Music and Musicians in the French Quarter

Parisian Musical Culture in Antebellum New Orleans

Candace Bailey

Placing music within cultural exchange across national borders can be as simple as mapping people and compositions from one place to the next or made markedly more complex by delving deeply into underlying facets of self-definition, ideas of nationalism, perceptions of ethnicity and race, and many other topics drawn from sociological and anthropological studies. Transnationalism itself is a popular subject at musicological (including ethnomusicological) conferences and in scholarly publications, and relationships between the United States and Europe have been teased out by many authors.[1] Most observers acknowledge that music from major European centers made its way into the United States, often with a history that describes waves of national styles. Less attention has been paid to musical ideas traveling in the other direction, from the United States to Europe, although notable exceptions exist, such as Axel Körner's *America in Italy: The United States in the Political Thought and Imagination of the Risorgimento, 1763–1865*, which derives rich and complex results by looking at aesthetic values translated from the United States to Europe.[2] Given the common language of the early American Republic, much of the transatlantic literature focused on the early nineteenth century addresses the importation of British music (both style and compositions themselves); a representative source, the US Library of Congress website's essay »Popular Songs of the Day« succinctly

1 For recent examples of conferences, see the 4th »Transnational Opera Studies Conference« in Bayreuth (June 2022) and the preceding three related meetings; »Transnational Perspectives on Music, Sound and (War) Propaganda (1914–1945)« at Humboldt University Berlin (October 2021) and »Transnational Approaches and Cosmopolitan Localisms« in Madrid (March 2020). William Weber has published several books dealing with transnational concepts, particularly *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (Cambridge, 2008). See also, *Cultural Mediation in Europe, 1800–1950*, ed. Lieven d'Hulst, Reine Meylaerts, and Tom Verschaffel (Leuven, 2017); *Grand Opera Outside Paris: Opera on the Move in Nineteenth-Century Europe* ed. Jens Hesselager (London, 2017); and numerous studies dealing with popular music or with Latin or African diasporic music.

2 Axel Körner, *America in Italy: The United States in the Political Thought and Imagination of the Risorgimento, 1763–1865* (Princeton, NJ etc., 2017).

states as fact that »well into the nineteenth century, the popular music of the United States was largely that of Great Britain.«[3] British music naturally dominated British colonies, and around 1800 music of the theater, such as Henry Bishop's settings for Shakespeare's plays, appeared on stages from Boston to Richmond (at least), often performed by British performers. A second stylistic wave followed soon thereafter, when Italian opera (in translation or in Italian) took the nation by storm, beginning in the 1820s. Following soon on its heels were specimens of German music, predominantly Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* and selections from Franz Schubert's lieder (of these, his »Serenade« [»Ständchen« D957] and »Erlkönig« appeared most frequently). Piano music saw a move away from sonatas by composers of the »London school« to variations on popular tunes, most of which were drawn from the same vocal repertory. French music is notably absent from this list, although a dance set from Daniel Auber's *Le dieu et la bayadère* circulated widely and excerpts from operas by François-Adrien Boieldieu appear in bound collections and in concert programs. An overview by historian Ann Ostendorf, appearing on the highly regarded website of the Organization of American Historians, exemplifies the historiography as I have laid it out here:

> […] the significance of European immigrant musicians to early United States music cannot be overstated. English, German, French, and Italian musicians fundamentally shaped the young country's sacred, military, social, and concert music. […] In addition, the growing American sheet-music industry facilitated domestic exposure to diverse immigrant sounds. Published songs denoted as Irish, Scottish, and Italian helped invent the idea of ethnicity in America, even if they were only loosely based on actual regional European styles. Irish ballads and dances remained popular through the early nineteenth century due to immigrants influenced by the Celtic cultural revival, as well as Irish music's fundamental role in British American culture. Nostalgia-infused »traditional« Irish music (and musicians) found commercial success in the young nation. As such, it became a genre of music that bonded an Irish-American ethnic community together, introduced Irish culture to those unfamiliar with it, and entrenched stereotypes about the Irish. Similarly, Americans held Scottish folksongs in high esteem as they imagined a disappearing Scottish primitivism. Later German arrivals initiated the rise of singing societies, called *Männerchöre*, which functioned as social and musical organizations. These not only helped keep German culture alive in America by the repetition of musical forms, but they also provided support systems though which immigrant communities could remain active and strong.

3 »Popular Songs of the Day« *Library of Congress*, https://www.loc.gov/collections/songs-of-america/articles-and-essays/musical-styles/popular-songs-of-the-day/(accessed February 14, 2023). Scholars have recognized other influences, particularly the work of Nancy Newman and others on German musicians who arrived in the United States in large numbers during the nineteenth century.

> These same immigrant musicians facilitated the development of formal European-style concert traditions in the United States.[4]

I have included this long quotation to illustrate an important point: though she mentions French musicians, French music does not appear among her examples. Such a view typifies the historiography of music in the United States, which has long located its subject in practices of the northeast (Boston, New York, and Philadelphia).[5] To view »American music« (a problematic term, to be sure) as a monoculture that compares to similarly styled European examples, such as British music, French music etc. is unwise for many reasons: its sheer geographical size, its young history still defined by the diverse groups that settled particular regions, and its ever-expanding borders all hinder any broad categorizations. The facile practice of limiting »American music« as an adjectival form of »music in the United States« ignores vital differences among variously defined strata (geography, class, race, and gender), each of which, ironically, fundamentally influences our understanding of music in other places.

By far the locale on which French culture (primarily as represented by the Paris bourgeoisie) had the most impact was New Orleans.[6] Its ties to France, the French language, and many other aspects of its culture remain even today, but in the antebellum period they noticeably distinguished the city from others in the United States. Several newspapers and journals appeared in French only or dually in French and English, most importantly *L'Abeille/The Bee*.[7] French music featured regularly in concerts and other performances. As far back as 1878, the black historian James Monroe Trotter commented on the connections between Creoles of color and their

4 Ann Ostendorf, »Music in the Early American Republic« The American Historian (2019), https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2019/february/music-in-the-early-american-republic (accessed February 14, 2023).

5 Ostendorf's *Sounds American: National Identity and the Music Cultures of the Lower Mississippi River Valley, 1800–1860* (Athens, 2011) is one of the few books, along with my own (*Music and the Southern Belle: From Accomplished Lady to Confederate Composer*, [Carbondale, IL, 2010]; and *Unbinding Gentility: Women Making Music in the Nineteenth-Century South*, [Urbana, IL, 2021]), to approach this topic from point of view of the southern United States.

