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Saint-Saëns, d'Indy, Debussy, and the Reconstruction of the Past in fin-de-siècle France
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ABSTRACT

Saint-Saëns, d’Indy, Debussy, and the Reconstruction of the Past in fin-de-siècle France

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My thesis explores the highly individual reconstruction of the past in the works of Camille Saint-Saëns, Vincent d’Indy, and Claude Debussy in the context of the larger retrospective impulse in fin-de-siècle France. Specifically, it investigates the appropriation and incorporation of the “old” into the “new,” which results not only from artistic need, but also from a compulsion to justify the present by way of the past. Chapter one shows Saint-Saëns’s and d’Indy’s different approaches to restoring early repertoire stemming from their divergent aesthetic views of the relationship between music and history. Chapter two illustrates Debussy’s attempt to forge a connection with Rameau and thereby defend his French identity not by imitating Rameau’s music but by constructing a French image of Rameau. The past was never far from the creative process, and it served as an important instrument in the definition and defense of their musical styles and artistic identities.
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Introduction

While the past cannot be changed, remembering it involves not only passive recognition but also active reconstruction. Which version of the past is remembered—and how it is narrated or explained—depends on a number of subjective choices. My thesis explores the highly individual reconstruction of the past in the works of Camille Saint-Saëns, Vincent d’Indy, and Claude Debussy in the context of the larger retrospective impulse in fin-de-siècle France.¹ To be sure, reconstruction of the past is not unique in late nineteenth-century France, as musicians throughout history have frequently used the past to defend artistic innovations. The Florentine Camerata’s creation of opera is strongly linked to their ideal of reviving Greek tragedy in the late

¹ In doing so it supplements the work of recent scholars examining the revival of early music in France. Jane Fulcher, for example, has studied the impact of politics on music, including political incentives for restoring early repertoire and composers’ reactions to the cultural and political instability of this period. See Jane F. Fulcher, French Cultural Politics and Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), and The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France, 1914–1940 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005). Jann Pasler has explored popular concerts in which early and modern repertoire were juxtaposed in order to create an intimate connection between the past and the present. See Jann Pasler, Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). Both Katharine Ellis and William Gibbons have surveyed the reception of early music: the former focuses on Rameau in Dijon, the latter gives an account of the restoration of the operas of Mozart, Gluck, and Rameau on the Parisian stage. See Katherine Ellis, “Rameau in Late Nineteenth-Century Dijon: Memorial, Festival, Fiasco” in French Music, Culture, and National Identity, 1870–1939, edited by Barbara L. Kelly (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008),197–214. See also William Gibbons, Building the Operatic Museum: Eighteenth-Century Opera in Fin-de-Siècle Paris (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2013). Annegret Fauser suggests that d’Indy tried to revive Monteverdi’s operas in Paris in order to reveal the “true expression” that musicians should follow; Barbara Kelly points out the significance of the French past as a whole in relation to Debussy’s nationalism. See Annegret Fauser, “Archéologue malgré lui: Vincent d’Indy et les usages de l’histoire,” in Vincent d’Indy et son temps (Hayen, Belgium: Mardaga, 2006), 123–133. See also Barbara L. Kelly, “Debussy and the Making of a musicien français: Pelléas, the Press, and World War I,” in Kelly, French Music, Culture, and National Identity, 58–76.
sixteenth century. Around the same time, the French literary group Pléiade sought to apply Classical metrical accentuation to modern French verse, which, with the help of musicians such as Claude le Jeune, gave birth to *Musique mesurée*. In the nineteenth century, retrospective impulses were increasingly associated with reclaiming national heritage: Mendelssohn used Lutheran chorales in his Reformation Symphony, acknowledging not only his religious but also German roots.² In an effort to revive the tradition of German lyric poetry, Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim collected medieval German poems into an anthology known as *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy’s Magic Horn) (1805–08), excerpts from which were set by composers including Gustav Mahler. Many of Richard Wagner’s operas refer to German Medieval legends and past musicians, such as the story of Tristan in *Tristan und Isolde* and Hans Sachs in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

In France, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that serious attempts to revive the past took place. Especially after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, restoring early repertoire often served to shape a distinctive and superior French identity.³ The monks of Solesmes, for example, revived and issued publications of Gregorian chants (notably in 1883, 1891, and 1896), making apparent the Latin origin of French music. Continuing this trend, the Chanteurs de Saint-Gervais, directed by Charles Bordes, performed music of the Gregorian and Palestrinian traditions beginning in 1892. This group paved the way for the foundation of the Schola Cantorum in 1894, whose primary goal was to restore past religious music. Editions and

² Lutheran chorales in the nineteenth century were largely associated with German identity. See James Garratt, “Mendelssohn’s Babel: Romanticism and the Poetics of Translation,” *Music & Letters* 80, no. 1 (February, 1999): 23–49.

³ The *Société Nationale de Musique*, founded in 1871 with the motto “Ars gallica,” was originally dedicated exclusively to the performances of contemporary French music. As d’Indy took over the directorship from Saint-Saëns in 1886, however, foreign works and early music, such as the music of Palestrina, Josquin, Bach, Rameau, Gluck, began to appear in *Société Nationale* programs.
performances of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French music—particularly that of Jean-Baptiste Lully, François Couperin, and Jean-Philippe Rameau—became popular, and by referencing the Grand Siècle sought to reclaim the power associated with earlier French culture. Not coincidentally, scholarship on early music began to flourish around 1890, perhaps as a response to the emerging discipline “Musikwissenschaft” in Germany: Henry Expert published a book on Renaissance composers; Alexandre Guilmant and André Pirro surveyed seventeenth- and eighteenth-century organists; Henry Quittard and Michel Brenet studied French Baroque music; Julien Tiersot shed light on the history of the French popular chanson. Around 1900, the Sorbonne and the Collège de France introduced music history courses, further contributing to this blossoming of music scholarship in France.4

Immersed in this lively early music revival movement in fin-de-siècle France, the three composers I have chosen—Saint-Saëns, d’Indy, and Debussy—not only actively participated in the creation of a musical past, planting the seed for neoclassicism after the Great War, but more importantly, they used the past to advance their personal aesthetic beliefs and musical styles. Although all three composers contributed to the reconstruction of the past, their approaches are drastically different: while Saint-Saëns advocated for historical authenticity, d'Indy promoted “renovation” to accord with current aesthetics; Debussy, indifferent toward reproducing music of the past, sought only to inherit the Frenchness associated with it. Based on studies of the three composers’ editorial, critical, and creative works, and drawing on journal articles and publications of their time, chapter one shows Saint-Saëns’s and d’Indy’s different approaches to restoring early repertoire stemming from their divergent aesthetic views of the relationship

between music and history. Chapter two illustrates Debussy’s attempt to forge a connection with Rameau and thereby defend his French identity not by imitating Rameau’s music but by constructing a French image of Rameau. For composers in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France, the past was never far from the creative process, and it served as an important instrument in the definition and defense of their musical styles and artistic identities.

5. Because I use two metaphors “archeologist” and “artistic” to compare and contrast Saint-Saëns’s and d’Indy’s artistic principles in restoring early music, I juxtapose these two composers in a single chapter rather than in two separate ones.
Chapter One. Archeologist and Artist: Saint-Saëns and d’Indy

An archeologist uncovers ancient objects and thereby preserves the historical record of a past civilization; an artist offers new creations in order to enrich present-day experiences. A modern musician who attempts to revive the music of the past takes on both roles: as an archeologist, he unearths and restores a musical artifact based on historical practices; as an artist, he creates an original work according to his own artistic judgment. This chapter explores this archeologist–artist dualism in Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) and Vincent d’Indy (1851–1931). Although both musicians fervently promoted early repertoire in late nineteenth-century France, their attitudes are strikingly different: whereas Saint-Saëns highlighted the dissimilarities between early and contemporary music in order to place historical authenticity above artistic criteria, d’Indy underscored the continuity and progress of music history by updating early music according to modern aesthetics. These two contrasting attitudes stem from their divergent views of music in relation to history: Saint-Saëns, being archeologically oriented, saw music as a fixed object in history; d’Indy, more inclined toward artistic license, regarded music as a living entity that progresses over time. In this chapter, I will show how Saint-Saëns and d’Indy followed their “archeologist” and “artist” principles in editing, respectively, Rameau’s Pièces de clavecin and Hippolyte et Aricie; performing and teaching early repertoire; and composing Baroque-inspired suites. While Saint-Saëns transcribed Rameau’s keyboard music accurately and observed strictly historical performance practices, d’Indy “improved” the orchestration of Rameau’s opera and linked music and musicians of the past and the present through a genealogical organization. Moreover, Saint-Saëns’ Suite resembles an eighteenth-century suite whereas d’Indy’s is more akin to a nineteenth-century composition, despite the title “dans le style ancien.”
Saint-Saëns’s 1895 Edition of Rameau’s *Pièces de Clavecin*

Saint-Saëns’s 1895 edition of Rameau’s *Pièces de clavecin* for Auguste Durand was widely acclaimed for its recognition of the importance not only of Rameau but also of the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in general.\(^1\) In 1904 one critic even praised the edition for having reestablished the true classical tradition.\(^2\) Although there were at least three editions of Rameau’s keyboard works in the nineteenth century that preceded Saint-Saëns’s—those of Méreaux, Szarvády, and Aristide and Louise Farrenc—his edition, marked by scrupulous attention to the original edition, is unique in his time, especially when compared to the Méreaux version.\(^3\) According to Katharine Ellis, Saint-Saëns was acquainted with Méreaux’s edition, and he mentioned it in the foreword to his own 1895 edition published by Durand. In 1864–1867, Amédée Méreaux published a collection of selected keyboard works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a response to his dissatisfaction with previous editions of harpsichord music, particularly that of Farrenc, which Méreaux saw as an unsuccessful attempt to popularize keyboard music of the past. Méreaux intended that his publication contribute to both the revival of the reputations of the great harpsichordists and the propagation of their works.

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2. As the critic phrased it, the edition was of particular significance given that bad taste and vulgarity stemming from Italian opera had degraded French music off and on for two centuries. See G. Samazeuilh, “Publications nouvelles: Jean-Philippe Rameau, Pièces de clavecin avec préface de M. C. Saint-Saëns; François Couperin, Pièces de clavecin transcrites par M. Diémer (deux recueils publiés par MM. Durand et fils, éditeurs),” *Revue musicale*, 4e année, no. 3 (February 1 1904): 90.

3. Rameau’s *Pièces de clavessin avec une méthode pour la mechanique des doigts* was first published in 1724, and his *Nouvelles suites de pièces de clavecin composées par M. Rameau avec des remarques sur les différents genres de musique* in 1727. No edition from the first half of the nineteenth century is known to me. Méreaux’s publication came in 1864–67, Farrenc’s in 1861–74, and Szarvády’s in 1863–64. See Ellis, “Saint-Saëns and Rameau’s Keyboard Music,” 267.
These are precisely the two goals that Saint-Saëns had for his edition for Durand: “First give homage in memory of one of the greatest composers that France had produced; then facilitate the understanding of these works and contribute to their popularization…” It is thus not surprising that both editions devote a large portion to the detailed biographies of the composers, highlighting the significance of Rameau and other composers before the nineteenth century. Yet, despite the shared function of Méreaux’s and Saint-Saëns’s editions, the two musicians had very different editorial approaches.

