

La Ville et la Cour se Mèlèrent – Napoleon’s Propaganda Quadrilles (1793–1813)

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Many eyewitnesses mention the emergence of a new style of ceremonial dances performed at the Napoleonic court between 1802 and 1814. The deliberate mixing of the social classes during these occasions was considered a novelty. A significant proportion of the original musical scores for these semi-public dances has survived although they are sometimes hard to decipher. However, the importance of the choreographers involved (Pierre Gardel and Jean-Etienne Despréaux among others), suggests that the artistic standard of the works was high. This is confirmed by a link between these dances and the corps de ballet of the Paris Opéra which is apparent from other contemporary sources. By comparing eyewitness accounts with the archival sources, it becomes possible to deduce at least some of the missing choreographic details and social circumstances.

Keywords: Napoleon, Quadrilles, *Bal de Cour*

INTRODUCTION

Impressive details from the Marshals Ball yesterday – it cost, I believe, one hundred and eighty thousand francs: the most beautiful one that has been given for a very long time; four thousand candles, renewed at two o’clock, twelve hundred women, three thousand people in all; two contredanses of honour; the Emperor arrives at half past nine, leaves at midnight; the women had been there since six; bored with all this waiting.¹

This extract from the personal journal of a young Marie-Henri Beyle, better known by his *nom de plume* of Stendhal, was made on 7 January 1805. The ball he describes took place five days earlier, concluding the celebration of the *Sacre* – Napoleon’s coronation as the new French Emperor – which had taken place a month before that. As Stendhal knowingly remarks, it had been a long time since Paris had enjoyed similar pomp and circumstance. Indeed, one might wonder whether the French capital had ever experienced anything on the scale of this massively-attended dance, that was both official and public.

Dance Research 40.2 (2022): 183–205

DOI: 10.3366/drs.2022.0368

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CORONATION CEREMONIES

Recent research suggests that Napoleon's coronation woke French public celebration from the dead with a start. Some authors indicate that, from the *Sacre* onwards the number of celebrations of Napoleon's power soared and that this event was instrumental in shaping the theatrical dimension of these celebrations.^{2,3} The revolutionary festivals that set the scene from 1792 onwards have attracted some academic attention for their hymns and mass choirs, but Bonaparte's rise to power began in earnest with the eighteenth of *Brumaire* (9 November 1799). One of his first acts was to forego the mass festivals which had been in decline since Robespierre's abdication in 1794. The *Directoire* that accompanied the change of *régime* paved the way for a renewal of festivities – a period characterised by the *dansomanie*⁴ – following the asceticism of the years of Terror. This public celebration of power between 1793 and 1813 is seldom referred to in current historiography, consigning a great French tradition to obscurity.

In spite of this previous lack of interest, there are good reasons to take a close look at these public celebrations. This study concentrates on the public dances, rather than other musical ceremonials in support of political power. The French Revolution is often taken to represent a watershed in virtually all social matters. Prior to the revolution, the Bourbon Kings were known far and wide for their use of social dance fashion to propagate absolutist power. The new revolutionary regime marked a sea-change in such notions by encouraging the crowds to dance in the ruins of the Bastille (*dansons la carmagnole!*).⁵ The question therefore arises as to what was driving this new thirst for splendour in the Napoleonic Court, which – as Stendhal and many of his contemporaries observed – was clearly regal in character, especially in its public dances.

NAPOLEON'S COURT MUSICAL CEREMONIAL

Notwithstanding the considerable historiography available for the epoch, the musical ceremonial of Napoleon's court remains largely unexamined. Some works ignore this element (these will be addressed first), others more or less acknowledge the importance of social dancing in Napoleon's reign. Prod'homme and Martens, published an early academic contribution on the subject.⁶ They stressed the personal bonds between the Emperor and a succession of court composers and musicians, including Rodolphe Kreuzer (1766–1831), Jean-François Lesueur (1760–1837), Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842), Frédéric Blasius (1758–1829), Ferdinando Paer (1771–1839), Gaspare Spontini (1774–1851), Étienne Méhul (1763–1817) and André Grétry (1741–1813). In spite of this impressive list, the authors argue that after Napoleon's power grab, his musical interests were eclipsed by his military concerns. They also claim that social dancing had no importance in Napoleon's court. These assertions may explain why two names were not included in this list. Louis Julien-Clarchies (1769–1815) the composer, arranger and musical leader of Empress Josephine's personal

quadrille orchestra, and one of the most influential musicians of his age, was omitted from it. In the light of the Emperor's supposedly exclusive preference for military music, it is more surprising perhaps that Michel-Joseph Gebauer (1765–1812), known for conducting the most prestigious military band in France at the time – that of the *Gardes Impériales* – remained unmentioned.

The only existing monograph concerning Napoleon and music was published more than half-a-century ago by Theo Fleischman.⁷ The author plainly states that Napoleon did not possess a musical ear and consequently was not deeply touched by music. Light arias by Giovanni Paissello could reduce him to tears, but for the most part he appeared to lack any refined taste in music. In line with Prod'homme and Martens, Fleischman claims again that, as a newly-crowned Emperor, Napoleon would have been interested solely in the political uses of musical propaganda. Neither Fleischman, Prod'Homme or Martens indicate how court ritual was organized or which institutions were involved in its realization.