6 Perhaps the most relevant large-scale study of music in France and its relevance here is *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris 1830–1914*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago, IL, 2009). Charleston maintained ties to Paris, too, which I explored Charleston-Paris connections in »Performing Paris in Antebellum Charleston« »American Musicological Society Annual Meeting« 2016; and *Charleston Belles Abroad: The Music Collections of Harriet Lowndes, Henrietta Aiken, and Louisa Rebecca McCord* (Columbia, SC, 2018). The connections here, however, in no way approximate those of New Orleans.

7 *The New Orleans Bee* began publication in 1835 and merged with *L'Abeille* in 1843. Versions of this paper ran until 1923.

French heritage, going so far as to call New Orleans a French city at its essence.[8] In her 2015 dissertation, Jennifer Jones Wilson drew attention to New Orleans and French music's impact in the United States, rightly recognizing the city as »an outpost of French culture« and crediting musicians from the city with an influence on styles in New York City – quite the opposite direction most scholars have interpreted the flow of culture. More recently, Charlotte Bentley has examined French opera in the city itself, providing an elegantly nuanced reading of opera culture in New Orleans as a transnational phenomenon, as well as a keen assessment of the networks of musicians and related industries that enabled it.[9] These excellent studies contrast typical histories of music in the United States, but the thoroughgoing nature of French influence on music in the city has still to be appreciated.[10]

New Orleans and the French Quarter

New Orleans can arguably be viewed as the most cosmopolitan antebellum US city. Established as La Nouvelle-Orléans in 1718, the city grew as a French colonial center for almost half a century before being transferred to Spain, in 1762, and named Nueva Orleans. It returned briefly to the French in 1800 (taking possession of the city in 1802) before Napoleon sold it to the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase (1803). As colonial rule ended in the French colony of Saint Domingue (1791–1804), many musicians (including both those descended from French Europeans and those from free and enslaved Africans) made their way to the United States, stopping predominantly in New Orleans because of common ties between the two cultures. The city already included a substantial population of free people of color, as well as enslaved people of African descent, which enabled the absorption of these populations, particularly those described as *gens de couleur libres*. This history, combined with other geographical conditions, resulted in a diverse society that differed substantially from that of the northeastern United States. Its national,

8 James Monroe Trotter, *Music and Some Highly Musical People* (Boston, MA, 1878), 335.

9 Jennifer Jones Wilson, »The Impact of French Opera« PhD thesis, City University of New York, 2015, 9–11; Charlotte Bentley, »Resituating Transatlantic Opera: The Case of the Théâtre d'Orléans, New Orleans, 1819–1859« PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 2017. See also Mary Grace Swift, »The Northern Tours of the Théâtre d'Orléans« in *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 26, no. 2 (1985), 155–93; Henry Kamen's *Music in New Orleans: The Formative Years 1791–1841* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1966) remains a relevant resource for any study of music in the city, as does John Baron's *Concert Life in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans: A Comprehensive Reference* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2013).

10 Books such as Michael Broyles's *Beethoven in America* (Bloomington, IN, 2018); Douglas Shadle's *Orchestrating the Nation* (Oxford etc., 2018); and Judith Tick's *American Women Composers before 1870* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1983) focus on the northeastern part of the country.

ethnic, and racial variety contributed significantly to the area's cultural identity, yet its influence has not been fully appreciated in the annals of music history – even though it constituted the nation's second largest port in the antebellum period.

Not surprisingly, the city's predilection for all things French continued throughout the century (even through Spanish and later American administration), and nowhere was this more prevalent than in the area known as the French Quarter or the Vieux Carré. Nouvelle-Orléans stretched outwards in a grid pattern from the area around St. Louis Cathedral (Cathedral-Basilica of Saint Louis King of France), the oldest Roman Catholic cathedral in continual use in the United States. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, a British-American architect, designed the French neoclassical building; and a French architect planned its enlargement in 1834. Street names in the Vieux Carré appear on signs in both Spanish and French. Today, the surrounding blocks evidence the various links with both France and Spain: Cabaldo, Presbytère, and Pontalba. Nearby regions include the Faubourg Marigny, whose name connects it to familiar Parisian neighborhoods, and Elysian Fields Avenue (which runs along one side of the Faubourg Marigny), named after the Avenue des Champs-Élysée. French-born Pierre Soulé, who represented the state in the US Senate, only came to the country as an adult, and his wife (Amantine) – a native of New Orleans – was described by one contemporary as »a pretty French woman who speaks English very imperfectly.«[11] These cultural markers validate the degree of influence in the city. That the tiny community of Lucy, Louisiana had a French newspaper, *L'Avant Coureur*, in the 1850s testifies to broader French sway in the region.[12]

Geographical features mark the French Quarter's boundaries. The Mississippi River defines its eastern edge, and Canal Street the south. City planners originally meant to build a canal along the route of what became Canal Street, but the waterway never materialized, leaving the street to be named for it instead. Rampart (or today North Rampart) Street defines the western border, so named for the wall constructed to defend the early colonial city. On the other side of this street lay Congo Square (now Louis Armstrong Park), where enslaved and free people of African descent gathered in the nineteenth century. Esplanade Avenue, an early established portage route for traders linking Lake Pontchartrain with Bayou St. John, delineates the north boundary.

11 Letter from Frances Miller Seward (Washington, DC) to Lazette Miller Worden (Auburn, NY), March 3, 1850. Seward Family Digital Archive https://urprojects.lib.rochester.edu/s/seward/item/107958(accessed March 2021).

12 People in this area also published *Le Meschacébé* (the French pronunciation of Mississippi) between 1853 and 1942, in the Kouri-Vini dialect. See *Le Meschacébé*, https://www.lib.lsu.edu/collections/digital/dlnp/newspaper-histories/Le-Meschacebe (accessed February 14, 2022).

