significance it once had. In Restoration pantomime, there are no excuses or explanations for the fact that the dialogue is silent. In fact, actors show no consciousness at all of

the fact that they are miming rather than speaking, as if the two mediums are analogous. Hence, actors open their mouths to call one another, they hear each other calling, they clap a hand over their mouths or someone else's mouth to stop them speaking, but we never hear a word from them (except the lone speaking part after March 1828, of course).[37] They 'speak', but the spectator cannot hear, rather in the manner of twentieth-century silent film. Pantomime after July 1830 did not continue in this vein. In *Robert le Pauvre Diable*, the plot and dialogue provide intermittent explanations or excuses to explain Deburau's unique position. Rather than read out a letter, for example, Deburau passes it to another character to read, because he is illiterate (Act 1, scene 4).[38] There is a similar diegetic excuse for Robert's muteness in Act 6, scene 3 when he does not reply audibly to Malice, and she attributes his manner to ingratitude: 'ton cœur est muet'.

Another strategy intended for the same purpose of explaining Deburau-Pierrot's muteness is to draw attention to Robert as being different in many ways, not just by virtue of his muteness. It is because he has a particularly striking nose that Latram spots him in the midst of the crowd at the beginning of the play (Act 1, scene 2). He is then struck by other aspects of his appearance: 'Quel est ce blondin…, si joli…, si rougeaud…, si joufflu'. We do not know how Deburau was dressed for this part, but it is highly likely that he wore a black skullcap and white face makeup,[39] and he was renowned for his long, thin face (see Plate 4).

PLATE 4 HERE. CAPTION: Jules Porreau, engraved portrait of Deburau, between 1845 and 1866. Deburau was often portrayed with a thin face and features. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Latram's references to his blond hair and rosy, chubby cheeks, therefore, sound like mocking antithesis, a metatheatrical reference to aspects of Deburau's appearance for which he was most well-known. Thus Deburau's character stands out as visually different, which encourages the spectator to accept his different way of communicating – in mime. His distinctive, atypical character is, in fact, exploited when it causes the final climax of the plot. Latrame desperately asks Robert to swear an oath of filial devotion before the stroke of midnight, otherwise Latram will be drawn back down into the underworld. But Robert cannot speak to him, even when Latram pleads: 'Un mot de ta bouche sera mon arrêt. Parle, parle donc! Si tu ne parles pas, eh bien fais semblant de parler. On te comprendra tout de même'. Although this idea that mime is 'pretending to speak' is very different to the illusion created in Restoration pantomime that mime is a normal mode of communication, it is artfully integrated into the play and used to great theatrical and metatheatrical effect.

4. Conclusion

Each of these three sub-genres at the Théâtre des Funambules tells us something about its overall repertoire. The *pantomime-arlequinade La Magie Infernale* gives us an idea of the kind of lavish visual spectacle which first drew the attention of the middle classes and the intelligentsia to this theatre. Nevertheless, it does not take long when reading plot synopses for one to realise that the *pantomime-arlequinade* was by no means the only kind of pantomime, or even the dominant kind, except for a brief two-year period. The *pantomime-comique La Chasse aux Filles* is different, not only because it deploys one speaking actor, but because of the controversial themes it broaches. Its treatment of slavery and rebellion is unprecedented in the extant plot synopses of productions at this theatre. Although more study of the theatre is needed to understand this innovation, the permission to employ one speaking actor clearly contributed a great deal to the phenomenon.

Robert le Pauvre Diable reveals yet a different aspect to the theatre's repertoire. The fact that it is such an elaborate parody of a contemporary production at the Paris Opéra demonstrates how mixed the socio-economic profile of audience was. It would have been pointless for the theatre to stage this parody unless there had been a significant number of wealthy spectators who could afford a seat at the Opéra. Some modern critics acknowledge the mixed nature of this theatre's audience,[40] but many suppose that it was (in the period we have discussed, at least) a working-class theatre visited only by a small group of avant-garde Romantics such as Nodier, Gautier and Janin.[41] These modern critics have taken for granted the working class image of the Théâtre des Funambules that these Romantic writers created.[42]

The mixed nature of the audience in turn contributes to the debate concerning the relation between the 'popular' and 'elite' arts in French Romanticism. The underlying assumption of most accounts of Romanticism is that the popular arts, produced for a popular audience, had a negligible impact on the development of Romanticism. This assumption is not convincing when we take into account how mixed were audiences and repertoires. Popular culture is part of the Romantic movement.[43]

Robert le Pauvre Diable also helps understand the nature of the myth that grew up around Deburau. The tendency during the July Monarchy for critics to focus a great deal on Deburau's appearance, particularly his white face and costume, stems at least partly from his singular decision to continue to perform exclusively in mime when all his fellow actors at the Théâtre des Funambules took advantage of the new-found freedoms to play speaking roles (see Plate 5).