The main differences between these two editions—the transcription of the ornaments, indications of tempo, and expressive markings—can be illustrated by comparing Rameau’s Les Soupirs in both. This composition was first published as one of the harpsichord pieces in the 1724 collection. As was customary at the time, Rameau provided an ornament table in his collection, in which he demonstrated how to properly execute various signs of ornamentation (see Figure 1). Méreaux in his version avoided the need for such a table by eliminating all signs and writing out all the ornaments in the score itself (compare Examples 1a and 1b). Saint-Saëns, however, assumed that his readers would be familiar with the signs (he did not provide an ornament table), and he retained most of them (compare Examples 1a and 1c). Only occasionally would he write out the ornaments for practical reasons. For instance, Saint-Saëns realized the ornamentation in the last measure because the sign of “arpegement simple” was no longer in use in the nineteenth century (compare Examples 2a and 2b).

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4. “D’abord rendre hommage à la mémoire d’un des plus grands compositeurs que la France ait produits; ensuite faciliter la connaissance de ses ouvrages et contribuer à les populariser…” Jean-Philippe Rameau, Oeuvres complètes, publiées sous la Direction de C. Saint-Saëns. Tome I: Pièces de Clavecin (Paris: Durand, 1895), i. All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.
Figure 1. Rameau’s Ornament Table
Example 1a. Rameau, “Les Soupirs” mm. 1–3 in the 1724 edition

Example 1b. Rameau, “Les Soupirs” mm. 1–3 in Méreaux’s edition

Example 1c. Rameau, “Les Soupirs” mm. 1–3 in Saint-Saëns’s edition

If the degree to which the ornaments are written out depends on practical considerations, the tempo indication and expressive markings are matters of subjective interpretation. Saint-Saëns’s version, in which no tempo or dynamic indications are to be found, is similar in appearance to Rameau’s first edition (compare Examples 1a and 1c). Méreaux’s publication, by way of contrast, is loaded with slurs and dynamic markings. Moreover, the “tendrement” in Rameau’s edition is replaced with “andantino” in Méreaux’s rendition, making this composition more akin to the middle movement of a sonata than to a character piece in Rameau’s time (compare Examples 1a and 1b).

These differences reveal not only Méreaux’s and Saint-Saëns’s contrasting editorial methods, but also their divergent aesthetic views of early music. To be sure, Méreaux had a reason for supplying expressive markings and tempo indications: to enhance the practicality of execution and thereby popularize this repertory among modern pianists. Thus, Méreaux’s edition serves less to present Rameau’s music as an artifact of an earlier time than to transform it into modern repertoire.

Many of Saint-Saëns’s writings display his hostility toward superfluous additions to the original versions of early music. In the preface to the 1895 Durand edition, he stated that because “the present edition aimed above all at the faithful reproduction of the author’s thinking, one will not find the abundant interference of interpolations—indications of tempi, of nuances, of fingerings—of which so many editions of older works boast.” In his On the Execution of Music, and Principally of Ancient Music (1915), Saint-Saëns criticized the complete edition of Mozart’s works published by Breitkopf for these kinds of added details:

5. “La présente édition visant avant tout à reproduction fidèle de la pensée de l’auteur, on n’y trouvera pas ce luxe parasite d’interpolations, -- indications de mouvements, de nuances, de doigtés, -- dont s’enorgueillissent tant d’éditions d’œuvres anciennes.” Jean-Philippe Rameau, Tome I: Pièces de Clavecin, v.
instead of reproducing them faithfully, that house [Breitkopf] believed it was doing well to leave to the professors full liberty of treatment and change. Thus that admirable series of concertos for piano has been ornamented by Karl Reinecke with a series of joined notes, tied notes, legato, molto legato, and sempre legato which are the very opposite of what the composer intended.6

Again, in Les Idées de M. Vincent D’Indy (1919), Saint-Saëns questioned why d’Indy, whom he perceived to be highly attentive to the smallest details, used musical examples loaded with editorial nuance and dynamic markings.7

As these quotes make clear, Saint-Saëns’s editorial standard was to reproduce music faithfully, in accordance with the notated scores and historical practices. Specifically, in Rameau’s Les Soupirs, he had two reasons for avoiding extraneous performance indications: tempo and dynamic markings were not present in the first edition; and in Rameau’s time, tempo and dynamics had meanings different from those of the present time. Regarding the latter, Saint-Saëns remarked that in earlier times, “the distance between extreme tempos was very small. All the tempos must have been understood as what we now call Allegro moderato and Andante.”8

Moreover, he stated in the preface:

what we call ‘nuances’ were unknown in the world of the harpsichord. The large instruments were equipped with two keyboards and several registers, allowing a substantial wealth of effects. Thanks to these resources, one could go from soft to semi-loud and to loud, but this loudness had nothing comparable to the formidable explosions that come from the sides of our concert grand pianos; it was a purely relative loudness.9

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9. “Ce que nous appelons ‘nuances’ était inconnu dans le monde du Clavecin. Les grands instruments étaient munis de deux claviers et de plusieurs registres, permettant une assez grande richesse d’effets; grâce à ces ressources, on pouvait passer du doux au demi-fort et au fort, mais cette force n’avait rien de comparable aux explosions formidables qui s’échappent des flancs de nos grands pianos de concert; c’était une force purement relative.” Jean-Philippe Rameau, Tome I: Pièces de Clavecin, vi.
Unlike Méreaux, who thought early music malleable in the hands of a modern artist, Saint-Saëns treated early music as a museum piece: he believed that it would be inappropriate to extract music from history, for the historical environment in which music comes into existence is part of its identity. Saint-Saëns’s 1895 edition of Rameau’s keyboard works thus is more akin to an archeological rediscovery than to an artistic manipulation: the music is revered as an artifact, uncovered and presented to modern readers.

**Saint-Saëns’s Performances of Rameau’s Work**

As a performer, Saint-Saëns’s efforts to revive Rameau’s music were even greater than his efforts as an editor: he frequently performed Rameau’s works in concert, both in France and abroad. Unfortunately, reviews of Saint-Saëns’s performances are general in tone and not very informative. For example, regarding the concert organized by Charles Poisot in 1865 in which Saint-Saëns played several compositions from the *Pièces de clavecin*, the critic only noted that Saint-Saëns played the pieces well. Another critic wrote a similar review of Saint-Saëns’s performances of two pieces from the *Pièces de clavecin* and four from *Pièces de clavecin en concert* with two other musicians, Taffanel and Reucksel, at the 1876 Fêtes de Rameau (see Figure 2). In the same year, Saint-Saëns’s performance of Bach’s French Overture was said

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12. The critic remarked only that the latter was much appreciated, and the fourth piece *l’Indiscrète* was encored. See J. Reucksel, “Les Fêtes de Rameau: A M. le Directeur de la *Revue et Gazette musicale,*” *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 43e année, no. 34 (20 August 1876): 267.
to have shown “the most scrupulous exactitude in the translation of the ornaments.”\(^\text{13}\) While this review sheds light only on Saint-Saëns’s manner of playing Bach’s music, one may speculate that Saint-Saëns executed other early repertoire in a similar fashion.

In the absence of detailed eye-witness accounts, then, we must rely on Saint-Saëns’s own writings to infer his style of playing Rameau’s works. Two sources are particularly important: the chapter on Rameau in Saint-Saëns’s *Au courant de la vie* (1916), and his speech delivered at the “salon de la Pensée Française” in San Francisco, which Henry P. Bowie transcribed and published in 1915 as *On the Execution of Music, and Principally of Ancient Music*. In the former, Saint-Saëns commented that people had recently attempted to put Rameau’s music back on the

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stage, but the results were unexpected. This failure stemmed from the lack of understanding of
the performance practice of Rameau’s time. To prove his point, Saint-Saëns explained how
music was executed differently in the past. First, the instruments were tuned a tone lower in the
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than in the present time. Second, the haute-contre voice
type no longer existed. Third, contemporary musicians did not observe the practice of over-
dotting. Fourth, the orchestra of that time was arranged differently.\textsuperscript{14}

Saint-Saëns’s illustrations of the dissimilarities between early and contemporary music
also occupy a large portion of \textit{On the Execution of Music}. He criticized the perpetual \textit{legato}
playing and excessive pedaling in modern performances of early repertoire. Concerning
aesthetics of early music as a whole, he remarked that expression did not exist in the music of
Palestrina and earlier composers.\textsuperscript{15} This point echoes his distinction between form and sensation
in the preface to the Durand edition: “The music of the older times draws all its value from \textit{form},
while \textit{sensation}, which is sometimes all or almost all in modern music, is nothing or almost
nothing in older times.”\textsuperscript{16}

We may extrapolate from these writings that Saint-Saëns most likely respected historical
performance practices when he performed seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music, including
the works of Rameau. He probably observed ornamentation punctiliously, used the sustaining
pedal cautiously, and played the music with less \textit{legato}. In broader terms, Saint-Saëns
presumably emphasized form over expression, logic over sensation. It is undeniable that a
performance by its very nature is artistically oriented, yet Saint-Saëns’s historical considerations

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\textsuperscript{16} “la musique des époques anciennes tire toute sa valeur de la \textit{forme}, et que la \textit{sensation}, qui est
parfois tout ou presque tout dans la musique moderne, n’est rien ou presque rien dans l’ancienne.” Jean-
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in his performances should not be ignored. By incorporating performance practices of the past in his own interpretation of early repertoire, his performances have a pedagogical function. Despite the artistic license inherent in playing, the principle that underlay Saint-Saëns’s performances of early music is, not surprisingly, the same as the one governs his editorial approach—the archeological view of music.

**Saint-Saëns’s Suite for Piano, op. 90 (1891)**

Saint-Saëns’s historical considerations are also deeply resonant in his own compositions that contain eighteenth-century dance types.¹⁷ His Suite for Piano, op. 90, for example, has an explicit reference to the past in the cover image (see Figure 3). In the letter to his publisher

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17. Saint-Saëns’s Suite for cello and piano and Suite for orchestra include Baroque dances. These, unlike his Suite for piano, are early works written before the Franco-Prussian War.
Auguste Durand on 23 May 1891, Saint-Saëns requested the cover to be a picture portraying a marquise at the harpsichord in the time of Louis XV. The significance of this image lies in its association with the word “Suite”: Here, Saint-Saëns situated the suite as a musical genre in the early eighteenth century, acknowledging its aristocratic connotation and rococo style. Saint-Saëns’s concept of the suite, exemplified in this image, is carried over to his compositional process: He made his Suite similar to an early eighteenth-century suite in four respects. First, regarding the ordering of the movements of the Suite, Saint-Saëns wrote to Durand on 14 November 1891: “I send to you the rest of the Suite. The Menuet will be the second number, the Gavotte will be the third. It is traditional that the Gigue is the last piece.” The final layout of the Suite, as Saint-Saëns instructed, consists of a Prélude et fugue and the three above-mentioned dances in that order. The menuet-gavotte-gigue construction can be found in the French Suite No. 4 by Johann Sebastian Bach (we shall see later that references to Bach’s music are prominent in this Suite). Moreover, Saint-Saëns regarded the suite as a set of pieces in a single key (F major in this case) played in succession. He even questioned Durand if it was necessary to put the composer’s name and opus number in each of the movements: “I did not dare to erase them, but I find them anti-artistic. It does not look like a Suite, but detached pieces.”