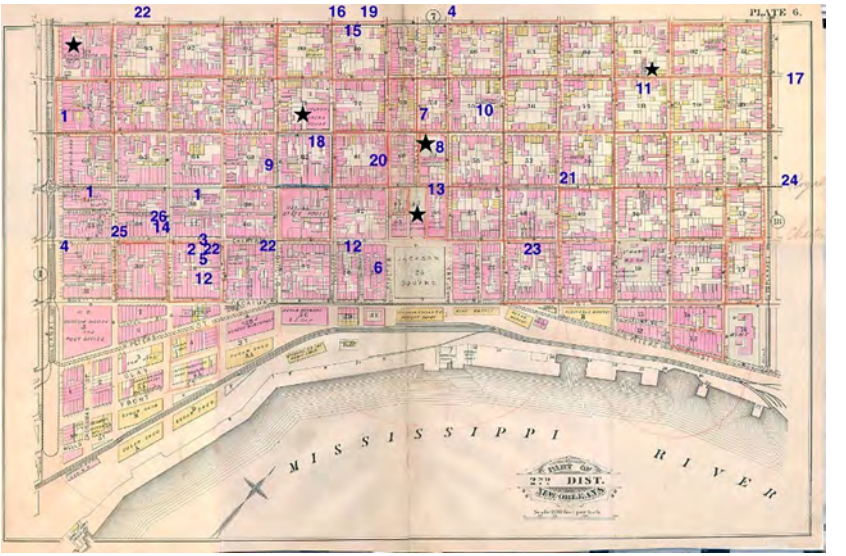

Fig. 1: Map of the French Quarter, New Orleans with locations relevant to its musical culture or mentioned here. Robinson's Atlas of the City of New Orleans, Vierre Carré, 1883 (New Orleans Notarial Archive, public domain)

Legend:[13]

1 *Adolphe Elie, 66 Royale*
2 *Louis Grunewald, 68 Chartres*
3 *Sourdes & [Eugène] Chassaignac, 78 Chartres*
4 *Lodovico Gabici, 338 Ursuline; 91 Canal St.; 19 St .Anthony*
5 *Gino Daeilli, 78 Chartres*
6 *Gustav Collignon, 10 St. Peter*
7 *Eugène Prévost, 43 Orleans*
8 *Théâtre d'Orléans, Orleans Street between Royal and Bourbon*
9 *Pierre and Amantine Soulé, St. Louis Street between Bourbon and Royal*
10 *St. Louis Academy (later Sacred Heart)*
11 *Mme E. Lavillebeuvre, 134 Bourbon*
12 *Thomas Benoit, corner of Chartres and Jefferson*
13 *Rectanus and Gabici, 172 Royal*
14 *Crescent Company*
15 *Henri Wehrman, 142 Burgundy*

13 This is a representative sample and by no means conclusive.

16 *John Baptiste 146 Toulouse*
17 *H. Benson and V. Bohlander, 544 Dauphine*
18 *Peter Berger, 114 Bourbon*
19 *M. Beyer, 142 Burgundy*
20 *Theatre St. Phillip (aka La salle de comedie), St. Phillip and Royal (performed operas by André Grétry)*
21 *Theatre St. Pierre, St. Peter between Royal and Bourbon (performed operas by Mehul)*
22 *Émile Johns, 184 Bienville; 113 Chartres; 87 Chartres*
23 *Condé Ball room*
24 *Boyer household*
25 *Olympe Boisse (milliner), 24 Chartres*
26 *Madame L. Dumagene (school for free children of color), 54 Chartres*

Within this comparatively small area, measuring only 1.7 kilometers, the French Quarter largely ruled the artistic milieu of New Orleans.[14] It is an excellent source for the study of transnational exchange and serves as a foil to more familiar narratives highlighting British, Italian, and German influences. The depth to the city was immersed in French culture can be illustrated through myriad types of examples, the sum of which could fill at least an entire volume. In this essay, however, I will concentrate on exposing transnational connections with a broad stroke, touching on theaters and their music, sheet music publishers and sellers, bound collections of music, musicians, and salonnières.

During the antebellum period, music dealers imported sheet music from Paris, Leipzig, Brussels, Bonn, and London. In addition to its frequently sited French and Italian opera performances, German immigrants formed their own societies and programmed chamber music, and local orchestras included Ludwig van Beethoven and Felix Mendelssohn in their concerts. Composers and teachers from Europe flocked to the city known for its vibrant musical scene. A large percentage of the population still spoke French, including a substantial number of refugees of color from the Caribbean. Free blacks moved relatively easily about the French Quarter and participated more fully in its musical events than elsewhere in the country, and mixed-race musicians mingled with whites in ways hitherto unexamined.

14 The only comparable influences could be found in the St. Charles Theatre and the music stores on Camp Street.

The Opera House and Other Venues

It is not possible to overestimate the strong link between opera culture in New Orleans and that in Paris.[15] Several important theaters were located in the French Quarter, including the Théâtre d'Orléans (1806–1866) between Royal and Bourbon Streets and later the French Opera House (1859–1919) on the corner of Bourbon and Toulouse Streets. The first operas heard in the city, such as André Grétry's *Silvain* (performed in 1796), were staged at the Saint Peter Street Theatre, between Royal and Bourbon Streets, although the Théâtre d'Orléans eventually emerged as the main concert and opera venue in the city. John Davis, an émigré from Saint-Domingue, led this institution from 1819–1837 and produced mostly French operas (such as those by Boieldieu, Nicolas Isouard, and Nicolas Dalayrac) or Italian operas translated into French.[16] While Boieldieu's music was relatively known around United States, that of Dalayrac and Isouard circulated less widely beyond this region. Stars from the French opera performed here, including Julia Calvé, Laure Cinti-Damoreau, and Rosa de Vries. Born in Rennes, Calvé became a prominent music teacher and performer in New Orleans, where she worked alongside the conductor François Michel Gustave Collignon (also a native of Rennes). Her husband, Charles Boudousquié, took over the leadership of the theater in 1853 and included Henriette

15 Scholars have taken more interest in opera in New Orleans than in any other of the city's musical institutions, and there is little need to rehearse their findings in detail here. More information exists on opera in New Orleans than any other pastime, not only because newspaper accounts and other sources have survived but also as a result of support for opera among different social classes during the mid-nineteenth century. The city's close connections with France were responsible for part of the prominent place of opera in local culture. (James Harding, *Music and Society: The Late Romantic Era* [Prentice Hall, 1991], 106.) Before the Civil War, opera was an integral part of cultured life in the city, and inhabitants representing all social strata attended. The wood engraving »Sunday in New Orleans« (1871, available at http://hnoc.minisisinc.com/thnoc/catalog/1/2806 (accessed February 14, 2023) illustrates diverse attendees at the opera. See also Will H. Coleman's reminiscences of opera before the war in his *Historical Sketchbook and Guide to New Orleans* (New York, 1885), in which he commented that a »frequent and undeviating appearance« at the opera amounted to »reception into the best French society under the ancient regime.« Copied in Henry Wehrmann Scrapbook, 1838–1939, folder 2, 134–35, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA. In addition to Bentley, see also https://neworleansopera.org/a-history-of-opera-in-new-orleans/(accessed February 14, 2023).

