

## Music as an Ideological Weapon in the French Revolution

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## MUSIC AS AN IDEOLOGICAL WEAPON IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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Chantez, chantez, amusez-vous...  
Vous faites plus par vos chansons,  
Que d'autres avec leurs canons.

—from a song in *La Constitution  
française en chansons*.<sup>1</sup>

The recent publication of a multi-volumed history of France in songs shows that the French have always sung about politics, but never was there such an outpouring of political songs as during the Revolution — about three thousand in a decade.<sup>2</sup> The number mounted from over a hundred in 1789 to more than seven hundred in 1794. At the peak of the Terror revolutionary songs and hymns were produced at an average rate of two per day. Then after Thermidor the output fell off sharply, sinking to a mere twenty-five in 1800.<sup>3</sup> As the Revolution progressed the number of little revolutionary songbooks grew until there was a proliferation of them in 1793 and 1794, bearing such curious titles as *Le Chansonnier de la Montagne*, *Étrennes des républicains français*, *La Lyre républicaine*, *La Muse républicaine*, *Les Muses sans-culottides*, or *Le Petit sans-culotte*. Revolutionary songs and hymns appeared not only in these songbooks, but also in sheet music, newspapers, almanacs, and programs for various ceremonies.

A songbook of the year II such as *Le Chansonnier de la Montagne* reveals the variety of genre and theme in these revolutionary compositions. There were hymns to Liberty and Equality, to the Mountain, to the martyrs Marat and Lepelletier, to Frenchmen and other objects of devotion, plus victory odes, marching songs, patriotic couplets, and republican *rondes*. The couplets range in theme from Liberty trees to one sung by a priest who is marrying a young Grey nun. There is even a song in praise of the Maximum by Citizen Ladré to the tune "Qu'en voulez-vous dire":

<sup>1</sup> From a prefatory song in *La Constitution française en chansons. A l'usage des honnêtes gens*, Paris, 1792.

<sup>2</sup> P. Barbier and F. Vernillat, *Histoire de France par les chansons*, 8 vols., Paris 1956-1961. My statistics on revolutionary music are based on the invaluable catalogue by C. Pierre, *Les Hymnes et Chansons de la Révolution...* Paris, 1904.

<sup>3</sup> There were 116 songs and couplets in 1789; 261 in 1790; 308 in 1791; 325 in 1792; 590 in 1793; 701 in 1794; 137 in 1795; 126 in 1796; 147 in 1797; 77 in 1798; 90 in 1799; and 25 in 1800. The output of hymns followed a similar pattern although they totalled only 177 for the decade.

Braves Français, consolons-nous,  
 A juste prix nous allons boire,  
 Et sur les tigres et les loups  
 Nous remporterons la victoire,  
 Car la justice est *nobiscum*  
 Calotins, chantez *te deum*;  
 Moi, je chante le *maximum*  
 Que l'on voit en France;  
 J'en ris quand j'y pense:  
 De la loi c'est un beau *factum*  
 Que ce bienfaisant *maximum*.<sup>4</sup>

Leafing through other songbooks published at the peak of the Revolution one comes across pieces on such diverse subjects as *tutoiement*, the new calendar, the creation of a female army, marriage as a civic duty, the liberty of colonies, freedom for slaves, the iniquities of priests, the need for saltpetre, or the benefits of printing.

The output of songs and songbooks suggests that revolutionary music was fairly widely used and other evidence strengthens this impression. The *Chronique de Paris* reported in the spring of 1790 that songs in the spirit of the Revolution spread rapidly through the streets of the capital.<sup>5</sup> We read in a variety of sources of street singers on the quays and intersections seeking a few coins in return for topical songs. Revolutionary songs were used in theatres, political clubs, and sectional assemblies. Singing delegations interrupted the work of the Convention so often that Danton finally complained that it was the job of legislators to pass good laws in prose rather than to enter songs in the record book.<sup>6</sup> Many of these songs and hymns were a spontaneous expression of popular feeling, or were calculated to appeal to the market created by that feeling, but many were inspired by a conscious desire to propagate a message. "Il faut au peuple des chansons, des fêtes, des spectacles," Devienne wrote in the notes accompanying a song in 1790. "Quand on veut intéresser les gens dont l'imagination est vive, et dont les esprits ne sont point encore suffisamment éclairés, c'est à leur sens qu'il faut parler."<sup>7</sup>

Various factors encouraged belief in the potency of music as an ideological weapon. Belief in the malleability of human nature was wide-

<sup>4</sup> *Le Chansonnier de la Montagne, ou recueil de chansons vaudevilles, not-pourris et hymnes patriotiques* . . . 2<sup>e</sup> éd., Paris, an II. For "Le Maximum" see pp. 135-136. For examples of Revolutionary songs see vol. IV of Barbier and Vernillat, *op. cit.*; C. Pierre, *Musique des Fêtes et cérémonies de la Révolution française* . . . Paris, 1899, which includes words and music; L. Damade, *Histoire chantée de la première République 1789-1799* . . . Paris, 1892; C. Lhomme, *Les Chants nationaux de la France. Poètes et musiciens de la Révolution*, Paris, 1883; or T. Dumersan, *Chansons nationales et républicaines 1789 à 1848* . . . Paris, 1848.