Second, Saint-Saëns attempted to follow the normative forms found in eighteenth-century suites. Recalling his remark on form and sensation, which characterize early and modern music

20. “Je vous envoie le complément de la Suite. Le Menuet fera le numéro 2, la Gavotte le numéro 3. Il est de tradition que la Gigue soit le morceau final.” Quoted in Ratner, Camille Saint-Saëns, 43.
21. “Je n’ai osé les effacer, mais je trouve cela anti-artistique, cela n’a plus l’air d’une Suite, mais de morceaux détachés.” Ibid.
respectively, this Suite underscores emotional restraint rather than overt self-expression, and
architectonic balance rather than the organic growth that permeates many late nineteenth-century
compositions. The Gavotte, for example, is cast in a ternary form with a codetta. The second A
section (mm. 81–104) is almost an exact repetition of the first A (mm. 1–48), shortened only by a
few measures to omit the internal repetitions in the original A section. The phrase structure,
similar to that of the Menuet, is symmetrical and subdivided into groups of two or four (see
Example 3). The harmony, although audaciously chromatic compared to that of an eighteenth-
century Gavotte, is unambiguous at important structural moments, helping to clarify sectional
divisions. For instance, although the opening four measures feature a concentration of
dissonances, the end of the phrase in m. 8 rests on a root-position dominant chord (see Example
3).

Example 3. Saint-Saëns, Suite, op. 90 Gavotte mm.1–8

It is worth noting that this Gavotte is not without precedent in Saint-Saëns’s
compositional output. In the Septuor, op. 65 (1880), the last movement is titled Gavotte et Final.
Originally, Saint-Saëns called the Septuor a Suite. On the autograph of the full score, however,
the word “Suite” is crossed out and replaced with “Septuor” (Septet). The reason Saint-Saëns deemed it inappropriate to categorize this Septet as a Suite lies in the structure of the fourth movement—Gavotte et Final. It is true that this Gavotte (see Example 4) shares the ternary form, symmetrical phrase structure, and unequivocal harmonic design of the Gavotte in the Suite, op. 90. Yet, unlike the Gavotte in the Suite, which, apart from being played in succession to the other movements, is a self-contained piece, the Gavotte in the Septuor serves as an introductory passage that leads to the finale. Moreover, the theme of the finale is borrowed from the fugue of the first movement (compare Examples 5a and 5b). Such cyclicism distances the Septuor further from the suite that Saint-Saëns had in mind, given that a suite exemplifies the early eighteenth-century rather than the nineteenth-century aesthetics.

Example 4. Saint-Saëns, Septuor, op. 65 Gavotte et final mm. 1–8

22. This information is recorded in Ratner, *Camille Saint-Saëns*, 174–175.
Example 5a. Saint-Saëns, Septuor, op. 65 Gavotte et final mm. 101–105

Example 5b. Saint-Saëns, Septuor, op. 65 Préambule mm. 25–30
Third, Saint-Saëns modeled his Suite, not after the examples of Rameau or other French masters, but after those of J. S. Bach, believing that Bach’s music displays supreme elegance and extraordinary writing, while the music of Rameau is clumsy, uneven, and sometimes disconcerting. The first movement of Saint-Saëns’s Suite, Prélude et fugue, pays homage to Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier. The Menuet follows the menuet-trio-menuet arrangement of Bach’s French Suite No. 3. The most direct influence of Bach’s music can be found in the Gigue, which is strikingly similar to the Gigue in Bach’s French Suite No. 5. Not only are both pieces in binary form, but the treatments of the motive in each are similar: the first section of each starts with an arpeggiated motive in the right hand, while the second section opens with that motive in the left hand (compare Examples 6a and 6b, 6c and 6d).

Example 6a. Saint-Saëns, Suite, op. 90 Gigue mm. 1–5

Example 6b. Bach, French Suite No. 5 Gigue mm. 1–4

23. See Saint-Saëns, “Rameau,” 13. Although such claim may be surprising to modern readers, it was not uncommon in Saint-Saëns’s time to regard Bach as a god-like figure, whose music surpasses that of all other eighteenth-century composers, including French composers.
Fourth, Saint-Saëns intentionally omitted metronomic marks—inexitably included in nineteenth-century works—on the score, as he explained to Durand in the letter of 26 December 1891: “The tempos of the Suite seem to me quite elastic, I decided not to indicate them in metronomic marks. All the movements [are to be played] ad libitum.”

This statement recalls the comment Saint-Saëns made in the preface to the 1895 edition that it is characteristic of Rameau’s time that tempos were flexible and could be altered within a single piece. In regard to the manner of playing, Saint-Saëns indicated in the Gigue not “staccato” but “non legato,” which he regarded as the proper way to perform an eighteenth-century composition for keyboard. It is evident based on the above analysis that Saint-Saëns’s conception of the suite is

24. Quoted in Ratner, Camille Saint-Saëns, 43.
historically oriented: a suite is not just any set of pieces performed in sequence, but one that represents early eighteenth-century ideas of structural equilibrium and emotional restraint.

**D’Indy’s 1900 Edition of Rameau’s *Hippolyte et Aricie***

Although d’Indy, like Saint-Saëns, also contributed to popularizing Rameau’s music by editing his works, his edition of Rameau’s *Hippolyte et Aricie* shows a very different approach.27 Graham Sadler, based on his study of this edition, criticizes it as “a case of forgery...[it is] specially misleading in two respects: the orchestration has often been distorted and the part-writing ‘improved’.”28 It is true, as Sadler points out, that the orchestration in some parts of d’Indy’s edition does not correspond to that in the original renditions.29 Take, for example, the opening of Act V Scene 7. Here, Rameau had a two-part texture: one for the violins and flutes, the other for the basso continuo. D’Indy added an extra violin part and a viola part, creating a fuller texture and a more animated rhythm (compare Examples 7a, 7b, 7c, and 7d).30 Another instance can be found in Act II Scene 5. Whereas in the 1733 and 1742 renditions only one melody is written in an octave doubling, d’Indy created parts for the winds in order to enhance the sense of harmony and vary the timbre (compare Examples 8a, 8b, and 8c).

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29. In the preface to d’Indy’s edition, Charles Malherbe, the annotator, mentioned the engraved first (1733), engraved second (1742), and manuscript (1742) editions of Rameau’s opera. While the engraved first and engraved second editions are identical for the most part, the manuscript edition differs from these two in many places. D’Indy used all three of them in making his edition.

30. While in Francis Casadesus’s edition (1900), the inner voice is also added, in Charles Poisot’s edition (1881) only two parts are written as in the 1733 and 1742 editions.

Example 7b. Rameau, *Hippolyte et Aricie* Act V Scene 7 opening in the 1742 engraved edition

Example 7c. Rameau, *Hippolyte et Aricie* Act V Scene 7 opening in the 1742 manuscript edition

Example 7d. Rameau, *Hippolyte et Aricie* Act V Scene 7 opening in d’Indy’s edition (piano reduction omitted)
Example 8a. Rameau, *Hippolyte et Aricie* Act II Scene 5 opening in the 1733 edition

Example 8b. Rameau, *Hippolyte et Aricie* Act II Scene 5 opening in the 1742 engraved edition

Example 8c. Rameau, *Hippolyte et Aricie* Act II Scene 5 opening in d’Indy’s edition (piano reduction omitted)
In addition to “improving” the orchestration, d’Indy also omitted certain ornaments. A critic, after having seen the voice and piano reduction of the “air du rossignol” from d’Indy’s edition of Hippolyte published by Le Figaro (see Figure 4, also compare Examples 9a, 9b, 9c, and 9d), denounced this practice of d’Indy in a review in 1901:

Figure 4. Rameau, “Air du rossignol” in Le Figaro of 8 June 1901


Why were the small grace notes removed by the honorable editor in so many works of Rameau? These grace notes are an essential trait, a delicate touch of archaism and like a mark of authenticity in certain music of the ancien régime; they are comparable, because of their historical importance, to the beauty marks, curlpapers and powder that evoke the overrefined portraits of the grandes dames in the times past.31

Although he never responded directly to this criticism, d’Indy did not consider his edition “a case of forgery” but rather a faithful interpretation of Rameau’s music, as his preface to his 1883 edition of André Cardinal Destouches’s (1672–1749) *Les éléments* (1721) testifies. Here, d’Indy justified his role as *copiste-interprétateur* by quoting from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Dictionnaire de Musique* (1768):

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31. “Pourquoi les petites notes d’agrément ont-elles été supprimées par l’honorable éditeur dans un si grand nombre de pièces de Rameau? Ces notes d’agrément sont un trait essentiel de physionomie, une touche délicate d’archaïsme et comme une marque d’authenticité dans certaines musiques de l’ancien régime; elles sont comparables, pour leur importance historique, aux mouches, aux papillotes et à la poudre qui relèvent d’une pointe de préciosité les portraits des grandes dames de jadis.” See C. “L’Édition des oeuvres de Rameau et M. J. Durand” *Revue musicale*, 1re année, no. 6 (June 1901): 264–265. This statement, emphasizing historical authenticity and the importance of ornaments, recalls Saint-Saëns’s archeological approach to editing early music. Moreover, the historical references in this review bring to mind the cover image of Saint-Saëns’s *Suite*, op. 90: both the critic and Saint-Saëns placed music in the historical context and saw it as an object, being hardly different from “curlpaper,” “powder,” or a harpsichord made in Louis XV’s day.
The duty of the copyist in writing a score is to correct all the false notes that can be found in the original ... [One] sees here that it is not sufficient for a copyist to be a good harmonist and to know the composition well, but what is more necessary is to be experienced in the diverse styles, recognize an author by his style and know to distinguish what he has completed from what he did not complete. He must also have a kind of proper criticism to reproduce a passage by the comparison with another, to put a fort (loud) or a doux (soft) where the author had forgotten, to separate the phrases inappropriately connected, to reproduce even the omitted measures, etc.32