16 This was the third building of this theater. On this and its early history, see Baron, *Concert Life* (as in fn. 9), 9–12. Beginning in 1827, Davis took his company north during the summer months, introducing audiences in New York to the Parisian repertoire, as Wilson argues in »The Impact of French Opera.«

Sontag among his stars, although the bulk of his company maintained their ties to Paris.[17]

The American premieres of many operas took place at the Théâtre d'Orléans.[18] All of these works were sung in French in New Orleans, even those in the Italian *bel canto* style by Italian composers (such as Gioachino Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, Gaetano Donizetti's *La fille du régiment*, and Guiseppe Verdi's *Jérusalem*). Indeed, these examples premiered in French in Europe, reflecting Paris's position as the epicenter of opera.[19] Thus, the New Orleans theater not only catered to the French creoles in New Orleans, but it also perpetuated the style of the leading opera house in Europe with similar performance practices. This is not to say that all opera in New Orleans was heard in French. The Camp Street Theatre, which became the St. Charles Theatre in 1835, catered to Anglo-American audiences and staged English-language premieres of Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Robert the Devil* (*Robert le diable*), Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma* and *Beatrice di Tenda*, and other Italian operas. Its clientele largely came from the American side of the city, that is, on the other side of Canal Street.[20]

Numerous other venues dotted New Orleans. The Salle d'Orléans served as a ballroom for many events, including some *bals du cordon bleu* (the infamous »quadroon balls« which usually took place at the Salle de Condé). Other rooms designated for concerts included the Salle Ordinaire or Salle Accoutumée. Later, the Varieties Theater, built by the Association Variété, provided a space for lowbrow entertainments. Several other buildings, such as Odd Fellows Hall and the Mechanics Institute performance hall, offered other opportunities for concert performances outside the French Quarter.

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17 For example, an 1856 benefit performance under Boudousquié's direction (Rossini's music), the featured singers were Mmes. Laget-Planterre and Gambier, and Mons. Duluc, Junca, Crambade, and Laget, *Touring the Antebellum South*, ed. Burden, 65n.

18 A list is available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Opera_House#American_premieres (accessed February 14, 2023).

19 On Paris, see Walter Benjamin's famous observation that it was the »capital of Europe in the nineteenth century« *Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt, 1938). The most commonly used English-language music history textbooks still single out Paris for its influence on opera in Europe and the Americas (e.g., Barbara Hanning, *Concise History of Western Music* [New York, NY, 1998], ch. 19). See also, Hesselager, *Grand Opera* (as in fn. 1). Wilson examines the use of French in US opera houses throughout »The Impact of French Opera« (as in fn. 9).

20 Natives of the city felt this divide keenly. In his astute examination of race in post-Civil War New Orleans, Christopher Coady concludes that a desire to be associated with whites drove elite Creoles to lose most of their direct ties to French culture in the emancipated city. Coady, »›Our Brothers across Canal‹: Forging Intraracial Unity through Western Art Music Practice in Mid-Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century New Orleans« *Musical Quarterly* 103, no. 3–4 (2020), 281–310. See also Shirley Thompson, *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to become American in Creole New Orleans* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), 12–14.

Publishers and Sellers

In a city where operas and concerts occurred nightly, we should not be surprised to find a thriving sheet music industry. Those who promoted English-language versions of popular European pieces (as well as some with their original texts) tended to be housed either on Canal or Camp Streets or nearby, towards the south. Even then, the barriers between American and French cultures blended according to popular taste. For example, William Mayo, a publisher, music seller, and instrument dealer opened an establishment on Camp Street, having purchased the business of Émile Johns in 1846.[21] In spite of a decidedly English-language predilection, Mayo published Collignon's Valse *Le pervenche* (op. 16), which the composer had dedicated to Amantine Soulé (the French-speaking wife of senator Pierre Soulé), with most of the title wording in French. This family maintained their Parisian connections, as did Collignon, thus demonstrating that French culture heavily influenced even the American parts of New Orleans.

When Ludovico Gabici (about 1813–1862), an Italian violinist who ran a music store in the French Quarter, published his own *L'exilé/Romance pathetique* (which he dedicated to Mme L. Queyrouze), he printed all of the title text in French, leaving the publisher and city in English. (See Fig. 2).[22] Using two languages suggests that Gabici banked on the French language's reputation as cultured and elegant to sell the music but understood the business need to maintain English for the details of merchandizing.[23] Other publishers along Canal Street and across the way did so as

21 Peggy C. Boudreaux's dissertation, »Music Publishing in New Orleans in the Nineteenth Century« PhD thesis Louisiana State University, 1977 remains an excellent resource on publishers in New Orleans, as does Florence Jumonville's »Set to Music: The Engravers, Artists, and Lithographers of New Orleans Sheet Music« in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 105, no. 1 (1995), 127–44.

22 Anne Marie Clara Tertrou Queyrouze was a descendant of French aristocracy whose family came to the area during the reign of Louis XIV. Her husband, Leon, moved to Louisiana from Beaumont (France) in 1830. Donna M. Meletio, »Leona Queyrouze (1861–1938) Louisiana French Creole Poet, Essayist, and Composer« PhD thesis, Louisiana State University, 2005, 7–8.

23 The use of French as a marker of culture or as a regular means of communication in New Orleans is difficult to describe in brief. Since the population of the French Quarter largely spoke French as its language of choice (see the reference to Amantine Soulé on p. 99), it was a matter of vernacular exchange there. However, for those steeped in the cultural education of gentility, such as the inhabitants of the American parts of the city, French was a sign of culture. Guillaume Pinson underscores the use of French as a means of establishing community throughout North America via a network of French-language publications in »Les journaux francophones au dix-neuvième siècle« *French Politics, Culture & Society* 35, no. 1 (2017). I explore the use of French as a marker of style in antebellum southern women's culture in *Charleston Belles Abroad*, 23, 89–110, 210.

well, but those housed within the French Quarter often kept everything in French. His native Italian meant nothing in this context.