PLATE 5 HERE. CAPTION: Arsène Trouvé, portrait of Deburau, oil on porcelain, 1832, showing the white costume, white face make-up, and black skullcap he wore in his Pierrot role. Curtesy of the Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

This, in itself, would have made him stand out. But the way that *Robert le Pauvre Diable* is written, constantly drawing attention to Deburau's muteness, would have emphasised his uniqueness all the more. Thus, the high symbolic value attributed to him by the likes of Gautier, Janin and Banville[44] is rooted in stage practice and the way it was adapted to a mixed medium of mime, speech and song.

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[1] Robert F. Storey, *Pierrot: A Critical History of a Mask* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 94.
[2] Patrick Berthier, *Le Théâtre en France de 1791 à 1828: Le Sourd et la Muette* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014), p. 607.
[3] Louis Péricaud, *Le Théâtre des Funambules: Ses Mimes, ses Acteurs et ses Pantomimes depuis sa Fondation jusqu'à sa Démolition* (Paris: Léon Sapin, 1897), p. 497.
[4] Roberto Cuppone, *Il Mito della Commedia dell'Arte nell'Ottocento Francese* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1999), p. 74.
[5] A.N.F., Paris, F[21] 1154, MS, Préfet de Police, Letter to the Ministère de l'Intérieur, 8 December 1813.
[6] Berthier, *Le Théâtre en France,* p. 757; *Almanach des Spectacles pour l'An 1822* (Paris: J.-N. Barba, 1822), p. 238.
[7] A.N.F., Paris, F[21] 1154, MS, Préfet de Police, Letter to the Ministère de l'Intérieur, 8 March 1815.
[8] A.N.F., Paris, F[21] 1154, MS, Directeur des Belles-lettres, Sciences et Beaux-Arts, 'Rapport présenté à son Excellence le Ministre secrétaire d'État au Département de l'Intérieur', 20 March 1828.
[9] Odile Krakovitch, *Hugo Censuré: La Liberté au Théâtre au XIX siècle* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1985), p. 44; F.W.J. Hemmings, *Theatre and State in France, 1760-1905* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 168.
[10] This calculation (and others in this article) is made on the basis of extant plot synopses at the A.N.F., the library of the S.A.C.D., and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter B.N.F.), as well as reports in the contemporary press, and lists in Péricaud. Although not complete (because of unknown works, and especially because we know very little about restaged works), these sources give a strong indication of the repertoire.
[11] There were 14 new *pantomimes-arlequinades* performed in these two years. From 1813 to 1826, we know of only 7. From February 1828 to Deburau's death in 1846, we know of only 11.
[12] According to cast lists, Deburau played the Pierrot or Gilles roles as early as 1816, but it is only in 1825 that he is the sole actor to do so at the Théâtre des Funambules. Information to this effect from the extant plot synopses accords with Maurice Sand's view; Maurice Sand, *Masques et Bouffons (Comédie Italienne)*, 2 vols (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1860-1862), Vol. 1, p. 283.