Based on Rousseau’s definition, d’Indy claimed himself a copiste-interprétateur, who not only realizes the figured bass and provides a correct harmony, but also discerns the author’s intentions and reproduces them accordingly.33 It is necessary to clarify that what d’Indy quoted from the Dictionnaire de Musique is not Rousseau’s complete definition of copiste. In fact, d’Indy intentionally omitted Rousseau’s comment on the faithfulness a copyist should have to the original score:

The perfection of the copyist is to render faithfully the Author’s ideas, good or bad: it is not the copyist’s business; because he is not Author or corrector, but Copyist. It is true that, if the Author accidently put a Note for another, he must correct it; but if the same author by ignorance made a mistake of Composition, he must leave it.34

D'Indy likely omitted that portion of Rousseau's definition for two reasons. First, d’Indy’s editorial approach, as noted, concentrates more on interpreting the author’s intention—whether by “improving” the orchestration or discarding “excessive” ornaments—than on transcribing

32 “Le devoir du copiste écrivant une partition est de corriger toutes les fausses notes qui peuvent se trouver dans son original... On voit par là qu’il ne suffit pas au copiste d’être bon harmoniste et de bien savoir la composition, mais qu’il doit, de plus, être exercé dans les divers styles, reconnaître un auteur par sa manière et savoir bien distinguer ce qu’il a fait et ce qu’il n’a pas fait. Il doit avoir, de plus, une sorte de critique propre à restituer un passage par la comparaison d’un autre, à mettre un fort ou un doux où il a été oublié, à détacher les phrases liées mal à propos, à restituer même des mesures omises, etc.” Vincent d'Indy, “Destouches et la Musique dramatique,” Renaissance musicale (19 May 1883), 153–154. See also Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Dictionnaire de Musique (Paris: Chez la veuve Duchesne, 1768), 146.
34. “La perfection de la sienne est de rendre fidèlement les idées de l’Auteur, bonnes ou mauvaises: ce n’est pas son affaire; car il n’est pas Auteur ni correcteur, mais Copiste. Il est bien vrai que, si l’Auteur a mis par mégarde une Note pour une autre, il doit la corriger; mais si ce meme Auteur a fait par ignorance une faute de Composition, il la doit laisser.” Rousseau, Dictionnaire de Musique, 146.
accurately the notes in the original. His term *copiste-interprétateur*, based on selected quotations from Rousseau’s *Dictionnaire*, thus justifies himself as someone who deciphers rather than merely records. It is true that d’Indy thought of himself as a faithful interpreter of Rameau’s music, yet this “faithfulness” comes less from the notated score than from d’Indy’s own artistic judgment: Rameau’s intention, according to d’Indy’s assessment, is not fully presented in the score; rather, it relies on d’Indy’s interpretation to be revealed completely. Thus, the “improved” orchestration and omission of certain ornaments are not signs of “unfaithfulness” but rather evidence of d’Indy’s “faithfulness” to Rameau’s intention, at least as he understood it.

The second part of the answer lies much deeper in d’Indy’s view of music and its relationship with history. As opposed to Saint-Saëns, who saw musical compositions as archeological objects, d’Indy regarded compositions—even historical ones—as living entities whose mode of existence is contingent on historical development. Although a piece of music may be abandoned for a certain time, when it reemerges, it is subject to (and improved by) current aesthetics. D’Indy thus did not unearth a dead object when he edited Rameau’s *Hippolyte*. Rather, he brought Rameau’s music from the corner of the stage to the center and clothed it in an up-to-date costume.

**D’Indy’s Teaching of Early Music**

D’Indy’s view of music as an evolutionary art is also evident in his teaching of early music. As director of the Schola Cantorum—an institution that promoted early music, especially the music of the Gregorian and Palestrinian traditions—d’Indy arranged numerous performances of early music and incorporated it into the curriculum.35 It is worth noting that while many

35. The Schola is not the first institution established in nineteenth-century France whose primary purpose was to revive the music of the past. In 1853, Louis Niedermeyer founded the École de musique religieuse et classique in which students learned music of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth
concerts were dedicated exclusively to the performances of early repertoire, some concerts juxtaposed old music with contemporary music, such as the one in December 1898 featuring Carissimi’s *Jephte* alongside the final scene from d’Indy’s *Fervaal*, and the one on 7 April 1916 including works of Rameau, Janequin, Berlioz, Franck, Debussy, and Chabrier. Similarly, the curriculum was designed to cover not only early music but also contemporary music. For example, the program for composers included studies of the music of Josquin, Corelli, Rameau, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Schumann, Berlioz, Brahms, Wagner, Grieg, Franck, Saint-Saëns, and Fauré. Not only was the music of the past linked to contemporary music in performances and classes at the Schola, but according to d’Indy, all pieces of music, or at least all “good” compositions, were connected through their shared expressive nature. Recalling the discussion of Saint-Saëns’s performances, whereas Saint-Saëns regarded form as the essential characteristic of the music of the past and expression as the dominant trait of contemporary music, d’Indy declared that early music was equally as passionate as modern music. He further criticized Saint-Saëns for not recognizing the expressive quality in the music of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which, according to d’Indy, was as full of emotion as Bach’s *Agnus Dei*, Beethoven’s

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36. Concerning the performances, a significant number of concerts were devoted to Bach’s music. Monteverdi’s *L’Orfeo* and *L’incoronazione di Poppea* received their premières in France on 25 February 1904 and 24 February 1905, respectively. Rameau’s operas were featured frequently—*Zoroastre* in 1903, *Castor et Pollux* in 1903 and 1904, *Hippolyte* in 1904, and *Dardanus* in 1907 and 1909. See a complete list of concerts with orchestra and choirs by la Schola in Vincent d’Indy, *La Schola Cantorum: son histoire depuis sa fondation jusqu’en 1925* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1927), 228–235.

opus 110 or the Adagio of the twelfth quartet, and the final scene of *Armide* or the death of Tristan.\textsuperscript{38}

The pedagogical purpose behind d’Indy’s attempt to connect old music and contemporary music may stem from his belief that early music could nourish contemporary musicians. He urged his students to

search only in the decorative art of the plain-chantists, the architectural art of the Palestrinian period, the expressive art of the great Italians of the seventeenth century. There, and only there will we be able to find melodic turns, rhythmic cadences, absolute new harmonic systems, if we know how to apply these nourishing juices to our modern spirit.\textsuperscript{39}

This idea that modern musicians can take inspiration from early music would make musical composition akin to archeological discovery and musicians to archeologists. Contrary to this assumption, however, what d’Indy really implied is that musical compositions are not fixed objects but rather artistic entities that transform from an old state of being to a new form of life.

This view of the relationship between early music and modern music can be inferred from his writings, especially those concerning composers and musical genres. Of composers, d’Indy saw ancient musicians not as unrelated individuals but as ancestors to modern musicians. For instance, d’Indy remarked that dramatic expression had passed down from Rameau, Grétry, and Gluck, to Wagner. Moreover, he saw Rameau’s and Destouches’s music as precursors of Wagner’ dramatic art. In d’Indy’s theory, however, not all composers merited association with this lineage—some musicians, such as Meyerbeer and Rossini, led the development of music

\textsuperscript{38} See d’Indy’s letter to Saint-Saëns on 10 April 1919, quoted in *Lettres de compositeurs à Camille Saint-Saëns* (Lyon: Symétrie, 2009), 310–314. 

\textsuperscript{39} “…n’allons pas la chercher autre part que dans l’art decorative des plain-chantistes, dans l’art architectural de l’époque palestrinienne, dans l’art expressif des grands Italiens du XVIIe siècle. C’est là, et là seulement que nous pourrons trouver des tours mélodiques, des cadences rythmiques, des appareils harmoniques véritablement neufs, si nous savons appliquer ces surs nourriciers à notre esprit moderne.” D’Indy, *Une École de Muïque*, 9.
astray. Yet, since the history of music is akin to “a spiral that always climbs and progresses,” good music eventually reclaims its place in the course of history. He perceived a similar ancestry in musical genres. In the second volume of his *Cours de composition musicale* (1909), d’Indy laid out the genealogy of musical genres in a chart (see Figure 5). It is clear here that no musical genre is isolated in history: in broader terms, it belongs to one of the two opposing traditions, symphonic or dramatic; in narrower terms, it evolves from and/or transforms into other musical genres. The suite, for example, is a descendent of the madrigal and is itself an

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42. D’Indy’s idea was not unique in his time. Indeed, Amédée Méreaux—whom we have seen in the discussion of the edition of Rameau’s *Pièces de clavecin*—maintained that the variety of expression in Rameau’s music was further developed through C. P. E. Bach, Clementi, Haydn, Mozart, Dussek, and Cramer. See Méreaux, ed., *Les Clavecinistes de 1637 à 1790*, 65.
ancestor of the sonata. In chapter two, d’Indy reemphasized the ancestral relationship between suite and sonata:

The special type of the rightfully called Suite has disappeared forever, we believe. But, like the always-renewed tradition, without ceasing to be itself the deceased Suite is still alive in her eldest daughter, the Sonata, [who became] in her turn the fertile mother of almost all the contemporary symphonic forms.43

D’Indy’s Suite dans le style ancien, op. 24 (1886)

As d’Indy noted, although an eighteenth-century suite is different from a nineteenth-century sonata, the two represent one continuum. Not surprisingly, he applied this view in his own composition of a suite. In 1886, d’Indy wrote the Suite in D dans le style ancien (in the ancient style) for a chamber group consisting of two flutes, trumpet, and string quartet.44 The title “dans le style ancien” indicates that d’Indy was conscious of returning to an older musical style, and yet, apart from its dance titles—Entrée, Sarabande, Menuet, and Ronde Française—d’Indy’s Suite, as opposed to Saint-Saëns’s, makes few references to the Baroque dance suite. Indeed, his departures from it are manifold. First, not only is the indication “animé” in the third movement rarely found in an eighteenth-century menuet, but the main metric characteristic of the dance—3/4 time—is also violated. Take, for example, the opening four measures of the movement (see


44. According to Romain Rolland, this instrumentation is associated with La Trompette, a leading chamber music society in Paris founded in 1860 by Émile Lemoine, a close friend of Saint-Saëns. A similar instrumentation can be found in Saint-Saëns’s Septuor (1880), which was written for trumpet, string quintet, and piano. Saint-Saëns dedicated his Septuor to Lemoine and this piece received its première at La Trompette. The trumpet player (M. Teste) who performed Saint-Saëns’s Septuor also played d’Indy’s Suite in 1887. See Rolland, Musiciens d’aujourd’hui, 257. See Émile Lemoine, “La Trompette: Histoire d’une société de musique de chambre,” Revue musicale, 3e année, no. 14 (15 October 1903): 575–579. See also J. –G. Ropartz. “Chronique des concerts,” Indépendance musicale et dramatique, 1ère année, no. 2 (15 March 1887): 57–58.
Example 10). While the trumpet articulates a regular 3/4 meter, the strings provide the rhythmic complication of hemiola in the first two measures. Although hemiola is not uncommon in eighteenth-century menuets, it usually occurs as cadential passages. To begin a piece with this kind of complexity—regular 3/4 meter and hemiola superimposed—is d’Indy’s own invention. It does not recall the past but rather foreshadows the neoclassical works in the early twentieth century, particular those of Francis Poulenc.

