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COMMUNICATION

The following communication has been received from Michael D. Greenberg:

In my article “The Double-Bass Class at the Paris Conservatory, 1826–1832” (this Journal 26 [2000]: 83–140), I noted (p. 129) a gap in the records of the *Commission de Surveillance auprès de l’Opéra Français et du Conservatoire de Musique* corresponding to its deliberation of the appointment of a double-bass professor in the fall of 1832, following the deaths earlier that year first of Marie-Pierre Chenié and then of his successor François-Noël Prouteau, known as Lami (who signed his name thus, not “Lamy”). Although this lacuna persists, other documents have come to light which further clarify the appointment process.

In my article, the letters from Cherubini to the Commission (cited on pages 122–26 and 131) were quoted from a register in the Conservatory’s archives (AJ³⁷ 3, 5), into which they were copied before being sent. I have since discovered that the original letters were subsequently forwarded by the Commission to the Minister of Commerce and Public Works, along with its recommendations, and were filed in the individual folders of the teaching personnel held in the archives of the Ministry (F²¹). Thus, the original letters from Cherubini to the Commission concerning the appointment of Lami are to be found in the latter’s file, accompanied by a letter from the secretary of the Commission, Cavé, dated 24 May 1832;¹ and the original letters from Cherubini concerning the appointment of Louis-François Chatt, known as Chaft, are likewise to be found in his file, once again accompanied by a letter from Cavé.² This source thus provides further clarification of the chronology of the two appointments.

After Cherubini transmitted the minutes of the Teaching Committee to the Commission on 23 October 1832 (as noted on p. 131 of my article), the Commission in turn forwarded the documentation to the Minister on 6 November 1832. In its accompanying letter, the Commission explained that it had insisted on the convocation of the Teaching Committee because Cherubini had not followed “the normal procedure” for selecting the candidates, and called to the Minister’s attention that “the study of the double bass is truly lagging in France,” adding that

1. Paris, Archives Nationales, F²¹ 1297, file of Lamy [*sic*].

2. Paris, Archives Nationales, F²¹ 1302, file of Schaft [*sic*].

the Teaching Committee is of the view that it would indeed be very useful to send, if possible, a graduate of the Conservatory to England, to take lessons with the greatest double bassist of our time. Such is the importance of this instrument in the current state of music, that the Commission considers it its duty to call this proposal to your attention. It depends upon you, Sir, to decide if the budget situation would allow the necessary expenditure. However, before making any decision, it would be necessary to ask Mr. Cherubini to inquire whether Dragonetti, who is very old, could and would give lessons. . . .³

Thus, it appears that Cherubini failed to write Dragonetti not because he opposed the proposal, but rather because he never received the necessary authorization from the Minister to contact the bassist.

In addition to his duties as professor at the Conservatory and principal bass of both the *Opéra* and the *Société des concerts du Conservatoire*, Chaft was also principal bass of the *Musique de la Chambre* of Louis-Philippe from 1 August 1835 until its disbandment in 1848.⁴ In that role he appears in a painting by Adrien Dauzats (1804–1868) and Nicolas Gosse (1787–1878), entitled *Représentation de Richard Cœur de Lion devant la reine Victoria, au château d'Eu le 8 septembre 1843* (fig. 1).⁵ He appears to be playing the double bass (Paris, 1757) by François Gaviniès (1683–1772), with its King David figurehead scroll, which is listed in an 1833 inventory of the instruments of the *Conservatoire*.⁶ This instrument is currently housed in the permanent collection of the Musée de la

3. Ibid., letter from Cavé (Paris) to the Minister of Commerce and Public Works, 6 November 1832: *La Commission remarquant que, pour cette proposition, M. Cherubini n'avait pas suivi l'ordre régulier, l'a invité à convoquer le Comité d'Enseignement du Conservatoire. . . .*