<sup>5</sup> *Chronique de Paris*, le 18 mai 1790.

<sup>6</sup> *Le Moniteur universel*, 27 nivôse an II (16 janvier 1794), reporting the session of the previous day.

<sup>7</sup> J.-B. (Dom) Devienne, *Le Bonheur de France* . . . Paris, 1790.

spread in eighteenth-century France and, in contrast to our own day, was a basis for optimism. Locke's notion that men were born with a blank slate led many to assume that it would be relatively easy to improve men by exposing them to desirable influences. Moreover, since men were attracted to what was pleasant and repelled by what was unpleasant, they could be conditioned, as we would say, to good behaviour by constantly associating virtue with pleasant sensations. Long before the Revolution the article "Esthétique" in one of the supplementary volumes of the *Encyclopédie* had even proposed a new science, not unlike what we would call motivation research, to determine how various sensations aroused pleasure or pain in order to apply this knowledge to extract the greatest utility from the various arts.<sup>8</sup> Like many of the *philosophes* of the Old Régime, the Revolutionaries believed that music was one powerful medium which could be used to convey lessons in a pleasant guise.

Confidence that music could serve as a mass educational weapon was further encouraged by historical examples. The Hebrews, the Greeks, and the Romans were commonly credited with employing melodious sounds to inculcate religious beliefs or civic duties. "Chez les anciens la poésie était législatrice," wrote Lebrun in the preface to his *Odes républicaines*. "Solon écrivait ses lois en vers pour les mieux graver dans la mémoire des peuples."<sup>9</sup> Above all there was the more recent use of music by the Church, an example which became all the more compelling as the Revolution itself turned into a pseudo-religious movement with liturgical trappings. As advanced revolutionaries adopted patriotic prayers, political commandments, civic altars, purification rites, communal feasts, processions complete with images of martyrs, and even consecrated burial grounds for their faithful, it was natural for them to think also of using hymns, chants, and canticles in the service of the new faith.

Music had certain inherent advantages over other available media as an educational instrument. Printed propaganda had serious limitations in a society where a high proportion of the population was illiterate. Revolutionary plays could reach only that fraction of the population with access to theatres located in larger urban centres. Sculpture was very expensive and often required materials such as bronze which were scarce in wartime. Large historical paintings took considerable time to create, so long in fact that some painters found it difficult to keep up with the rapidly changing revolutionary credo. Engravings were easier to produce, but even they involved enough expense to place them beyond the easy reach of the lower classes. But music could be turned out quickly and could reach the illiterate or semi-literate masses.

<sup>8</sup> "Esthétique," *Encyclopédie*, 3<sup>e</sup> éd., 36 vols., Genève, 1778-1779, vol. XIII, p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> P.-D. E. Le Brun, *Odes républicaines, au peuple français, composées en brumaire l'an II<sup>e</sup>... précédées de l'ode patriotique sur l'événement de l'année 1792*... Paris, an III, p. 3.

A mass audience was possible because the song-writers of the Revolution employed a technique familiar to their predecessors of the Old Régime, namely utilization of well-known tunes, either traditional airs going back as far perhaps as the fifteenth century or more recent melodies popularized by the theatres. The union of new words to familiar music was sometimes a marriage of convenience with unhappy results, but the technique promised rapid diffusion of the authors' work. Even when their songs were accompanied by new music authors generally also indicated a popular tune to which the words could be sung. Some tunes were used repeatedly and we even encounter patriotic hymns set to the melodies of vulgar or amorous songs. The music for Boy's "Veillons au salut de l'Empire", for example, came from a gallant serenade in the comic-opera *Renard d'As* staged back in 1787. Familiar tunes could thus be made a ready vehicle for a new ideology. This explains why only about five percent of the songs of the Revolution were set to new music.

Music could be used to assist the revolutionary cause in a variety of ways. It was of course essential for the vast festivals by which leaders hoped to arouse popular enthusiasm for the new institutions. "Point de République sans fêtes nationales, point de fêtes nationales sans musique," asserted the *Journal de Paris* in November, 1793, while arguing in favour of creation of an Institut national de musique to train republican musicians. The newspaper observed that since national festivals could only be staged in the open air where all the sovereign people could participate, and since string instruments lacked the volume necessary to carry over a large area, wind instruments were greatly to be preferred. The paper commended the musicians of the National Guard, who were trying to form an Institute, for reviving such wind instruments as the *tuba curva* employed by the classical Greeks or the *buccinus* used by the ancient Hebrews. The article also expressed the hope that the musicians would help to perfect a bass bugle that had been created recently.<sup>10</sup> Powerful and stirring music was needed to accompany the mass singing which was to be a feature of revolutionary festivals in their fully developed form.