Example 10. D’Indy, Suite *dans le style ancien*, op. 24 Menuet mm. 1–4

Second, d’Indy made a great effort to link the sections of individual movements in this suite by motivic transformation, despite the double bar-lines that he employed to demarcate sections. For instance, in the second movement, labeled Entrée, the opening motive in the first violin in the A section (mm. 1–33) is transformed into the motive in the viola in the B section (mm. 34–85) (compare Examples 11a and 11b). Another example can be found in the Menuet. Here, the upward leap of a 4th that initiates the middle sections is derived from the opening motive (compare Examples 12a and 12b). Again, to render a continuous effect from one section
to another, d’Indy shortened the note value of the motive in the B section so that the return of the A section would seem to evolve out of the previous passage (see Example 12c).

Example 11a. D’Indy, Suite *dans le style ancien*, op. 24 Entrée m. 1 Violin I
Example 11b. D’Indy, Suite *dans le style ancien*, op. 24 Entrée m. 34 Viola

Example 12a. D’Indy, Suite *dans le style ancien*, op. 24 Menuet m. 1 Flutes and Trumpet
Example 12b. D’Indy, Suite *dans le style ancien*, op. 24 Menuet mm. 57–61 Flutes and Trumpet

Example 12c. D’Indy, Suite *dans le style ancien*, op. 24 Menuet mm. 121–128
Third, cyclicism, not a common technique in pre-nineteenth-century music, but an important unifying force that exemplifies the nineteenth-century penchant for structural unity, is highlighted in d’Indy’s Suite. The Prélude, being very concise and having no particular melodic interest, functions more as an introductory section to the Entrée than as a separate piece. Only at the end of the final movement is the Prelude’s significance fully shown, when its opening motive is transformed into the fast and energetic conclusion of the Suite (compare Examples 13a and 13b). By connecting the beginning of the work to its end, d’Indy underlined the evolutionary character of his Suite: the various movements do not merely follow one after the other; rather, the music progresses across them toward a culmination in the final movement.

Example 13a. D’Indy, Suite *dans le style ancien*, op. 24 Prélude mm. 1–2
As we saw, d’Indy remarked in the *Cours de composition musicale* “after Bach, the Suite form was completely abandoned,” and he did not see his own Suite as an exception. Indeed, the metric ambiguity, the motivic transformation, and the cyclicism link the Suite more closely with other compositions of the nineteenth century than with a Baroque suite. And yet, he called

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46. D’Indy did mention that the two Suites for piano by Alexis de Castillon, written around 1871, are similar to the old binary-form Suite. See Vincent d’Indy, *Cours de composition musicale*, vol. 2 (Paris: Durand, 1909): 151. The two Suites that d’Indy referred to are Castillon’s *Suite pour le piano* op. 5 (1868), which has five movements: Canon, Scherzo, Thème et variatons, Gavotte, and Marche, and his *Suite pour piano*, op. 10 (1872), which contains Ballade, Ronde, Adagietto, Fantaisie, and Saltarelle. Despite d’Indy’s reference, the movements are not written in binary form, nor are they in the same key. The character and the harmony resemble early nineteenth-century rather than pre-nineteenth-century music.
his composition a suite because he saw the juxtaposition of different pieces as an essential characteristic of that genre, and this juxtaposition is not unrelated to cyclicism:

…the principle of the *juxtaposition* of the airs, adopted little by little by the instrumental Suite, must have reacted profoundly on loads of other symphonic forms. Must it not indeed lead, after successive stages, to a *cycle* of different pieces dependent on one another [...] Foreseen by Beethoven, carried out by César Franck, the *cyclic* conception is at the root of all symphonic work of some scale: we will find the constant tradition in the Sonata, like in all the forms belong to the family of the accompanied Madrigal (Chamber Music, Symphony, etc.).47

According to d’Indy, cyclicism is not a nineteenth-century invention; rather, it was inherent in the Madrigal, adopted in the Suite, and carried out in the Sonata. Thus, evidence of cyclicism cannot be used as an argument against the appropriateness of designating a work such as d’Indy’s as a “suite,” for cyclicism is one of the essential characteristics of that genre (despite Saint-Saëns’s claim to the contrary).48 In a similar way, other “nineteenth-century features” in d’Indy’s Suite—metric displacement and motivic transformation—should be seen not as rivals to but as descendants of “eighteenth-century traits.” Even though d’Indy’s composition bears little resemblance to an early eighteenth-century suite, it is justifiable to call it a “suite” because its music is descended from the earlier genre.

From this perspective it is clear that the evolutionary view of music that governs d’Indy’s method of editing and teaching also underlies his approach to composing. Musical compositions, including those inspired by earlier models, were creations, not archeological discoveries. Unlike

47. “…le principe de la *juxtaposition* des airs, adopté peu à peu par la Suite instrumentale, devait réagir profondément sur une foule d’autres formes symphoniques. Ne devait-il pas aboutir en effet, après des étapes successives, au *cycle* de pièces différentes quoique dépendantes les unes des autres [...] Pressentie par Beethoven, réalisée par César Franck, la conception *cyclique* est à la base de toute œuvre symphonique de quelque envergure: nous en retrouverons la tradition constante dans la Sonate, comme dans toutes les formes appartenant à la famille du Madrigal accompagné (Musique de Chambre, Symphonie, etc.).” D’Indy, *Cours de composition musicale*, 118–119.
48. Recall Saint-Saëns’s decision to cross out the original title “Suite” because of the cyclicism in his Septour, op. 65.
Saint-Saëns, who thought being an artist naturally implies being an archeologist, d'Indy regarded art as having no association with archeology because it was not subject to the specific historical moment in which it was created. He is not an archeologist but an artist: someone who creates an ideal environment in which the music can progress by propagating “good” music, whether old or new.
Chapter Two. Inheriting Frenchness: Debussy and His Rameau

To a musically educated audience, the cover page of Debussy’s Cello Sonata published in 1915 may seem explicitly nationalistic and archaic: Debussy’s French identity is proclaimed by the inscription “Musicien Français” below his name, and the language and format of this page do not call to mind a typical early twentieth-century publication but rather an edition printed in the early eighteenth century, such as Jean-Philippe Rameau’s *Pièces de clavecin en concerts* (1741) (compare Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3). As Debussy pointed out, he had intentionally modeled the cover on original editions of works by François Couperin and Rameau.¹

Figure 1. Debussy, Cello Sonata (1915), title page (in an early eighteenth-century style)

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Figure 2. Debussy, *Children’s Corner* (1908), title page (in a more typical early twentieth-century style)

Figure 3. Rameau, *Pieces de clavecin en concert* (1741), title page (from the eighteenth century)
Given Debussy’s propensity to identify himself as a specifically French composer, the nationalistic inscription is not extraordinary. The novelty and significance of this cover page lie instead in his use of a Baroque-style title page to subtly reinforce his Frenchness. Indeed, Debussy and many of his contemporaries regarded seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France as not simply “the past,” but as an age that embodied true Frenchness. It is therefore no surprise that Debussy sought to forge a connection between himself and Rameau in order to portray his works as authentically French.

Although one might expect that he would base this connection on an imitation of Rameau’s style, Debussy chose another route. As a critic he may have promoted Rameau’s music enthusiastically, but as an editor he took no interest in highlighting what he regarded as French characteristics in his edition of Rameau’s *Les Fêtes de Polymnie*; as a composer, he was not compelled to emulate Rameau’s musical style in his own compositions that refer to Rameau and early eighteenth-century France, such as *Hommage à Rameau* and *Suite bergamasque*. Rather, the connection that Debussy forged with Rameau was based on their parallel historical positions as advocates for pure French music in the wake of Italian and German influences, such as Gluck in Rameau’s time and Wagner in Debussy’s.

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3. Debussy’s French identity as relating to his personal life and late nineteenth-century French politics has been studied thoroughly and is thus not discussed in this chapter. See Jane Fulcher, “Debussy’s Nationalism” in *French Cultural Politics and Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 170–194.

4. Although Jean-Baptiste Lully and François Couperin were also regarded as masters of French Baroque music, Lully’s Italian origin and Couperin’s fame in keyboard music rather than in operas compelled Debussy to seek connection with Rameau and not with these two composers. Also, Rameau’s works on music theory, which Louis Laloy discussed extensively in his book on Rameau, distinguished Rameau from all other composers and served to emphasize the importance of logic and reason in French, and not German, culture.
Since the Fêtes de Rameau in Dijon in 1876, music critics and scholars—even those who doubted the talent of Rameau—had identified him as an authentic French composer. Adolphe Jullien in 1877 claimed that the French Rameau surpassed the Italian Lully “not only in the colorful orchestration but also in the concise recitative and less pompous airs.”\(^5\) René de Récy declared Rameau France’s most celebrated representative, who defended French opera against Italian opera during the Querelle des bouffons.\(^6\) After having attended the Schola’s performance of Rameau’s La Guirlande in 1903, Constant Zakone maintained that “no one’s works can be compared to Rameau’s, neither in terms of the quality of emotion nor of the quality of music.” He then asked rhetorically: “Why do we so rarely have the opportunity to hear the master who reunites the best qualities of our race?”\(^7\)

Contributing to this promotion of Rameau’s music and his Frenchness, Debussy and his spokesman Louis Laloy not only advocated for more frequent performances of Rameau’s works but they also referred to Rameau as the unparalleled national composer whose authentic French tradition had been lost since his death.\(^8\) Juxtaposing this claim with Debussy’s assertion that his own style is purely French, it is not difficult to see why Debussy linked himself directly to Rameau, bypassing the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century in the process. By promulgating Rameau’s music and asserting the lineage between it

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7. “Aucune ne peut se comparer ni pour la qualité de l’émotion, ni pour la qualité de la musique, à l’œuvre de Rameau. Pourquoi nous est-il donné si rarement d’entendre un maître qui réunit en lui les meilleures qualités de notre race?” Constant Zakone, “J. -Ph. Rameau: au théâtre (Schola cantorum),” *Revue musicale*, 3e année, no. 7 (1 July 1903), 308.

8. Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, 323. Although Debussy professed admiration for François Couperin and almost dedicated the Préludes (1910, 1913) to him, Rameau remains the single composer to whom Debussy attributed the definitive French tradition.
and his own, Debussy seems to take on the role of a disciple of Rameau. As he testified:

“Rameau, whatever one may think, is one of the most assured foundations of music, and we can follow his way without fear...We should love him with the tender respect that we have for our ancestors....” Yet, upon closer examination, Debussy’s “discipleship” is not at all conventional: not only did Debussy rarely mention specific musical characteristics in Rameau’s music that influenced his own works, but he also showed little interest in Rameau in purely musical terms. Despite his claim to the contrary, Debussy did not intend to propagate Rameau’s Frenchness through editing and thus popularizing his music.