Music businesses in the French Quarter catered to the French-speaking inhabitants of the city as well as others desiring European imprints. Surviving examples in binder's volumes testify to an active trade in imported Parisian sheet music: Thomas E. Benoit (Chartres Street, 1840s and 1850s) imported music from Meissonnier and Brandus; Adolphe Elie (Chartres Street, Royale Street, active 1830s–1860s) sold music from Brandus & Sélim-François Dufour, Léon Escudier, Léon Grus, and even the Gambogi frères (Hippolyte and Charles); Eugène Chassaignac (at first partner of and then successor to Benoit on Chartres Street, 1850s) imported items from Jean André; and many works brought out by Troupenas, Pleyel, Lemoine, Heugel, and Choudens found their way into collections bound in the Deep South. Moreover, Schott's publications could be bought at several places throughout the French Quarter.[24] Not surprisingly, all of these music sellers all hail from France. Chassaignac arrived in New Orleans from Nantes; Elie taught music in Paris (Gottschalk was his student) before coming to Louisiana; and Benoit hailed from France as well.[25] These men would have personally known the Parisian publishers from whom they imported music.

The map in Figure 1 illustrates the physical spaces through which music in the French Quarter moved. Stamps from local merchants, such as the music seller Benoit, on Parisian imports dot extant collections. The act of bringing such materials across the Atlantic Ocean was repeated in the conveyance of other goods, too. Instruments from Paris could be purchased in New Orleans establishments, and, of course, this practice was not limited to music. Mme Olympe Boisse made annual trips to her native Paris to procure the most up-to-date fashions for her clothing and tailoring business on Chartres Street. Brothers Valsin and Oscar Vignaud imported fine French porcelain, as did John Gauche (from the Alsace-Lorraine region). Their stores were also located on Chartres Street, where several music sellers had shops. The overall impression was – almost – as if shopping in a neighborhood in Paris.

Impact and Meaning

It is not enough simply to illustrate New Orleans's close association with French culture, particularly in the French Quarter – this is nothing new. The degree to which this transnational culture engulfed it, however, deserves more recognition than it

24 This list is by no means exhaustive, and each of these dealers sold music from a variety of Parisian publishers. Only occasionally do imported pieces evince a trade route through New York City (especially through Breusing's).

25 Bentley, »Resituating Transatlantic Opera« (as in fn. 9), 42.

now receives in general narratives of music in the United States. Music education followed French patterns. Many music teachers came to New Orleans from France, and some vaunted their journeys home to learn new styles, acquire modern music, and generally immerse themselves in French culture *in situ*. Granted, French music instructors could be found all over the country, but the continued connections to France and the depth of French culture mark New Orleans as unique among large cities. In October 1857, Mme Petre advertised that she had returned from France and would resume giving music lessons at her house on rue Bourbon, as if she had been refreshed with pure French aesthetics during her absence.[26] In 1848, Mme Deron announced that she had taken over the girls' school founded by Mme Arpin on the rue Bourgogne (Burgundy) with similar pedigree: »une maîtresse de musique venant de Paris et possédant une méthode excellente et une execution remarquable, est spécialement attaché à l'Institut pour y enseigneur le piano et le chant.« (Mmes Boyer and Lavillebeuvre would continue teaching harp and piano.)[27]

One of the most influential musicians in mid-century New Orleans was composer, conductor, and organist Eugène Prévost (1809–1872), a white Parisian who had won the 1831 Premier Grand Prix de Rome and began leading the Théâtre Français in New Orleans in 1838. Disenchanted with the »superficial and incomplete« vocal training he had witnessed in the United States, Prévost opened a music school for men in 1858, which he ran in addition to the vocal classes for Mme Desrayaux's institute for young women.[28] He spent the Civil War in Paris, where he conducted the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens and the Concerts des Champs-Élysées, and the Opéra-Comique debuted his *L'Illustre Gaspard* in 1863. He was a formidable artistic voice in New Orleans both before and after the war, and his touch can be detected across many genres. The Parisian-born composer and performer Octavie Romey (1824–1881) worked closely with Prévost. She started her career in New Orleans as a pianist performing concertos in 1850s, and after the Civil War she garnered a reputation as a concert organizer and composer (her published album of compositions, *Les lys et les roses*, appeared in France when she was fourteen).[29]

The impact of francophone New Orleans extended well beyond the city and touched the wider region. People from as far away as Natchez, MI purchased sheet music in New Orleans, and, in the case of the Johnson family, shopped mostly in the French Quarter. The fact that they were free blacks living in the slaveholding

26 *Le Courrier de la Louisiane*, October 21, 1857, 7.

27 *La Chronique*, December 21, 1848, 4. A year later, the advertisement still ran with the same wording, suggesting that this woman from France had yet to materialize for Mme Deron.

28 *Le Courrier de la Louisiane*, June 23, 1858, 5.

29 Octavie was the daughter of the well-known author Charles Romey. Pamela D. Arceneaux, *Les lys et les roses*, for »Four Museum Objects Highlight New Orleans and the Arts« https://www.hnoc.org/publications/first-draft/four-new-museum-objects-highlight-new-orleans-and-arts (accessed February 14, 2023).

South places special emphasis on how and where they acquired musical materials. Anna Johnson (1841–1922) was the daughter of William Tiler Johnson and his wife Ann Maria Battles, both of whom had been manumitted before their marriage. Anna attended school in New Orleans, possibly under the watchful eye of her aunt, Lavinia Miller, until the time of her father's murder in 1851, at which point she returned home. She may have attended a school like the one advertised in 1853 by Mme L. Dumagene »pour les jeunes personnes de couleur« at 54 Bourbon Street (between Bienville and Douane [Dumaine]).[30] All of the Johnson children who survived infancy were baptized in the Cathedral and Parochial Church of St. Louis, even though they lived almost 400 kilometers away (traveling by either the Mississippi River or the river road). The distance did not deter William from going to New Orleans on several occasions, such as to hear Jenny Lind in 1851. The furnishings of the family home included a guitar (which William, Ann, and her sister Catharine (1842–1909) are documented to have played), a violin and flute, and a piano. In fact, William bought and sold several pianos over the course of his life, on one occasion shopping with Lavinia Miller in Natchez. Anna and Catharine both took piano lessons after their father's death and collected music until at least the end of the century. The surviving collection of music from this family includes items bought at Gabici's music store on Royale or, later, Camp Street. For all of this, the French Quarter provided a place where the Johnsons, even though they were not white, could attend concerts, purchase music, go to school, and interact with people whose backgrounds differed from their own.