Music could contribute to other activities by which citizens would be simultaneously entertained and educated. The theatres produced a considerable number of patriotic vaudevilles, revolutionary operettas, and other musical productions with an ideological message. Revolutionary songs were composed for such spectacles as Radet's *Fête de l'Égalité*, d'Antilly's *Le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau*, Fabre d'Olivet's *Toulon soumis*, or Maréchal's *La Rosière républicaine*. There were also musical dramas for young people to enact at home. Mercier de Compiègne published *Les Concerts républicains* containing a series of little plays, part prose

<sup>10</sup> *Journal de Paris*, No. 325, 1<sup>er</sup> frimaire, an II.

and part song, plus a selection of hymns, odes and other musical selections. Mercier said that his collection was designed to prepare republican youths for their high destiny "... par des chants héroïques et des leçons de vertu dégagées de tout ce que l'instruction avait de sec et de rebutant dans les siècles de l'erreur."<sup>11</sup> Even partying was to have an ideological function.

Men had always marched to battle to the beat of martial music, but for the French revolutionaries the potential value of this medium was all the greater because they were attempting to create a citizen army inspired by both patriotism and a new faith. "Tout le monde connaît les effets de la musique et sa puissance sur les esprits et avec quelle force elle agit sur les caractères les plus faibles. Il faut donc une musique militaire," argued the *Journal de Paris*.<sup>12</sup> Thus the Institut national de musique was established in November, 1793, not only to turn out musicians and music for festivals, but also to supply the French armies. Some of the little songbooks produced at the peak of the Revolution were designed specifically for soldiers and many of the others contained at least some martial songs.<sup>13</sup> The editors of one collection expressed the hope that it would become the psalter of the soldier.<sup>14</sup>

Much was also expected of indoctrination through music in the schools. Some of the educational reformers of the Old Régime had already proposed the use of music to inculcate social morality, civic virtue, and patriotic zeal among school-children.<sup>15</sup> It was precisely this idea which inspired Thomas Rousseau, the most prolific song-writer of the Revolution, to produce a collection entitled *Morale élémentaire* designed especially for school-children. "Persuadé, comme je le suis, que c'est par des chants qu'il faut inoculer, en quelque sorte, dans l'âme de vos enfants les principes sacrés de la morale et de la vertu," he wrote in his introduction, "je désire que tous les matins, à l'ouverture de chaque classe, on fasse répéter en chœur, à tous les étudiants, quelques-uns de ces hymnes."<sup>16</sup> The collection of heroic deeds published in year

<sup>11</sup> [C.-F.-X. Mercier de Compiègne (ed.)] *Les Concerts républicains, ou Choix lyrique et sentimental...* Paris, an III.

<sup>12</sup> *Journal de Paris, loc. cit.* See also the little essay "Des Chansons guerrières chez les anciens" which introduced *Le Chansonnier français-républicain, ou Recueil de chansons, d'odes, de cantates...* Paris, s.d.

<sup>13</sup> For examples of songbooks designed for soldiers see T. Rousseau, *L'Ame du peuple et du soldat. Chants républicains.* Paris, s.d., or P.-J.-B. Nougaret, *Chansons de guerre pour les soldats français, au moment de combattre les ennemis de la liberté...* Paris an II. Others, like F. N. Parent, *Recueil de chants philosophiques, critiques et moraux...* Paris, an VII, simply included a section of military songs.

<sup>14</sup> "Avertissement" in *Le Chansonnier de la Montagne...*

<sup>15</sup> For example J.-J. Garnier, *De l'éducation civile,* Paris, 1765, pp. 6-7; l'abbé G.-F. Coyer, *Plan d'éducation publique,* Paris 1770, pp. 222-223; l'abbé Le More, *Principes d'institution...* Paris, 1774, pp. 265-266.

<sup>16</sup> T. Rousseau, *Morale élémentaire à l'usage des écoles françaises...* 5<sup>e</sup> éd., Paris, an VI, pp. 15-16.