**Debussy’s edition of Rameau’s Les Fêtes de Polymnie (1908)**

The first publication of Debussy’s edition of Rameau’s opéra-ballet *Les Fêtes de Polymnie* was issued in 1908 as the thirteenth volume of the Durand *Oeuvres complètes*, to which Saint-Saëns and d’Indy had previously contributed. In the bibliographic commentary, the annotator Charles Malherbe listed five available documents, two of which—the manuscript (partly autographic) at the Bibliothèque de l’Opéra and that housed at the Bibliothèque Nationale, named Document A and B, respectively—were used as the main sources for this edition. Because these documents do not always agree and occasionally contain very different versions of the same passage of music, it was necessary for Debussy to choose between them for each of the many sections of the score. Anya Suschitzky, based on her study of this edition, claims that Debussy “seized on ambiguities in the source to derive a reading of the composer’s

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10. This is the only work of Rameau that Debussy edited and published.

style as a model for modern music” and presented Rameau as typically French, a composer who highlighted colorful orchestration and avoided Italianate vocal excess.\(^{12}\) Although such claims may seem plausible, it is evident that Debussy had little interest in defending the French tradition in Rameau’s opéra-ballet by manipulating the music: his choice of the sources depended more on the common editorial practices of the time than on his own personal preferences.

To support her thesis, Suschitzky gives four examples, which I will discuss here. In regard to the “air de chasseurs,” she argues that Debussy chose Document B over A because the former contains a colorful orchestration—the horn calls—that the latter lacks. An investigation of the sources, however, suggests that Debussy’s choice would have been a matter of convenience and practicality. Malherbe, in the commentary, noted that whereas Document B provides a single clear score, Document A presents two versions: one is crossed out in black ink, and the other, on a separate piece of paper, is not in Rameau’s hand but in that of a copyist.

Concerning the chorus “A nos travaux,” Suschitzky criticizes Debussy for enhancing the texture “by inventing woodwind parts to double the voices.”\(^{13}\) Again, further examination of the evidence suggests that this criticism is overstated. First, Debussy might have interpreted the “tous” (all) above the violin parts as an indication for all instruments to play rather than merely all strings (see Example 1). Second, doubling the voice parts with the woodwinds is not Debussy’s own invention; rather, it is consistent with the scholarship and editorial practice of French Baroque music in Debussy’s day. For example, \textit{La Revue Musicale} published two extracts from the piano and voice reduction of Rameau’s \textit{La Guirlande} in 1903, which is preceded by a short introduction:

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{13.} Ibid., 417.
\end{itemize}
The transcriptions provided here are based on two scores housed at the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra, one of which has annotations by Rameau. The orchestra includes strings in four parts, and a large number of flutes, oboes and bassoons. Sometimes the wind instruments converse with the string instruments; but usually the score does not have any indication of orchestration: the parts were doubled at will, by the wind instruments...


14. “Les transcriptions que nous donnons ici ont été faites d’après deux partitions conservées à la Bibliothèque de l’Opéra, dont l’une porte des annotations de la main de Rameau. L’orchestre comprend le quatuor à cordes, les flûtes, haubois et bassons, en assez grand nombre, Il arrive que les instruments à vent dialoguent avec les instruments à cordes; mais le plus souvent la partition ne porte aucune indication d’orchestre: les parties étaient doublees à volonté, par les instruments à vent....” “La Guirlande, ballet pastoral en un acte, J.-Ph. Rameau (1751),” *Revue musicale* (1 August 1903), 33.
Third, if Debussy doubles the voice parts with the winds on the basis of his own artistic judgment rather than editorial convention, as Suschitzky suggests, then it can only be used as a counterargument against her claim that Debussy “[created] a more diverse orchestration,” “enhancing what he considered to be one of the nation’s most desirable characteristics.”\textsuperscript{15} In fact, \textit{fin-de-siècle} French scholars often praised Rameau’s original orchestration, in which the winds do not double the voices or the strings but rather have independent parts, as Gustave Chouquet noted:

> Instead of being content with strings in five parts, or flutes or oboes or wind instruments doubling the strings, as in the established manner, [Rameau] assigned each instrument in the orchestra a distinctive part, which enriched and furthered the symphonic ensemble.\textsuperscript{16}

Suschitzky’s third example is the “ariette de Polymnie,” for which she argues that Debussy chose the version in Document B, which has less vocal embellishment and fewer Italian mimetic gestures, in order to show French restraint. Again, this may be an over-interpretation on Suschitzky’s part: Debussy had selected Document B as the basis for all of the music from the chorus “A nos travaux,” discussed above, to this arietta. Choosing Document B for this “arietta de Polymnie” thus may simply reflect his continued use of Document B. Moreover, Appendix I of Debussy’s edition contains the corresponding passages from Document A for every passage that Debussy employed from Document B. Therefore, Debussy did not obscure the versions that he chose not to use, but provided them to his readers for easy comparison. In her article, even Suschitzky did not cite examples from the original Documents A and B, but apparently based her

\textsuperscript{15} Suschitzky, “Debussy’s Rameau,” 417.
\textsuperscript{16} “...au lieu de se contenter du chœur à cinq parties des instruments à cordes, des concerts de flûtes ou de hautbois, et des grands chœurs où les instruments à vent doublaient les instruments à cordes, ainsi que cela était consacré par l’usage, il confie à chaque instrument de l’orchestre une partie distincte qui contribue à nourrir et à mouvementer l’ensemble symphonique.” Gustave Chouquet, 	extit{Histoire de la musique dramatique en France depuis ses origines jusqu’à nos jours} (Paris: Librairie Firmin Didot Frères, 1873), 130.
conclusions about their differences by comparing the main score of Debussy’s edition with its appendix.

The last example Suschitzky uses is the air “Des plaisirs.” She maintains that Debussy chose the version in Document A in this instance, because the music in Document B consists of an elaborate vocal line and a flute part imitating birdcalls, which Debussy, she surmises, regarded as excessively Italianate and thus avoided. Considering that in previous examples she criticizes Debussy for using Document B, her implication here that Document B would have been the more logical choice is surprising. Even if one disregards this contradiction, Debussy had a good reason for choosing Document A rather than B: this air appeared in Document B not within the main text but under “Supplément du troisième acte” (supplement of the third act), which might have led Debussy to consider it as a later addition, post-dating the first performance.

Debussy’s disinclination to incorporate his own reading of Rameau into this edition is due less to a respect for historical authenticity than to an indifference to editing Rameau’s music. In the correspondence with his publisher Jacques Durand, Debussy only mentioned this edition once, expressing his gratitude to Durand for sending it. It is even likely that instead of taking the editorial responsibility himself, Debussy entrusted this task to his student Francisco de Lacerda: on 22 January 1906 Debussy wrote to Lacerda concerning this edition: “Your manuscript is clear enough that we do not need to trouble you with rewriting...”; again on 3 September of the same year, he wrote “...Durand is pressuring me for Polymnie, I must therefore

ask you to bring or send it to me as soon as possible.” Despite the lack of further evidence to support this theory directly, Debussy’s apathy in working with Rameau’s music differs considerably from his enthusiastic attitude toward editing the piano works of Chopin. Not only did he request the original edition of Chopin’s Barcarolle from Durand, but he also carefully compared the various manuscripts of the same composition and complained about the difficulty of discerning which one is in Chopin’s own hand. Whether Debussy assigned the entire editorial work to his student or not, it is clear that he was not particularly interested in editing this opéra-ballet. Unlike Saint-Saëns and d’Indy, whose passion for Rameau's music was displayed in their enthusiastic approach to editing Rameau's works, Debussy’s passive participation as an editor of Polymnie contradicts his own significant efforts as a writer and critic to promote the French tradition of Rameau’s music.

*Suite bergamasque* (1890, rev. 1905) and *Hommage à Rameau* (1901–5)

Debussy was equally uninterested in imitating Rameau’s music in his own compositions, even in those that refer to eighteenth-century France by alluding to Baroque dance types—such as *Suite bergamasque*—or by including Rameau’s name in the title—*Hommage à Rameau* from *Images* I for piano. To begin with, he did not mention any particular piece of Rameau that served as a model for his compositions, nor did he point out specific musical resemblances between their works. Although Debussy had access to a variety of editions of Rameau’s music and the opportunity to hear it performed in concert, he intentionally avoided following Rameau’s

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18. “Votre manuscript est très suffisamment clair et il est bien inutile de vous donner la peine de le récrire...”; “...les Durand me réclament Polymnie d’une façon pressante, je suis donc obligé de vous demander de bien vouloir [me] l’apporter ou me le renvoyer le plus vite possible.” Debussy, *Correspondence*, 936 and 944.

example in purely musical terms. Instead, he chose to model works after those of his older contemporaries or his own previous compositions.

Three of Debussy’s early piano pieces contain at least one Baroque dance—*Petite suite* (1886–9), *Pour le piano* (1894–1901), and *Suite bergamasque*. Although these dances recall a distant past, and particularly the time of Rameau, they stem less from Debussy’s predilection for authentic seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music than from his attraction to the vogue of reviving Baroque dances in Parisian culture around 1890. It is no coincidence that in January 1888 the newspaper *Le Gaulois* published an album to which thirty-nine living French composers each contributed a bourrée, menuet, rigaudon, gavotte, gigue, or other Baroque dance (see Figure 4). Because of the market success and increasing demand of this album, *Le Gaulois* decided to reprint it in December of the same year (see Figure 5). In addition to following the
fashion indicated by works such as the *Gaulois* album, Debussy also found prototypes in his contemporaries’ works. For example, Scott Messing has pointed out the similarities between Saint-Saëns’s Menuet, op. 56 (1878) and Debussy’s Menuet from *Petite suite*. He has also suggested that Debussy probably based his Passepied from *Suite bergamasque* on that in Léo Delibes’s *Le roi s’amuse, six airs de danse dans le style ancien* (1882). This presumption is plausible, given the similar rhythms and articulations in specific left-hand passages in the two passepies (compare Examples 2a and 2b). Another piece that may also have served as a model is the Pavane from Saint-Saëns’s *Etienne Marcel* (1877–8), an opera from which Debussy transcribed seven airs and dances for two pianos in 1890. The eighth-note accompaniment in Saint-Saëns’s Pavane is no less similar to Debussy’s Passepied than Delibes’s (compare Examples 2a and 2c). It is significant that the four movements in *Suite bergamasque* were

21. Ibid., 41.
Example 2a. Debussy, *Suite bergamasque*, Passepied, mm. 1–7

Example 2b. Léo Delibes, *Le roi s’amuse, six airs de danse dans le style ancien*, Passepied, mm. 1–8

Example 2c. Saint-Saëns, *Etienne Marcel*, transcribed by Debussy, second piano, mm. 1–10
originally titled Prélude, Menuet, Promenade sentimentale, and Pavane in 1901. Not until 1905 did Debussy change the names of the third and fourth movements to Claire de Lune and Passepied, respectively.23 Despite the duple meter, Debussy retitled the Pavane as Passepied, a dance that is generally in 3/8 or 6/8, probably after having become acquainted with Delibes’s example.