Gabici's position in New Orleans serves as an entry point into the unusual intersection of race, ethnicity, and music in a city that differs from all others in the antebellum United States – at least as far as has been discovered to date. First, there is the very practical reality that people of color shopped in stores owned by whites, although we would be wise to question Gabici's perceived whiteness as an Italian émigré in this period of US history.[31] I do not use the term »people of color« without consideration. New Orleans famously divided racially into three categories: the usual black and white split common in the nation, and a third group commonly referred to as »free Creoles of color.« This latter group included an expansive sweep of people who did not fit neatly into black or white designations, particularly as understood by contemporary Americans.[32] Many of the *gens de couleur libres* either were

30 *L'Abeille* (1853), April 7, 1, col. 1; quoted in Baron, *Concert Life* (as in fn. 9), 99.

31 See Stefano Luconi, »Italian Immigrants, Whiteness, and Race: A Regional Perspective« in *Italian American Review* 11, no. 1 (2021), 4–26.

32 In his assessment of the race and the law in New Orleans, Paul Lachance uses the term *ménagères*, essentially free women of color who were major beneficiaries (»de facto common-law spouses«) of white men to describe this third group, or »caste« as he calls them. Lachance, »The Formation of a Three-Caste Society: Evidence from Wills in Antebellum New Orleans« in *Social Society Review* 18, no. 2 (1994), 215. Most scholars, however, recognize a

established in the city during the Spanish colonial period or arrived from areas of the Caribbean. They owned property in a geographic area that denoted no racial segregation. They had rights unheard of in the rest of the country, although beginning in 1803 white Americans sought to systematically curtail these.[33] Like most inhabitants of the French Quarter, their first language was French, a fact that invites a re-evaluation of the soundscape of race in the country.

City directories throughout the antebellum period designate »fpc« for »free person of color« although at least a few prominent musicians escaped any racial label in directories.[34] Many of the French Quarter's leading musicians fell into this category, among them Richard Lambert, conductor of the Negro Philharmonic.[35] Jacques Constantin Debergue (1799–1861), who possibly conducted the orchestra of the Théâtre de la Renaissance in 1840, acquired a significant estate that included real estate in the Faubourg Marigny and the French Quarter as well as enslaved Africans.[36] Debergue taught Edmond Dédé (1827–1903), a violinist, composer, and conductor, who also studied with Gabici and Prévost. In other words, Dédé, a free black man born in New Orleans, studied with a Creole of color and an Italian and a French immigrant.[37] Such interactions are difficult to contextualize anywhere else in the United States in this period, but evidence suggests that it was not unknown in New Orleans.

Dédé strongly identified with French culture. His song »Mon pauvre coeur«, published by Benedict Simon in New Orleans in 1852, connects with contemporary French songs in several respects.[38] That the text is French-only is not so unusual for the city, but Dédé chose to physically present the music along the models of French songs of the early nineteenth century, with the second verse printed with

broader segment of the population. See also, Lester Sullivan, »Composers of Color of Nineteenth-Century New Orleans: The History behind the Music« in *Black Music Research Journal* 8, no. 1 (1988), 51–82.

33 Nathalie Dessens, »Re-Writing Race in Early American New Orleans« *Miranda* 5 (2011) https://journals.openedition.org/miranda/2296 (accessed February 14, 2023).

34 Some editors used »fwc« or »fmc« for »free woman/man of color«. Neither Sydney Lambert nor Victor-Eugène McCarty have any special designation in the 1861 directory; the absence of such implies white.

35 Trotter mentions this orchestra in *Music and Some Highly Musical People* (1878). See Baron, *Concert Life* (as in fn. 9), 73.

36 Charles E. Kinzer, »The Band of Music of the First Battalion of Free Men of Color and the Siege of New Orleans, 1814 1815« in *American Music* 10, no. 3 (1992), 358; Sullivan's »Composers of Color« is a beginning point for any study of New Orleans in this period.

37 Sally McKee makes the point about Dédé's dark skin tone and its meaning in New Orleans in several places in *The Exile's Song: Edmond Dédé and the Unfinished Revolutions of the Atlantic World* (New Haven, CT, 2017), 10, 49, 99, 116, 140, 145, 178.

38 Simon later worked with the music publisher Philip Werlein.

the vocal line alone, as shown in Romagnesi's »Le pauvre aveugle« in Figure 3.[39] This aspect of »Mon pauvre coeur« solidifies a connection to France because most English-language songs did not appear this way. (They either simply printed the text or printed the entire verse – accompaniment and voice part – again.) Indeed, only the listed city and names of lithographer and printer tie this piece to the United States; it could have been the product of a French publishing house.[40] In this case, the printer was a German immigrant, who became an important entity in color lithography beginning in 1853 when he partnered with Louis Lucien Pessou, a free man of color who had emigrated from Saint Domingue.[41] Here is another example of a person from Europe willing to work with a person of color in New Orleans, a situation unlikely for a white American.

Furthermore, several composers of color from New Orleans traveled to Paris to study; Dédé himself studied at the Paris Conservatoire in 1857, later moving to Bordeaux where he conducted the orchestra at the Théâtre Alcazar and the Folies Bordelaises. He published several compositions in Paris and was twice featured in *Bordelaise journal*.[42] Victor-Eugène Macarty (1821–1890) had studied at the Conservatoire some years earlier, obtaining permission to matriculate (because he was overage) with the help of Pierre Soulé. By 1854, another Creole of color, Charles Lucien Lam-

39 Although French, as a language, connoted a marker of elite class throughout much of the United States, several scholars interpret its meaning differently in antebellum New Orleans. Juliane Braun contextualizes the use of language in transatlantic cultural exchanges in *Creole Drama: Theatre and Society in Antebellum New Orleans* (Charlottesville, VA, 2019), noting that the continual use of French represented a »struggle to maintain [the French Quarter's] political, economic, and cultural sovereignty in the face of growing Anglo-American dominance« (p. 6). Dianne Guenin-Lelle suggests that white New Orleanians' association with France permitted more fluid racial boundaries and social orders than other areas of the United States in *The Story of French New Orleans: History of a Creole City* (Jackson, MS, 2016).