II by the government in order to inspire youth also contained revolutionary songs.<sup>17</sup> So too did many of the little civic manuals and revolutionary catechisms published for school-children at the height of the Revolution. One writer even put the Declaration of the Rights of Man into verse, evidently to be sung, so that young people could memorize it more easily.<sup>18</sup> And the decree passed by the Convention on 27 brumaire year III required that children be taught "chants de triomphe" as part of republican primary education.<sup>19</sup>

But most revolutionaries hoped that their music would not be limited to special uses in festivals, theatres, the army, or the schools. They hoped that it would pervade everyday life. An engraving in one of the songbooks of the year II shows the Republic, wearing a Phrygian bonnet, disarming Cupid to whom she says:

Laisse ta flèche, et sur les airs connus  
Apprends ma morale chérie  
Ne sois plus le fils de Vénus  
Deviens l'amour de la Patrie

Love was apparently to yield to more utilitarian themes in the songs of the people. Piis, the author of this songbook, declared that his songs were aimed at propagation of a pure civism and expressed the hope that, conveyed by familiar tunes, they would spread through the capital and out into rural communes.<sup>20</sup> The editor of another collection urged his audience to sing the new gospel everywhere at all hours "... quand l'étoile du soir t'indique l'heure de repos, dans tes foyers, aux champs, au travail, à table, la nuit, le jour, par-tout chante, célèbre le triomphe de l'homme libre; retrace-le à ta famille naissante, et que ses premiers accents seraient un hommage solennel à ta liberté."<sup>21</sup>

Music could of course convey a counter-revolutionary message as well. Critics of the Revolution produced at least forty hostile songs in 1790 alone. In fact no sooner had "Ça ira" emerged as a popular revolutionary refrain during preparations for the great festival of Federation in 1790 than an aristocratic version appeared:

<sup>17</sup> L. Bourdon (éd.), *Recueil des actions héroïques et civiques présenté à la Convention nationale au nom de son Comité d'instruction publique*... 5 nos. [No. 5 par A.-C. Thibaudeau], Paris, an II.

<sup>18</sup> E. Mentelle, *Les Droits de l'homme et du citoyen, mis en vers français, pour la plus grande facilité des jeunes gens qui les apprennent de mémoire*... Paris, an II. One can assume he intended that these verses could be sung in view of his publication earlier of similar verses "pour être chantés par les hommes libres."

<sup>19</sup> Décret du 27 brumaire an III, chapitre IV, art. 7.

<sup>20</sup> P.-A.-A. de Piis, *Chansons patriotiques... chantées tant à la section des Tuileries, que sur le Théâtre du Vaudeville*, Paris, an II, pp. i-ii.

<sup>21</sup> *Recueil de chansons patriotiques*, Strasbourg, an II, pp.1-2.

Ah ! Ça ira, ça ira, ça ira !  
 Les démocrates à la lanterne;  
 Ah ! Ça ira, ça ira, ça ira !  
 Tous les députés on les pendra.<sup>22</sup>

In 1792 François Marchant published several collections of songs mocking the Assembly, satirizing revolutionary leaders, and making fun of recent legislation. He dedicated *La Constitution en vaudevilles* to the émigrés telling them that since at present one could not get rid of the Constitution "... vous préférez encore la Constitution qui fait rire à celle qui fait fuir, et que même vous pourrez la chanter en attendant le jour où vous rentrerez en France..."<sup>23</sup> With the advent of the Terror, however, it became increasingly difficult to publish and disseminate counter-revolutionary music, and even under the Directory the authorities were fairly successful in stamping out songs ridiculizing the régime. The great majority of songs of which we have evidence were pro-revolutionary.

At first the production of revolutionary music was almost completely spontaneous, but with the coming of the Republic the government made increasing attempts to stimulate the output and direct its use. During his second period as Minister of the Interior following the insurrection of August 10, 1792, Roland paid for the printing of fifteen hundred copies of Thomas Rousseau's *La Grande Bible des cantiques en honneur de la Liberté* and had them distributed throughout France. The following year Bouchotte, the Minister of War, paid for twelve hundred copies of another edition of Rousseau's songs and despatched them to the twelve French armies then in existence.<sup>24</sup> In November, 1793, the Committee of Public Safety ordered that the "Marseillaise" was to be sung regularly every *décadi* at all theatres and whenever the public demanded it.<sup>25</sup> Also from time to time government committees or commissions concerned with public instruction ordered certain songs to be printed and distributed to the departments, districts, municipalities, and popular societies.<sup>26</sup>

The largest effort at such distribution of music got under way in February, 1794. After hearing a report from the Committee of Public

<sup>22</sup> Cited in J. Tiersot, *Les Fêtes et les chants de la Révolution française*, Paris, 1908, p. 24.

<sup>23</sup> F. Marchant, *La Constitution en vaudevilles*... Paris, 1792. See also his *Les Bienfaits de l'Assemblée nationale*... Paris, 1792, and his *Folies nationales, pour servir de suite à la Constitution en vaudevilles*... Paris, 1792. Another interesting satirical collection is *La Révolution française en vaudevilles. Depuis le commencement de l'Assemblée destituante jusqu'à présent*, Coblenz, 1792.

<sup>24</sup> For an account (which errs in giving the dates of various ministries) of the assistance Rousseau received, see the preface to his *Morale élémentaire* cited above.

<sup>25</sup> F.-A. Aulard et al., (eds.) *Recueil des Actes du Comité de salut public*... 27 vols. and 2 index vols., Paris, 1889-1956, vol. VIII, p. 670.