[13] Charles Nodier, 'M. Deburau', *La Pandore*, 19 July 1828, p. 2. Storey, *Pierrot*, p. 97-112.
[14] David Mayer, *Harlequin in his Element: The English Pantomime, 1806-1836* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), Chapter 2.
[15] Anon., *La Magie Infernale, ou Les Épreuves d'Arlequin, Pantomime Arlequinade à Grand Spectacle Orné de Décors, Transformations, Changements à Vue etc.* Paris, MS, S.A.C.D. First performed before March 1828, probably in the 1820s.
[16] Nicolette Capozza, *Tutti i Lazzi della Commedia dell'Arte. Un Catalogo Ragionato del Patrimonio dei Comici* (Rome: Dino Audino, 2006), pp. 31-37.
[17] Péricaud, *Le Théâtre des Funambules,* p. 469; Théodore de Banville, 'Les Petits Théâtres de Paris', *Musée des Familles*, 13 (1845–46), 237-47, 237.
[18] Artur Pougin, *Dictionnaire Historique et Pittoresque du Théâtre et des Arts qui s'y Rattachent* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1885), p. 155-6.
[19] Mayer, *Harlequin in his Element,* p. 24.
[20] Edouard Plouvier, 'Jean-Gaspard le Bohémien', *La Sylphide: Littérature, Beaux-arts, Modes*, 4:2 (1846), 6-8, 7.
[21] Sand, *Masques et Bouffons*, 1, p. 287.
[22] T.T., *La Chasse aux Filles, Pantomime-Comique Mêlée de Paroles, ~~de Chants,~~ et de Danses en Six Tableaux,* Paris, MS, S.A.C.D. First performed 17 November 1829.
[23] The censor's signature on the front cover of the synopsis is not clear, but it is not the signature of any of the five censors publically named for the first time in *Almanach Royal pour l'An M DCCC XXIX* (Paris: A. Guyot et Scribe, 1829), p. 179.
[24] Compare Deburau's Pierrot 'blacking up' to the black-masked Harlequin character on the contemporary English stage who is sometimes the result of a magical transformation of a white actor blacked up to look like an African; see David Worrall, *Harlequin Empire: Race, Ethnicity and the Drama of the Popular Enlightenment* (Oxford: Routledge, 2016), p. 24.
[25] Hemmings, *Theatre and State in France*, p. 210.
[26] Krakovitch, *Hugo Censuré,* p. 31.
[27] Worrall, *Harlequin Empire*, p. 112.
[28] James Smith Allen, *Popular French Romanticism: Authors, Readers, and Books in the 19th Century* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981), p. 7-9.
[29] Even if the censors thought *La Muette de Portici* was sufficiently toned down for a Parisian audience, it was nevertheless caught up in the Belgian revolution of August 1830; see Paul Arblaster, *A History of the Low Countries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 178.
[30] 'Ambigu-Comique', *Le Figaro,* 27 June 1828, p. 2.
[31] Léon-François Hoffmann, *Le Nègre Romantique. Personnage Littéraire et Obsession Collective* (Paris: Les Éditions Payot, 1973), pp. 252-254.
[32] Lawrence C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 5.
[33] Péricaud, *Le Théâtre des Funambules,* p. 88.
[34] Anon., *Robert le Pauvre Diable, où La Bouteille à l'Encre, Grande Bêtise en une Demi-Douzaine de Petits Actes*, Paris, MS, S.A.C.D., first performed 7 January 1832.
[35] Compare, for example, *La Chasse aux filles*, discussed above, which is a light parody of Voltaire's tragedy *Zaïre*; or *Oreste*, a parody of Melly-Jeannin's play of the same name; see 'Variétés', *Le Miroir des Spectacles, des Lettres, des Mœurs et des Arts*, 6 May 1822*,* p. 4.
[36] Élisabeth Gaucher, *Robert le Diable: Histoire d'une Légende* (Paris: Champion, 2003).
[37] These examples are from *La Chaumière Isolée, ou Les Brigands des Cévennes,* Paris, MS, S.A.C.D., first performed 22 January 1824, but almost any other Restoration pantomime would show the same.
[38] It is possible that this sequence in the Funambules performance reflects the medieval myth more than the nineteenth-century opera. Deburau's mute, simple-minded and illiterate portrayal of Robert can be read as an understated rendering of the penance imposed on the mythical Robert to speak to no one and to appear mad.
[39] Edward Nye, 'Jean-Gaspard Deburau: Romantic Pierrot', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 30: 02 (2014), 107-119, 4.
[40] F.W.J. Hemmings, *The Theatre Industry in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 125.
[41] Isabelle Baugé, *Champfleury, Gautier, Nodier & Anonymes: Pantomimes* (Paris: Cicero Éditeur, 1995), p. 3-4.
[42] Edward Nye, 'The Romantic Myth of Jean-Gaspard Deburau', *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 44: 1–2 (2015), 46-64, 54-5.
[43] James Smith Allen, *Popular French Romanticism: Authors, Readers, and Books in the 19th Century* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981), p. 5.
[44] Nye, 'Jean-Gaspard Deburau', p. 116-7.