By imitating nineteenth-century interpretations of Baroque dances, Debussy was able to evoke a past in *Suite bergamasque*, however unauthentic.24 The past in *Hommage à Rameau* is even less recognizable, despite the explicit reference to Rameau in the title, even though scholars have judged otherwise. Jane Fulcher, for example, has maintained that “the stately rhythm, the punctilious attention to sonority and color, the graceful and expressive melodic treatment, the texture” of *Hommage à Rameau* evoke “the eighteenth-century master’s style.”25 But these qualities alone cannot prove that Debussy intentionally evoked Rameau’s music. Rameau, unlike Destouches and Couperin, was not known for his “graceful and expressive melodic treatment,” at least not within Debussy’s circle. Louis Laloy, Debussy’s frequent spokesman, asserted:

> Melody, even in the works of Destouches and François Couperin, is modest and discrete. It often displays a rare delicacy and refrains from being explicit: a few notes and gestures are sufficient. All that is extreme is forbidden: it does not accelerate or retard excessively, nor does it have very wide leaps or very chromatic passages. Even when the melody is in the instruments, it recalls the French vocal style and shows priority of simplicity. Rameau is not afraid of anything—not of writing 32 notes in a single measure, or two or three semitones in succession, or a very strong clash.26

24. The title “bergamasque” may have been taken from the first poem in the collection *Fêtes galantes* (1869) by Paul Verlaine’s (1844–96): “Votre âme est un paysage choisi, Que vont charmants masques et bergamasques.”
26. “la mélodie, même chez Destouches, même chez François Couperin, est modeste et discrète; elle indique, souvent avec une délicatesse rare; elle se garde d’être explicite; quelques notes, quelques
Fulcher’s assertion aside, even if Debussy and Rameau shared certain musical qualities, Debussy did not imitate Rameau in order to make his music akin to the old master’s. Rather, he forged a connection with Rameau to assert the legitimacy—the Frenchness—of the musical style that he had established years before he began to identify with Rameau. This established style is found in Debussy’s Sarabande from Pour le piano published five years before he began to compose Hommage à Rameau. Debussy indicated on the score that Hommage à Rameau should be played “dans le style d’une sarabande mais sans rigueur” (in the style of a sarabande but without strictness). Marguerite Long, a pianist who studied with Debussy, observed that these two sarabandes are in the same style. Indeed, Debussy not only marked “lent et grave” (slow and solemn) for both pieces but also employed similar compositional techniques, which he frequently reused in later piano works. The list of similarities between these two works are extensive: sonorities that move in parallel motion (see Examples 3a and 3b); an occasional motive first in an octave doubling and then in a “harmonized” version (compare Examples 4a, 4b, 4c, and 4d); alternative “harmonizations” for the same melody (compare Example 5a, 5b, 5c, and 5d); and sometimes the same material juxtaposed in different tonal areas (compare Examples 6a and 6b, 6c and 6d).

27. Roy Howat made a similar observation in his article on Debussy for The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.
Example 3a. Debussy, *Pour le piano*, Sarabande, mm. 38–40

Example 3b. Debussy, *Hommage à Rameau*, mm. 44–45

Example 4a. Debussy, *Pour le piano*, Sarabande, mm. 5–6

Example 4b. Debussy, *Pour le piano*, Sarabande, mm. 46–47
Example 4c. Debussy, *Hommage à Rameau*, mm. 1–2

Example 4d. Debussy, *Hommage à Rameau*, mm. 26–27

Example 5a. Debussy, *Pour le piano*, Sarabande, mm. 1–2

Example 5b. Debussy, *Pour le piano*, Sarabande, mm. 42–43
Example 5c. Debussy, *Hommage à Rameau*, mm. 28–29

Example 5d. Debussy, *Hommage à Rameau*, mm. 59–60

Example 6a. Debussy, *Pour le piano*, Sarabande, mm. 56–58

Example 6b. Debussy, *Pour le piano*, Sarabande, mm. 60–62
Example 6c. Debussy, *Hommage à Rameau*, mm. 43–45

Example 6d. Debussy, *Hommage à Rameau*, mm. 48–50
While Debussy alluded to eighteenth-century France in both *Suite bergamasque* and *Hommage à Rameau*, neither of these represents the authentic past: the former was an imitation based on nineteenth-century reproductions, echoing the Baroque dance fashion of his time; the latter does not revert to the style of Rameau but uses Debussy’s own musical language. This disengagement with the historical past, according to Messing, was a result of Debussy’s “almost nonexistent access to editions and recitals of early music,” and he also claimed that it was not until after attending the Schola’s performance of Rameau’s *Hippolyte et Aricie* in 1903 that Debussy was introduced to early repertoire. In my view, however, numerous editions of Rameau’s keyboard works, airs and dances, and even entire operas became available during the second half of the nineteenth century, and performances of his works were not uncommon on the Parisian stage. As early as 1857, Adrien de la Fage reviewed a recent publication of Rameau’s *Pièces de clavecin en concert* by François Delsarte and Tellefsen. From 1855 to 1860, Delsarte successively published piano reduction scores of excerpts from *Platée, Acante et Céphise, Les Indes galantes, Les fêtes de Polymnie, Dardanus, Hippolyte et Aricie, La fée Urgèle, Les fêtes d’Hébé*, and *Castor et Pollux*. Adolphe Jullien wrote a favorable review of Charles Lecocq’s edition of *Castor et Pollux* in 1877. Three years later, Charles Poisot transcribed Rameau’s *Dardanus* in its entirety for piano and voice, the cover page of which explicitly indicates that he based this edition on the original ones of 1739 and 1744. Published in the 1890s and 1900s, Durand’s edition of Rameau’s *Oeuvres complètes* represents a milestone of the revival of

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Rameau’s music. Regarding performances, musicians such as Saint-Saëns eagerly promoted Rameau’s works in concerts. In 1875, the Société des concerts du Conservatoire performed fragments from *Hippolyte et Aricie*, despite a lukewarm reception. The next year Pastorale and Tambourin from *Les Fêtes d’Hébé* appeared at the Concert du Châtelet in an orchestrated version by Wekerlin. A critic remarked that these two pieces are “quite well-known in the piano version, especially the latter.” Because of the rising popularity of Rameau’s music, musical journals occasionally reproduced several dances from the operas and ballets, further contributing to the accessibility of his music. Music periodicals such as *La Chronique musicale* included the Sarabande from *Zoroastre* (see Figure 6), Forlane from *Les Sibarites*, and Passepied from *Castor et Pollux* (1874) (see Figure 7); and *La Revue musicale* republished the Air gracieux en Rondeau from *La Guirlande* (1903). These examples show that Rameau’s works were in fact accessible to musicians and the general public in fin-de-siècle France, and certainly to those who were interested in Rameau’s music. Debussy’s decision not to imitate Rameau’s music is therefore due more to a lack of interest than to a lack of knowledge. And even if his knowledge of Rameau’s music was limited, it was limited by choice rather than by difficulty in accessing the music.

33. Th. de Lajarte, “Les airs à danser de l’ancienne école française,” *La Chronique musicale* 5, no. 25 (1 July 1874), 42; and no. 27 (1 August, 1874), 50. See also “La Guirlande, ballet pastoral en un acte, J.-Ph. Rameau (1751),” *Revue musicale* (1 August 1903), 39–40.
Figure 6. Rameau, Zoroastre, Sarabande (piano reduction published in *La Chronique musicale*)
Figure 7. Rameau, *Castor et Pollux*, Passepied (piano reduction published in *La Chronique musicale*)
“Saviors” of French Music

Based on the above analysis of his edition of Polymnie and his two piano works, it is clear that Debussy did not intend to defend any French tradition in Rameau’s music or to imitate Rameau’s musical style in order to construct a connection with Rameau on stylistic grounds. Although some writers accepted that such a Debussy-Rameau stylistic connection existed, others questioned this association.34 Indeed, as early as 1909, a critic dismissed it as too far-fetched.35 Even earlier, in his lengthy review of Pelléas, d’Indy linked Debussy’s style not to Rameau’s, but to Monteverdi’s:

This work [Pelléas] of Claude Debussy seemed to me a reconstitution of the very modern art that the Florentine Academies created in the beginning of the seventeenth century. There are indeed, though perhaps the author had not done intentionally, a strict kinship between his way of noting the words and the “stile rappresentativo” of Caccini, Gagliano, and Monteverdi; I would even say, not as a poor compliment in my thinking, that it is the admirable author of Orfeo, Ariana and l’Incoronazione di Poppea that the composer of Pelléas resembles the most: the same system of expressive recitation supported by atmospheric harmony, to the point that one could apply to Debussy the maxim that Monteverdi wrote about Marenzio: “L’orazione padrona dell’armonia e non serva” (the words should be the master and not servant of the music); the same preoccupation of coloring the sentiments by a general hint in the instrumentation and not by the detail; the same audaciousness in harmonic language, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that the audaciousness of Monteverdi—in the eyes of art critics and writers of treatises, if they know it—is even more astonishing than that of the author of Nocturnes and La Damaioiselle élue.36

34. Lionel de la Laurencie, for example, argued that Debussy’s Pelléas recalls the principle of Rameau’s style, namely the affect is created through harmony and not through melody. See Lionel de la Laurencie, “Un moment musical: notes sur l’art de Claude Debussy,” Le Courrier Musical, 7e année, no. 6 (15 March 1904), 184.
36. “...l’oeuvre de Claude Debussy m’est apparue comme une reconstitution formelle très moderne de l’art que créèrent, au commencement du XVIIe siècle, les Académies florentines. Il y a, en effet, sans probablement que l’auteur y ait songé, une étroite parenté entre sa façon de noter les paroles du texte et le ‘stile rappresentativo’ des Caccini, des Gagliano, des Monteverde; je dirai même, et ce n’est point, dans ma pensée, un mince éloge, que c’est avec l’admirable chanter d’Orfeo, d’Ariana et l’Incoronazione di Poppea que le compositeur de Pelléas me semble avoir le plus de rapport. Même système de récitation expressive rehaussée par l’harmonie ambiante, à tel point qu’on pourrait appliquer à Debussy lui-même la maxime que Monteverdi émettait au sujet de Marenzio: ‘L’orazione padrona
Despite d’Indy’s effort to defend Pelléas against unfavorable reviews by forging a connection between Debussy’s and Monteverdi’s music, Debussy apparently did not take advantage of this connection but relied exclusively on Rameau to substantiate the Frenchness of his music.

It is no coincidence that Roland-Manuel, in his much later discussion of tradition in Debussy’s music, argued that Hommage à Rameau does not recall the musical style of Rameau but rather the genius of France, quoting Paul Valéry’s assertion that the tradition “is not to redo what others had done, but to find the spirit that had accomplished these great things and would have done something completely different in other times.”