<sup>26</sup> For example, Lebrun's "Ode républicaine au peuple français sur l'Être suprême" was printed by the Commission d'instruction publique: J. Guillaume (ed.), *Procès-verbaux du Comité d'instruction publique de la Convention*, 6 vols., Paris, 1891-1907, vol. IV, pp. 656, 661.



Instruction, the Committee of Public Safety agreed to a proposal of the musicians of the National Guard that the government subsidize a fifty to sixty-page periodical to be distributed each month to all 550 districts in France. Each number was to contain at least one symphony, one hymn or chorus, one rondeau or *pas redoublé*, one military march, and one patriotic song. The Committee observed that music was not only an instrument of public instruction, but was essential to maintain the morale of the Revolution, to arouse the courage of the nation's defenders, and to render public festivals attractive.<sup>27</sup> The first number, entitled *Musique à l'usage des fêtes nationales*, was ready in April when copies were presented to the Convention and the Paris Jacobin Club. It contained an overture for wind instruments by Catel which had been played in the Temple of Reason the previous December; the chorus consisting of words by Voltaire set to music by Gossec sung during the transferring of the philosopher's remains to the Pantheon; a military march and a parade step both by Catel; a patriotic ballad by Auguste to music by Devienne on the heroic death of the young Bara; and a patriotic song on the successes of French armies by Coupigny with music by Gossec. Copies were despatched to the principal theatres as well as to every district in France. This periodical continued to appear regularly until its subsidy ran out a year later.

In May the same group of musicians and composers proposed that the government aid them in publishing a second monthly collection, this one to consist of simpler, more popular songs which could be used by country folk in celebrating *fêtes décadaires* or by the armed forces. Early in July the Committee of Public Safety approved this suggestion and even ordered extra copies for the cadets at the *École du Champs de Mars*:

Le Comité de salut public arrête que l'association des artistes musiciens et compositeurs fera passer aux diverses armées de la République, soit de terre, soit de mer, douze mille exemplaires de chants et d'hymnes patriotiques propres à propager l'esprit républicain et l'amour des vertus publiques . . . Cette association en enverra dix exemplaires par centurie à l'École de Mars.<sup>28</sup>

This new publication, prosaically entitled *Ouvrage périodique de chansons et romances civiques*, each month contained three or four selections to be sung in unison to a figured bass accompaniment. The first few numbers featured such pieces as "Stances contre le luxe" by Piis to music by Solié; "Stances chantées à la fête . . . du salpêtre" by Pilet to music by Catel; "Chant d'une esclave affranchie" by Coupigny

<sup>27</sup> Guillaume, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 265, 299-301, and 302-303; and Aulard, *op. cit.*, vol. XI, p. 157.

<sup>28</sup> For the proposal see Arch. Nat., AF. II, 67, dossier 236, p. 66; for the decision see Aulard, *op. cit.*, vol. XV, pp. 25-26.

to a melody by Jadin; or "La Chute des Tyrans" by Magol to a tune by Devienne. In order to speed the diffusion of such patriotic songs the Committee also leased the quarters of an *émigré* to these musicians for use as a publishing house.<sup>29</sup> There the presses turned out, not only the above periodicals, but thousands of copies of songs or hymns employed in the great festivals. At times as many as 18,000 copies of a single selection were produced.

Jacobin efforts at propaganda reached their peak in the spring of 1794. "Le Comité," Barère told the Convention, "s'occupe d'un vaste plan de régénération dont le résultat doit être de bannir à la fois de la République, l'immoralité et les préjugés, la superstition et l'athéisme."<sup>30</sup> This great program of regeneration envisaged employment, not only of mass education, but of newspapers, festivals, dramas, poems, paintings, statues, engravings, and music. Revolutionary leaders aspired to create a new kind of citizen by exposing him from childhood to inspirational messages and behavioral models. In establishing a whole cycle of revolutionary festivals to serve as substitutes for Christian holy days and Sundays the government appealed to musicians to supply the necessary civic hymns and choruses.<sup>31</sup> Again as part of the government's plan to mobilize the arts the Committee of Public Safety called on all musicians to compose civic choruses, martial music, theatrical pieces, and other compositions designed to fill republicans with the passions and memories of the Revolution.<sup>32</sup> These repeated appeals for revolutionary music help to explain the remarkable number of such compositions in the year II.

Some of the implications for music of the government program can be seen in the great Festival of the Supreme Being on 20 prairial. As laid down in the grandiose plans drawn up by David, which were amended in some respects by Robespierre himself, music was to play a key role in the great celebration.<sup>33</sup> Not only was the musical corps of the National Guard to play appropriate selections at various stages, but there was to be mass popular participation at two high-points in the proceedings. At the Tuileries garden between the two parts of Robespierre's discourse, the people were to join in singing a hymn to

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. XV, p. 398. On this publishing house see C. Pierre, *Le Magasin de musique à l'usage des fêtes nationales et du Conservatoire...* Paris, 1895.