40 »French« although I recognize that most publications emanated from Paris. On the other hand, three bound volumes that belonged to Mme L. T. include many songs with the Parisian publisher's name overpasted with Jac[q]min-Briére of Rouen as the publisher (as shown in Figure 3). These survive now at Louisiana State University, and several facts suggest that they came to New Orleans probably not long after publication, probably the 1820s.

41 Patricia Brady, »Free Black Artists in Antebellum New Orleans« *64 Parishes*, https://64parishes.org/entry/free-black-artists-in-antebellum-new-orleans (accessed February 14, 2023) and »Black Artists in Antebellum New Orleans« *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 321 (1991), 5–28; Jumonville, »Set to Music« (as in fn. 21), 137.

42 More context for Dédé's work in Bordeaux will be published in my article »The Composer's Black Identity on the Operatic Stage: Edmond Dédé's *Morgiane, ou, le Sultan d'Ispahan*«, in *Black Identities on the Operatic Stage*, ed. Naomi André, Kristen Turner, and Elizabeth Keathley (forthcoming); and a forthcoming book on the opera.

bert (1828–1896), had moved to Paris where he published compositions and raised his son, Lucièn-Léon, another musician.

These examples corroborate a transnational exchange between New Orleans and Paris that extended far beyond the world of opera. Not only did white musicians, such as Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1828–1869) go from New Orleans to Paris to study, but a number of musicians of color did as well. This pattern of a more open (but certainly not equal) society extended to many aspects of musical life in New Orleans, particularly in the French Quarter.[43] It must have impacted life in the French Quarter, for a degree of tolerance can be detected in other spaces within the city, notably the salon.

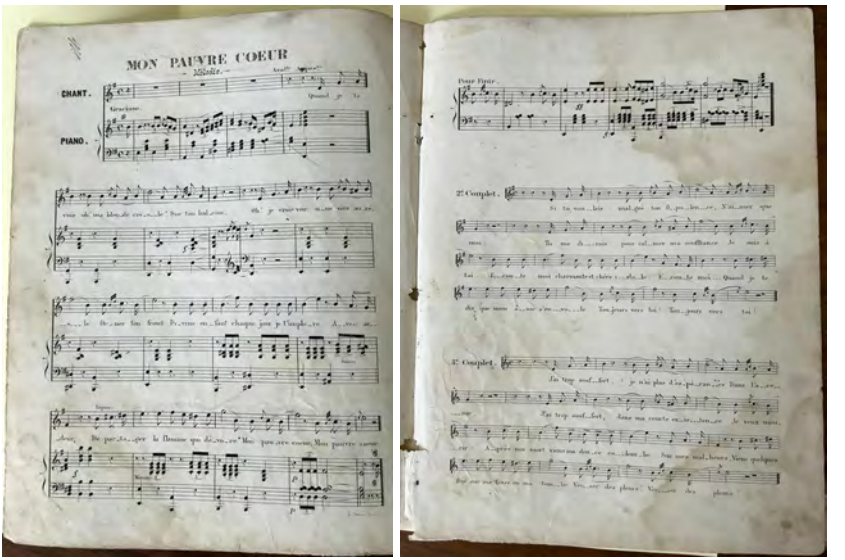

Fig. 2: Dédé, »Mon pauvre coeur«. Tulane, Special Collections, Panzeri Collection

43 Coady considers how a more accepting (but not equal) attitude towards people of African descent relates to French culture in a musical context in »Our Brothers across Canal« (as in fn. 20).

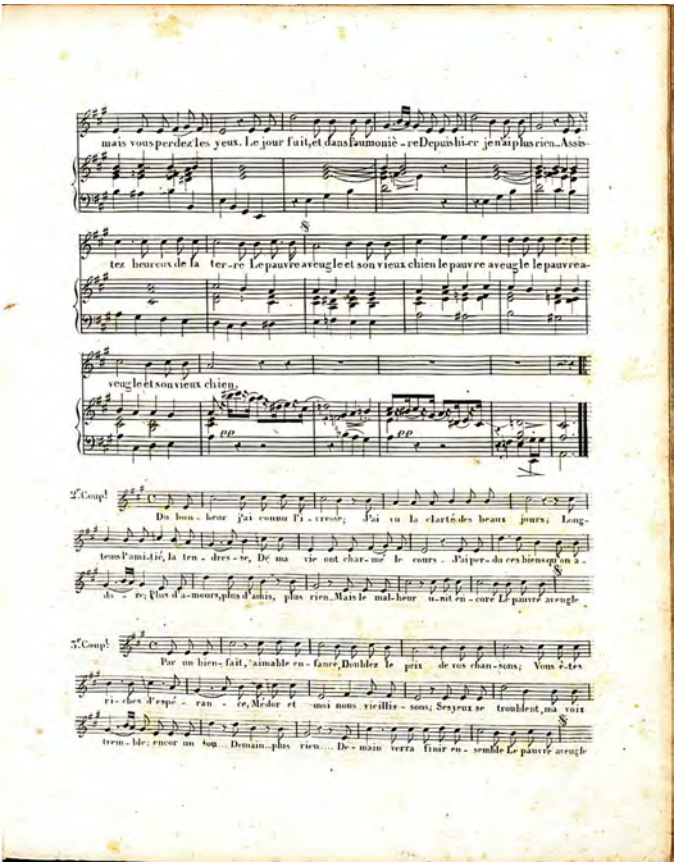

Fig. 3: Romagnesi, »Le pauvre aveugle« Tulane, Special Collections, Rare 784.89 M685 v. 3, »Mme. L. T.« binder's volume

The Idea of the Salon

The word »salon« appears in newspaper advertisements, period literature, and on sheet music, and people in the United States largely associated it with France, as evidenced by the fact that the word frequently appears with French-language titles. For example, Robert Meyer, »Chef d'Orchestra [sic!] de Theatre [sic!] des Variétés à la N'vlle Orleans [sic!]« capitalized on a French association with his *Un instant de*

bonheur/Polka de Salon and several other polkas »de Salon« between 1851 and 1855.[44] Theodore von la Hache did likewise, as his *Grand Etude de Salon* of 1858 demonstrates, and many others followed suit. Even the serial novels that ran in New Orleans newspapers evoked Parisian social customs among the wealthier classes, as when the main character, Geraldine, in Gustave Vattier's feuilleton »Santa Maria« (*Le Courrier de la Louisiane*, 1857) accompanies her hosts »*au salon*« where Mme de la Chesnaye perfectly executes a sonata by Mozart.[45] The next issue of *Le Courrier* carried an account of music performed at Rossini's salon in the rue Basse du Rempart.[46] These allusions evince an awareness of how such events occurred in Paris.