Dans son procès-verbal ci-joint, vous lirez, Monsieur le Ministre, que l'étude de la contrebasse est réellement en arrière en France. . . . Examinant ensuite la troisième question posée par la Commission, le Comité d'Enseignement est d'avis qu'il serait, en effet, très utile d'envoyer, si faire se peut, un Elève-Lauréat du Conservatoire en Angleterre, pour y prendre des leçons du plus grand contrebassiste de l'époque. Telle est, dans l'état actuel de la Musique, l'importance de cet instrument, que la Commission croit devoir appeler votre attention sur cette proposition. C'est à vous de décider, Monsieur le Ministre, si la situation du budget permettrait de faire la dépense nécessaire. Toutefois, avant de s'y décider, il faudrait charger M. Cherubini de s'informer si Dragonetti, qui est fort âgé, pourrait et voudrait donner des leçons. . . .

4. Paris, Archives Nationales, O⁴ 59A, *Musique de la chambre*, 1832–1839, and O⁴ 59B, *Musique de la chambre*, 1840–1848.

5. Sables, Musée du château et des Trianons, MV 6115. The comic opera *Richard Cœur-de-lion* was composed by André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry and first performed in 1784.

6. Paris, Archives Nationales, AJ³⁷ 81, 10, no. 31: *Une Contrebasse garniture en cuivre avec tête & archet . . . 1757 . . . Gaviniès*. (The phrase *garniture en cuivre* presumably refers to the instrument's brass tuning gears.)



Figure 1. The double bassist Louis-François Chatt, known as Chafft, shown as a member of the royal *Musique de la Chambre*. Detail from Adrien Dauzats and Nicolas Gosse, *Représentation de Richard Cœur de Lion devant la reine Victoria, au château d'Eu, 8 septembre 1843*, oil on canvas. Versailles, Musée du château et des Trianons, MV 6115; photo © Réunion des Musées Nationaux.

Musique, Paris.⁷ As is still the case with most French orchestras, instruments were provided to the musicians of the *Chambre*, who were thus spared the expense of purchasing their own. For example, Chenié's estate inventory reveals that at the time of his death he possessed neither a

7. Paris, Musée de la Musique, E.979.8.1. A photograph of the carved head of King David appears on the cover of Paul Brun, *A New History of the Double Bass* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, France: Paul Brun Productions, 2000). Since being depicted in this painting the instrument has been significantly altered: a repair label reveals that it underwent "restoration and reshaping" (*restauration et recoupe*) in 1954, and a report by the luthier Pierre Jacquier, dated 5 February 1979 and kept at the museum's *Centre de Documentation*, states that "Currently this bass is in such a mutilated state that . . . its value as an organological document is greatly reduced. . . . One may say that not much remains of the original instrument" (*Actuellement, cette basse se présente dans un état de mutilation tel . . . que sa valeur de document organologique est très réduite. . . . De l'instrument d'origine, on peut dire qu'il ne reste pas grand' chose*).

double bass nor a bow, only a piano of painted wood by Van Casteen, appraised at thirty francs, and a quantity of sheet music appraised at twenty francs.⁸

Concerning Antonio Dall'Occa (mentioned in passing on p. 105 of my article), it appears that there were two double bassists of this name: Antonio Domenico (1763–1833) and his son Antonio (1818–1846).⁹ It was the former who performed at the *Galerie de Wenzel* in Paris in March 1822,¹⁰ and to whom Fétis must refer in his 1827 essay as being, along with Dragonetti, a partisan of the Italian bow.

Finally, my French colleagues have pointed out that the accepted spelling of the name of the *Directeur Général des Beaux-Arts* of Charles X is “Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld.”

8. Paris, Archives Nationales, Minutier Central, ét. XXXIV liasse 1015, 9 June 1832, “*Inventaire après le décès de M. Chenié*”: un piano en bois peint du nom de Van Casteen, prisé trente francs.... un lot de musique prisé vingt francs.

9. Klaus Schruff, “Ready for a Revolution,” *Double Bassist* 13 (Summer 2000): 55–59, at p. 57. Alfred Planyavsky appears to have conflated the dates of the two musicians (see his *Geschichte des Kontrabasses* [2nd ed., Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1984], 513).

10. *Leipziger Musikzeitung* 24/22 (29 May 1822): 366.