<sup>30</sup> *Le Moniteur*, 12 Germinal an II, le 1<sup>er</sup> avril 1794.

<sup>31</sup> The Committee of Public Safety was to select the most suitable works and to compensate the authors: articles IX and X in the decree approved by the Convention 18 floréal an II, reprinted in *Le Moniteur*, 19 floréal an II (18 mai 1794).

<sup>32</sup> Aulard, *op. cit.*, vol. XIII, pp. 544-545, 572. The various decrees and orders on the arts were grouped in *Arrêtés du Comité du salut public relatifs aux monuments publics, aux arts, et aux lettres*, n.d., Arch. Nat. AF. II. 80, dossier 591.

<sup>33</sup> David's general plan adopted by the Convention and his later revised and more detailed scheme are reprinted in Guillaume, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, pp. 347-350 and 561-566. Guillaume includes several other interesting documents on the *fête* and its music.

the Supreme Being written by Désorgues with music by Gossec. Then in the concluding ceremonies on the Champs de Mars a choir of 2,400, composed of ten old men, ten mothers, ten girls, ten young men, and ten little boys from each of the forty-eight sections of Paris, would sing another hymn, this time by M.-J. Chénier to the tune of the "Marseillaise." The first verse would be sung by the men and boys in the choir, with all the men in the crowd joining in the refrain. Then all the mothers and girls in the choir would sing the second verse, with all the women in the crowd responding. Finally the whole choir would unite for the last verse which all the people would then repeat. Obviously the aim was to achieve as great involvement of the people in the *fête* as was possible.

Popular execution of part of the music in a revolutionary festival was not new — the first example seems to have been in Strasbourg in 1791 — but it had never been attempted on such a vast scale as that planned for the Festival of the Supreme Being. To perform the hymn at the Tuileries the populace had to be taught both the words and the music. In the case of the second hymn at the Champs de Mars the tune would be familiar to the people, but they would have to be taught new words. The problems involved were complicated by the fact that a hymn to the Supreme Being by Chénier intended for the ceremonies at the Tuileries had been vetoed by Robespierre just a few days before the festival when the music had already been printed. But the musicians of the Institut national de musique took extraordinary measures to prepare the people for their rôle. Two days before the ceremony school children from each district were assembled to learn the words and music. Then on the very eve of the *fête* musicians from the Institut national accompanied by student assistants went by twos or threes to every section of Paris where the people had been summoned to rehearse their part. Meanwhile, the printers apparently worked through the night producing copies of the hymns for mass distribution.<sup>34</sup> The festival involved a musical *levée en masse*.

Following Thermidor ideological conflict often centered on music in the theatres and on the streets. The anti-Jacobins favoured the "Réveil du peuple" which they frequently sought to force on performers and audience alike.<sup>35</sup> But in January, 1796, when the Directory ordered the "Marseillaise," "Ça ira," "Veillons au salut de l'Empire," and the "Chant du départ" sung before curtain rise, these songs were often greeted by boos and catcalls because they were associated in many minds with

<sup>34</sup> Tiersot, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-168; C. Pierre, "L'Hymne à l'Être Suprême enseigné au peuple par l'institut national de musique", *La Révolution française*, 1899, 1<sup>er</sup> sem., pp. 53-64.

<sup>35</sup> Delaunay described this musical warfare in a report to the Convention on behalf of the Comité de sûreté générale on July 19, 1795. See *Le Moniteur*, 6 thermidor an III (24 juillet 1795).

the Terror and the rolling of the tumbrils. When some theatre-goers applauded affectedly the line "tremblez, tyrans..." in "Veillons au salut de l'Empire," the substitution of the word *chouans* for *tyrans* displeased them intensely. Others left the hall during numbers of which they disapproved, or blew their noses loudly. Sometimes the performers themselves provoked incidents by singing patriotic pieces with very bad grace indeed, or playing them before tuning their instruments. And when the minister of police ordered certain songs about current matters such as speculation, forced loans, republican oaths, or military victories to be presented in the theatres, these mediocre compositions often evoked ironic cheers and derisive demands to know the name of the author.<sup>36</sup> Eventually, however, boredom rather than opposition seems to have greeted the officially-approved songs. "On a entendu les airs chantés par ordre dans un calme qui est difficile à concevoir," the *Courrier républicain* reported in April, 1796: "ni applaudissements, ni murmures, le plus respectueux silence."<sup>37</sup>

Relative calm seems to have reigned in the theatres from March, 1796, until late in the following year when there was another rash of minor disturbances. To prevent these outbreaks from becoming serious the Directory forbade pieces not listed on the program except those authorized by the government.<sup>38</sup> At the same time the authorities, who had by no means lost their belief in the need to influence public opinion by every available media, continued to urge the theatres to present patriotic airs. In January, 1799, the central administration of the Seine ordered theatres to submit their repertoires to it and to present on all *décadés* and national holidays plays lauding the virtues of the defenders of liberty. Producers were asked especially to include patriotic tunes which were to be worked into the overtures if at all possible.<sup>39</sup> In May of the same year the administration distributed couplets on the assassination of the French envoys at Rastadt, urging theatres to have them sung at intermission. But the reaction of theatre-goers to all these efforts at musical propaganda was generally luke-warm, according to police agents and other observers.