This argument confirms my assertion that Debussy was disinclined to follow Rameau’s example literally. Indeed, the connection established between Debussy and Rameau is not one of imitation but of reincarnation: what unites the two composers is not so much similar styles as comparable positions in French music history. Not surprisingly, by 1908 Emile Vuillermoz called Debussy the “grandson of Rameau,” which suggests an innate likeness rather than an acquired resemblance.

This is not to say that there is no similarity between Debussy’s music and Rameau’s, but Debussy did not attempt to use such similarities (if indeed they exist) as the primary means to create his unique relationship with Rameau. Rather, this relationship is based

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on their shared identity as “saviors” who restore the purity of French music in the aftermath of Italian and German influences.\(^{39}\)

Debussy, like many other French musicians, was captivated by Wagner’s operas in his youth. Yet, after his pilgrimages to Bayreuth (1888–89), Debussy began to doubt Wagnerian aesthetics and soon became one of the most outspoken opponents of Wagner in France. He considered his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* as an attempt to be “post-Wagner” and not “following Wagner.”\(^{40}\) As the opera stirred controversy among French musicians, some critics harshly attacked Debussy’s musical style and aesthetics.\(^{41}\) It is no coincidence that shortly after the première of *Pelléas*, Debussy began to justify his style as authentically French. From about 1903, his bid to establish the legitimacy of his Frenchness went hand in hand with his advocacy for Rameau. Debussy and his devotees eagerly constructed an image of Rameau so that Rameau became a prototype of Debussy: just as Rameau defended French tradition against Italian and German music in the eighteenth century, so too does Debussy defend it against Wagnerian influences in the present.

In light of Debussy’s early fascination with and later hostility toward Wagner, Laloy interpreted Debussy’s *Pelléas* as a work that may seem Wagnerian but in fact differs dramatically from Wagner’s operas:

...*Pelléas* resembles Wagnerian dramas, but with very profound differences: it is truly a new style of symphonic drama that is born. One can recognize, throughout the opera, that a certain number of motives reappear from time to time to ensure unity. Yet to begin


\(^{40}\) See Debussy’s article “Pourquoi j’ai écrit *Pelléas*,” Debussy, *Monsieur Croche*, 63.

with, these motives do not indicate, as they did in Wagner’s works, a fixed object, a helmet or a ring, much less *fait accompli*, a curse or spell, not even a character to the exclusion of all others.... Here every theme applies only to a sentiment and does not return except for recalling that sentiment.  

Debussy approved of Laloy’s review and even regarded the author as the only one who understood *Pelléas*, apart from Debussy himself.  

In a similar way, Laloy in his monograph on Rameau depicted the composer as one who, despite his early imitations of Italian cantatas, may seem to be influenced by Italian style but has in fact fundamentally different aesthetics:

Yet there is, between the Italians and him, the great difference that their virtuosity is foreign to Rameau. If the melody is sometimes covered up with ornaments, it is not for the sake of being beautiful but for imitating laughter or the warbling of birds. If it has rapid-moving lines, it is not for asserting a victorious *coup d’archet*, it is for giving an idea of animation. And if it descends chromatically, it is not for adorning with a fine and concealed harmony, it is for lamenting the death of a hero. In Italian music, the melody only seeks to please, to amaze or to amuse; in Rameau’s music, it always has a meaning: it is an image, not a play.  

Debussy himself took this parallelism even further, suggesting a conflict not only between Rameau and the Italians, but also between Rameau and Gluck. For Debussy, while Rameau represents the true French tradition, Gluck had corrupted French music and led it
astray. He is even said to have shouted “long live Rameau! Down with Gluck!” on his way out of the performance of *La Guirlande* in 1903. This opposition occupies a significant place in Debussy’s writings, appearing not only in “An Open Letter to Monsieur le Chevalier C. W. Gluck” (1903) but also in all three articles that he dedicated entirely to the discussion of *Castor et Pollux* (1903), *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1908), and Rameau’s biography (1912), respectively.

It is important to note that Debussy’s conclusions about Rameau and Gluck do not reflect typical views of Rameau in fin-de-siècle France. Instead, they reflect Debussy’s desire to manipulate the image of Rameau and take it in a direction quite different from that prevailing for the past sixty years. In 1852, Adophe Adam published an essay on Rameau, in which he claimed that although Rameau was an inventive composer, his genius could not be compared to the well-known Italian and German composers in his time. Rather, Adam pointed, he should be compared to his French contemporaries: only from this perspective should Rameau be regarded as immensely superior. After the publication of Charles Poisot’s biography in 1864, Rameau was typically compared to Lully. This comparison had culminated in Alphonse Pellet’s book on opera in France, in which he overtly declared Rameau’s superiority to Lully. Gluck, on the contrary, was not put side by side with Rameau until later in the 1870s, and even then authors such as Jacques Hermann did not criticize Gluck’s influence, but acknowledged its importance.

for French music. Only in 1886 was Gluck’s German—and not French—identity exploited in René de Récy’s lengthy article on Rameau and the Encyclopédistes. Yet, this German identity did not carry negative connotations: A critic in 1903 praised both Rameau and Gluck as representatives of a glorious and productive period of opera, marked by a richer orchestration and a more intense manner of expression. As late as 1908, Henri Quittard argued that whereas Rameau’s dances surpass those of Gluck, the latter’s airs are of a higher rank than Rameau’s.

Debussy was probably the first to not only severely criticize Gluck’s style as “pompous” and “artificial,” but also to identify it as completely contrary to French tradition as defined by Rameau’s music. A year after Debussy’s first denouncement of Gluck’s music, Romain Rolland followed his lead and gave a lecture on the profound difference between Rameau’s and Gluck’s personality and art. Echoing Debussy’s claim, Charles Malherbe—the annotator of Polymnie—advanced a model in 1908 that established a rivalry not between the followers of Gluck and those of Piccinni as was conventional, but rather between the devotees of Gluck and those of Rameau:

One should declare to be Gluckiste or Ramiste and resume writing for or against the god of one’s choice. In this way, alive or dead, Rameau will take part in battles. Despite his name, which the poets see commonly as an amiable symbol and a token of peace, Rameau will never cease to fight and conquer: it is the law of his destiny. In the musical world, he sows the fight but reaps the laurels.

51. See the review of Eugène Hirschberg’s Les Encyclopédistes et l’Opéra français au XVIIIe siècle, published under “Publication nouvelles” Revue musicale, 3e année, no. 17 (1 December 1903), 680. See also Henri Quittard’s review of the performance of the fragments from Dardanus, published under “Exécutions et publications récentes,” Revue musicale, 8e année, no. 3 (1 February 1908), 78.
52. “Les concert,” Revue musicale, 4e année, no. 3 (1 February 1904), 97.
53. “Il faudra se déclarer Gluckiste ou Ramiste, et les flots d’encre recommenceront à couler pour ou contre le dieu de son choix. Ainsi, vivant ou mort, Rameau prendra part aux batailles. En dépit de son nom, où les poètes voient d’ordinaire un symbole aimable, et comme le gage de la paix, il n’aura jamais cessé de combattre et de vaincre; c’est la loi de son destin. Dans le champ musical, il sème la lutte, mais il récolte le laurier.” Charles Malherbe, “Le ‘Ramisme’,” Le Courrier musical (15 May 1908), 312.
Not satisfied with equating the Rameau-Gluck and Debussy-Wagner oppositions, Debussy went further and identified a direct connection between Gluck and Wagner:

We know the influence of Gluck on French music, the influence that could only have taken place because of the intervention of the Dauphine Marie-Antoinette (Austrian). It was similar in Wagner’s case, in which the first performance of *Tannhäuser* in Paris was due to the power of Mme de Metternich (Austrian).\(^{54}\)

Beyond Gluck’s and Wagner’s Austrian patrons, Debussy established a direct line between the two composers, asserting that Gluck “contains many Wagnerian formulas in their infancy.”\(^ {55}\) By making Gluck both the antagonist of Rameau and the prototype of Wagner, Debussy forged an anachronistic opposition between Rameau and Wagner.\(^ {56}\) Thus, it is not only through analogy with the situation between Rameau and the Italians in the eighteenth century, as Laloy suggested, that Debussy wages war against Wagnerian influences in the present. According to Debussy’s analysis, Rameau, though not physically present, actively participates in this French-German conflict, and Debussy, as an anti-Wagnerian, not only assumes the anti-foreign role of the reincarnated Rameau but also inherits the old composer’s authentic Frenchness.

\(^{54}\) “On sait l’influence de Gluck sur la musique française, influence qui ne put se manifester que grâce à l’intervention de la Dauphine Marie-Antoinette (Autrichenne) — aventure assez semblable à celle de Wagner, qui dut la représentation du *Tannhäuser* à Paris à la puissance de Mme de Metternich (Autrichienne).” Debussy, *Monsieur Croche*, 91.

\(^{55}\) “...contenez l’enfance des formules wagnériennes...” Ibid., 101.

\(^{56}\) Debussy’s claim is contrary to d’Indy’s. Recall in Chapter One that d’Indy advocated for a genealogy that links Rameau’s style to Wagner’s.
**Brief Conclusion**

For Debussy, the music of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France did not serve as an artistic inspiration. Instead, he used its nationalistic image to advance his French identity. For Saint-Saëns and d’Indy, however, this music laid the foundation for modern French music and thus deserved not only respect but also restoration. Saint-Saëns believed that early music, which was distinctively different from contemporary music, should be preserved with archeological precaution. D’Indy, who understood music to be evolutionary in nature, believed that early music could be adapted and improved in light of contemporary standards. Although the three composers had different reasons for and approaches to reviving early music, it is evident that they did not passively acknowledge the past but rather actively reconstructed it to serve their individual purposes.

Further studies on the revival of French Baroque music might include Baroque-inspired compositions contemporary with Saint-Saëns’s and d’Indy’s, such as Georges Enesco’s *Suite dans le style ancien* (1897). Maurice Ravel’s *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1914–17), which makes reference to François Couperin’s keyboard works, also deserves detailed examination. With the renewed interest in restoring early musical instruments and the growing popularity of musicians such as the harpsichordist Wanda Landowska, some composers in the following decade not only borrowed musical forms but also used reproductions of the instruments of seventeenth and eighteenth century to evoke the past: Francis Poulenc’s *Concert champêtre* (1927–28) is a fine example. The interest in Baroque music is not confined to the French soil: Composers such as Ottorino Respighi eagerly transcribed and orchestrated many Baroque pieces, such as his famous *Gli uccelli* (1927), for his Italian audience. As a participant in the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Paul Hindemith composed neo-Baroque works as a reaction against expressivity in post-Expressionist
These composers, not unlike Saint-Saëns, d’Indy, and Debussy, rather than leaving the music of the past to the past, embraced it as a vital part of their creative processes.
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