Exactly how this knowledge impacted the cultural world of New Orleans cannot be ascertained with the certainty we might desire: few diaries or letters mention salons of any type. Contextual evidence, however, supports the idea that at least some flourished in the city. *La Violette: Revue musicale et litterarie*, published in 1849/50 »avec le Patronage des Dames de la Louisiane« as an addition to *L'Abeille* (housed on Chartres Street), began its initial issue with a description of the women pianists of New Orleans by Étienne Duverger (the editor), described other musical activities of note, and included amongst its printed music Collignon's »La pervenche.«[47] »Mme E. L.« appears most frequently as a talented pianist in *La Violette*. Following southern US custom, the women's names were kept hidden, but the recurrent mention of Mme E. L. suggests a prominent musician whose reputation shown in New Orleans. One candidate is Mme Eli Farault de LaVillebeuvre (Jeanne Aimée Roman, 1818–1889), who lived on rue Dumaine during this period.[48] Suzanne Eugenie Lavillebeuvre (1834–1912), although a musician of significant standing in later decades, seems less likely: her maiden name was Lavillebeuvre, and her age in 1849 was only fifteen. Whichever woman, Mme Lavillebeuvre succeeded Mme Boyer as a piano teacher after the latter's death, further substantiating the possibility that she was Duverger's esteemed salon pianist.

The same journal carries advertisements for music lessons under Mme Rosalie Pacquot Boyer. In fact, some of the pianists featured in *La Violette* were described as Boyer's students. Eliza Ripley famously described Boyer's tutelage, and different accounts in the newspapers (including the teacher's obituary) confirm her place as

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44 The Historic New Orleans Collections owns an entire volume of Meyer's works (M22 .M4), dating from 1851 to 1855.

45 *Le Courrier de la Louisiane*, February 7, 1857, 4.

46 *Le Courrier de la Louisiane*, February 11, 1857, 7; see also October 3, 1857, 8.

47 More information on this now obscure journal can be found in Candace Bailey, »La Violette and a French Salon Ideal in Antebellum New Orleans« in *Cultural and Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Salon*, ed. Anja Bunzel and Nancy November (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

48 Jeanne Romain LaVillebeauvre's sister in law was Elizabeth »Isabelle« LaVillebeuvre, but she would have gone by either her husband's name (Mme J. LaVillebeuvre) or »I« for »Isabelle.« (Whether to capitalize the »V« in Lavillebeuvre depended on the writer.)

one of the most influential music educators in New Orleans.[49] Moreover, a young Gottschalk used her salon as a means to make his reputation in New Orleans, and in its first issue, *La Violette* ran an announcement of a »SOIREE MUSICALE/Donnee [sic!] par M. SCHMITT, dans les salons de Mme B.«[50] It seems that Boyer's salon compared favorably with more famous salons held by musicians in Paris, but more work remains to say precisely.

Another possible salon – in the Parisian sense – can be associated with the family of Pierre and Amantine Soulé. The Soulés seem to have entertained guests in something akin to a French salon in their home at 720 rue de Saint Louis, and there both Henri Herz and Louis Moreau Gottschalk played piano before company. Tantalizingly, an account in Herz's *Mes voyages en Amérique* (1866) depicts an encounter with Amantine that suggests a mixed-race salon-style gathering in the Soulé home, a circumstance that would not have been the norm for such highly stationed social elites elsewhere in the United States.[51] But the Soulés apparently differed in this regard. Most notably, in the 1840s Pierre sought special permission for Victor Eugène Macarty, a Creole of color, to attend the Paris Conservatoire even though he was over age.[52]

Conclusion

This brief description of musical experiences in the French Quarter of New Orleans illustrates a flourishing French culture in the city during the antebellum period that was not a passing fad but rather an association that extended back more than a century. This area contrasts other American cities, and its acceptance of people of color into artistic endeavors greatly contrasts more familiar practices in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. The city's history (Spanish, French, and American), as well as its close ties to indigenous and African-descended populations contributed

49 Eliza Ripley, *Social Life in Old New Orleans: Being Recollections of My Girlhood* (New York, NY, 1912), 151; *Le Meschacébé*, July 9, 1859, 2.

50 Written by »Un Indiscret« *La Violette* 1, no. 1 (1849), 3–4; S. Frederick Starr, *Louis Moreau Gottschalk* (Urbana, IL, 2000), 44.

51 For more details, see Candace Bailey, *Unbinding Gentility: Women Making Music in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Urbana, IL, 2021), 46.

52 On Macarty see William Horne, »Victor Eugène Macarty« in *The Journal of African American history* 103, no. 4 (2018), 496–525; Pierre also aided the person who rescued Solomon Northup in late 1852. Solomon Northrup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (Buffalo, NY, 1854), 196. See also »La vie de Pierre Soulé par Catherine Chancerel« *La Depeche* (2015), https://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2015/05/28/2113079-la-vie-de-pierre-soule-par-catherine-chancerel.html (accessed February 14, 2023).

to customs and expectations that mark it as unique in the United States. Its continued reliance on Paris as a center of learning, taste, style, fashion, and manners can be proven through myriad means, from the fact that Louisiana native and senator's wife Amantine Soulé barely spoke English to the adoption of Parisian song printing practices within the city. Looking in the other direction, the painter Edgar Degas's uncle described »notre petite colonie Louisianaise« in Paris in acknowledgment of the ties between the two cities.[53] Another vital facet of transnational culture exists in the way New Orleanians, especially those in the French Quarter, approached racial divisions. To be sure, neither France nor New Orleans practiced racial equality, but their attitudes towards interracial mingling extended into music practices, as the case of Dédé and the Philharmonic (whose members included white, black, and men of color) makes plain, suggesting that daily life in the French Quarter entertained more possibilities for black musicians than most places in the country. This reality intervenes in traditional approaches to transnational influences in the United States and offers a counternarrative of considerable relevance to cross-cultural exchange between the country and Europe.

53 Christopher Benfey quotes Eugène Musson, the uncle in question here, in *Degas in New Orleans: Encounters in the Creole World of Kate Chopin and George Washington Cable* (New York, NY, 1997), 5, but does not provide the source of this information.