Nevertheless the government was still engaged in a major effort to mobilize music when the bayonets at Saint-Cloud brought the Directory to an end. Like the Jacobin dictatorship before it, the Directory promoted its program of republican festivals and *fêtes décadaires* in which popular singing was to play an important part, but local authorities

<sup>36</sup> The *arrêté* ordering the singing of "les airs chéris des républicains" was dated 18 nivôse an IV (8 janvier 1796). The F<sup>7</sup> series, "police générale," especially cartons 3491-3493, contains many reports on the theatres during the Directory, too many to cite in detail.

<sup>37</sup> *Courrier républicain*, 14 germinal an IV, 3 avril 1796.

<sup>38</sup> See *arrêtés* dated 1<sup>er</sup> prairial an VI (20 mai 1798). This order was actually sent out to the theatres in July.

<sup>39</sup> *Arrêté* dated 12 pluviôse an VII (31 janvier 1799).

complained repeatedly of the dearth of suitable music. In 1797 the Minister of the Interior, Bénézech, bemoaned the lack of a repertory of patriotic poems and music suited for singing by the people.<sup>40</sup> Subsequently François de Neufchâteau, as a member of the executive of the Directory and then as Minister of the Interior, set about creating such a collection for use especially in the smaller centres and rural communes. The collection was to contain new hymns and songs by outstanding poets and musicians commissioned by the government, plus suitable pieces culled from earlier revolutionary compositions.<sup>41</sup> The surviving proofs in the archives of the Conservatory reveal that the selections were abbreviated and the music simplified to suit small choirs and limited orchestras. This collection was never completed. The first three parts were ready for press and the cost provided for in the coming budget when 18 Brumaire interrupted the work.

François de Neufchâteau's plans thus proved abortive, but his purpose was significant. In a letter to parents and teachers, appended to a primary-school reader which he published in 1799, the minister outlined a whole series of educational projects which the government had under way. There was a plan to publish a *bibliothèque élémentaire* or series of republican manuals for children including the text of the Constitution plus a summary of French laws, a short history of France emphasizing the liberating principles of the Revolution, a collection of useful proverbs and maxims, an expurgated republican anthology of French poetry, and a selection of outstanding eulogies of great Frenchmen. The government was also preparing a collection of the best republican orations and poems to be used in national festivals. François' project for an arsenal of republican music was thus part of a general plan for mass education and indoctrination. In discussing preparation of this collection, he revealed his intention to record the tunes on cylinders which could then be played uniformly on mechanical organs in every canton.<sup>42</sup> Evidently even in remote villages Frenchmen were all to sing the same songs to the same music.

<sup>40</sup> Arch. Nat. F<sup>17</sup> 1296, pièces 13-15. J.-B. Leclerc, member of the Conseil des Cinq-Cents, mentioned the possibility of providing every canton with copies of "Chants civiques et moraux" in his *Rapport... sur les institutions relatives à l'état civil des citoyens*. Séance du 16 brumaire, an VI. Leclerc was a strong advocate of music as propaganda: *Essai sur la propagation de la musique en France, sa conservation et ses rapports avec le gouvernement*, Paris, an IV; and *Rapport... sur l'établissement d'écoles spéciales de musique*. Séance du 17 brumaire an VI, Paris, an VII.

<sup>41</sup> Arch. Nat. F<sup>17</sup> 1296, esp. pièces 52-60, contains considerable correspondence from local officials about the need for civic music and François' replies. While awaiting its official collection the government subsidized publication of F.-N. Parent's *Recueil de chants philosophiques, civiques et moraux à l'usage des fêtes nationales et décadares...* Paris, an VII. On the subsidy see F<sup>17</sup> 1011, 424.

<sup>42</sup> N.-F. François de Neufchâteau, *Méthode pratique de lecture...* Paris, an VII, pp. 130-158.

Pending further research, one can only hazard some tentative comments about the effects of music as an ideological weapon in the French Revolution. No doubt revolutionary music helped to diffuse new ideas and to stimulate devotion, but its effectiveness was limited for various reasons. Revolutionary leaders never really envisaged the scale of operations which their theories of mass indoctrination logically involved. While lauding the monthly collection of festival music subsidized by the Committee of Public Safety, the *Journal des théâtres et des fêtes nationales* pictured all Frenchmen singing in union under the shade of a single symbolic Liberty Tree, but the journal does not seem to have realized that 550 copies provided far too few hymn-books for so vast a choir.<sup>43</sup> Even in the summer of 1794 when publication of certain pieces for festivals reached 18,000 copies this was still inadequate, yet the following year printings for any given *fête* dropped to one or two thousand copies before sinking even lower under the Directory. In 1796 when the musicians associated with the *Magasin de musique à l'usage des fêtes nationales* petitioned for renewal of the government subsidy for their collection of civic songs, the Ministry of War ordered 2,000 copies, the Ministry of the Navy and the Colonies only 600 copies, and the Ministry of the Interior a mere one hundred — this for more than 26,000,000 Frenchmen.<sup>44</sup>

Lack of funds and general economic dislocation also prevented more massive efforts at musical propaganda. The subsidies granted in year II to the two musical periodicals were paid tardily and proved completely inadequate once price controls were removed. A special supplementary grant barely rescued the associates of the *Magasin de musique à l'usage des fêtes nationales* from bankruptcy. In 1796 the same musicians and composers protested that the government was not providing them with sufficient funds to furnish the music and musicians needed for state festivals. Lacking adequate state support, this group eventually turned to printing non-revolutionary music — romantic songs, classical compositions, and purely instrumental selections.<sup>45</sup> Financial difficulties restricted government efforts until the end of the Directory. François de Neufchâteau planned to send the plates of his collection of republican music out to the departments in order that copies could be run off for local use without straining the central treasury.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time failure of the Revolution to stabilize itself prevented propaganda efforts from being sustained for any length of time. The projects of the Committee of Public Safety in the spring of 1794 were

<sup>43</sup> *Journal des théâtres et des fêtes nationales*, 1<sup>er</sup> fructidor an II, le 18 août 1794.

<sup>44</sup> Pierre, *Le Magasin de Musique*, pp. 77-86.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48-59, 75-76, 87-104.

<sup>46</sup> Arch. Nat. F<sup>17</sup> 1296, pièces 20 and 22.

formidable, but they were short-lived. After the fall of Robespierre the government continued to subsidize or commission certain works but the Thermidorian reaction left the public bitterly divided over music as over much else. The efforts at musical propaganda by the Directory were not only too limited but ultimately were frustrated by the instability of the régime. Consequently the bulk of musical production throughout the revolutionary decade tended to reflect as much as to shape public sentiment. In order to cater to changing tastes and political fortunes some song writers had to exhibit chameleon-like qualities. Ladré, for example, sang in turn the praises of constitutional monarchy, the insurrection of August 10, the Jacobin seizure of power, and the downfall of the Mountain.

And in the end boredom proved a serious obstacle to mobilization of music as an educational weapon. Both the dwindling output of revolutionary compositions, despite official efforts, and the passiveness of most audiences make this clear. Man proved to be less a political animal than many republican zealots believed. Bored with indoctrination, Frenchmen returned to older themes and Cupid took up his arrows again.

#### STATISTICS ON SONGS AND HYMNS DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

TABLE A

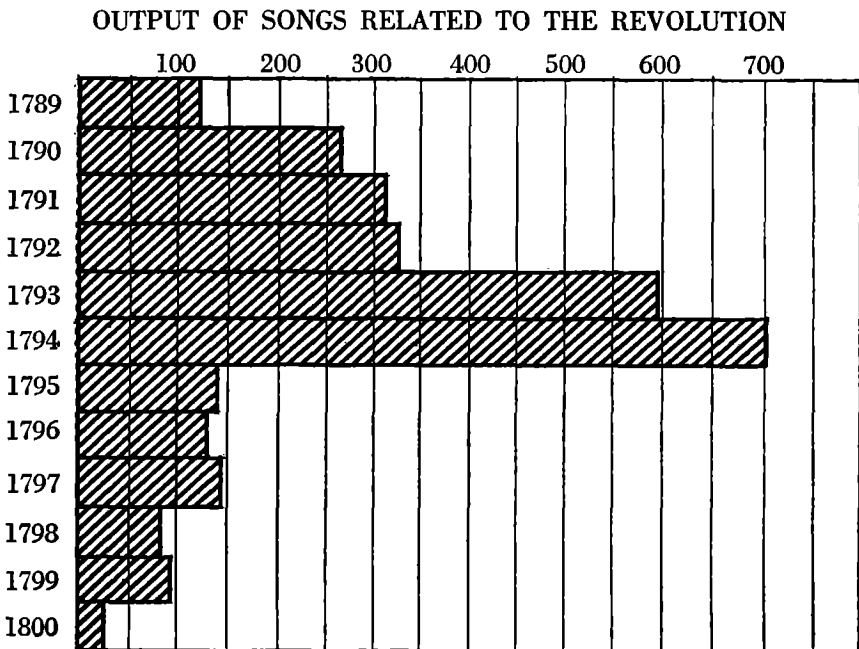


TABLE B

OUTPUT OF HYMNS RELATED TO THE REVOLUTION