Two other works did attempt to view Napoleon's musical court life in an institutional perspective. Both of them acknowledged the importance of social dancing. Indeed, the first, by Frédéric Masson, is entirely dedicated to the quadrilles danced at Napoleon's court.⁸ Masson's methodology follows Prod'homme, Martens and Fleischman in citing eyewitnesses rather than consulting contemporary musical or archival sources. The general impression is that, like Fleischman, Masson mainly wanted to prove that Napoleon Bonaparte's personal and political motives stood out clearly in the musical framework for the culture of his court that he constructed once he had gained power. He even claimed that some of the festivities organized during the years after the *Sacre*, were reminiscent of Louis XIV's *ballets de cour*. His use of the 'quadrille' label for all types of choreographed, publicly-performed dances might appear peculiar, but it was also how most eyewitnesses identified them.

Only the more recent study of Dratwicki and Duflo was actually entirely based on musical sources – those in the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.⁹ This extensive collection of original scores relating to the *Divertissements de l'Empereur* covers the period 1801 to 1818. The series starts before Napoleon's coronation and includes material from the early part of Louis XVIII's reign. The authors were so confounded by the vast amount of material they encountered, that they began by identifying all the music citations and phrases in this immense musical *pot pourri*. In this way a chronology was established using the dates noted down on the scores. They also attempted to link these dates with important events for which they could have been produced. This was not always possible and seldom straightforward; sometimes different dates would appear on scores in the same bundle.

Eventually, the authors chose to ignore a significant proportion of the scores for social dances. They were not aware of Masson's earlier work, which certainly would have given them clues as to the political motives underlying the creation of some of these dance works. Their analysis strives for the most part to link court life with what is known about musical institutions and the networks of musicians

active in the *Opéra National*, the *Opéra Impérial* or the *Concert Spirituelle*. As with their predecessors, the authors asked no questions as to how the court that was abolished by the revolutionaries after 1792, could be so fully reactivated after 1799. They did not ask how Napoleon's courtiers managed to establish such a highly-complex musical ceremonial, that would become the mainstay for the public display of his political *persona*. Under the *Ancien Régime* it is acknowledged that institutions like the *Académie de Dance et de Musique* and the orchestra of the *Guardes Royales* contributed to the realization of musical ceremonial at court through the agency of the *Menus-Plaisirs du Roy*. Both had been replaced by the *Conservatoire National* (later *Impérial*).^{10,11}

If the accounts of eyewitnesses like Stendhal are to be believed, one of the defining features of these public dances was that they were very much part of the musical ceremonial of Napoleon's court – and surprisingly, that they were attended by the masses. Thousands of people participated, whether as onlookers or as dancers. As such, these events were hardly comparable to the extremely exclusive *Bal de Cour* of the *Ancien Régime*. Prior to the revolution, the court had been the unique playground of the nobility. However, all titles of the nobility were abolished with the monarchy in 1792 and Napoleon did not manage to establish his own *Noblesse d'Empire* until 1808. So the question remains, who could be invited in such massive numbers? Who would come to dance and who would just spectate? What was the artistic programme? Which dances were danced and how did the dancers prepare for the ballet-like quadrilles that were typical for that era? And last, but not least, what possible political motives lay behind these truly massive public dances? To what extent were they comparable with danced, musical ceremonial under the Sun King?

QUADRILLES AND/OR DIVERTISSEMENTS?

One of the tasks undertaken by Dratwicki and Duflo was to establish the difference between the categories of *quadrilles* and *divertissements*, the two main titles on the archival files containing the scores they investigated. Challenging this binary classification will be the start of my own contribution. To avoid confusion in the future about the suggested difference between the two categories, I propose to discuss the historical meaning of the term *divertissement*. Musicologists might argue that this title alluded to the *divertimento*, a new and 'free' form of composition that was growing in popularity at the end of the eighteenth century. Sound as this explanation may seem, in the context of Napoleon's court life, this was probably not the way those present would have understood the term. For them, it was just the music played during social occasions at court. Naturally, the occasion largely dictated the kind of music that was deemed appropriate. It was closely related to what the German musicologists today would call *Unterhaltungsmusik* – which can be almost anything from a recent sonata, to arias, warm-hearted waltzes or even lively accompaniments for ballet.

In fact, all of the scores held in this particular collection at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* were designed to amuse the Emperor and his family, his courtiers and their guests, regardless of the circumstances. One moment there could be a dinner with light background music played by a wind quartet, followed by some social dancing – and the wind instruments would be temporarily joined by strings and a *turquerie* (a unit of three or four percussionists in ‘black face’ dressed up as moors). Then someone would sing an aria at the harp or forte-piano. Eventually, a group of boisterous courtiers would take over the evening with a well-rehearsed, masked pantomime performed with the aid of professional dancers from the *Opéra Impérial*, accompanied by their professional orchestra. Therefore, quadrilles were as much *divertissements* as all the rest. There really was no limit as to what was possible, as long as it suited the occasion. In short, music in this context was always highly programmatic. Nevertheless, more than half of these scores were for dancing. So, just how important was dancing to Napoleon’s court life and its outward, ceremonial representation?

BAL DE COURT VERSUS QUADRILLE D’HONNEUR

Social dancing had played a continuous role in the propaganda efforts of successive revolutionary French governments since 1792. From the start, revolutionary feasts had constituted the musical ceremonial of political power in Paris and elsewhere in the French Republic. As far as can be verified, the dancing during these mass displays was mostly undertaken by the people in the open air in what were recognised as officially-organized *bals populaires*. As early as 1794, the republican rulers of France and the civil servants supporting the regime, had designed separate indoor dance events for themselves, while the people danced outside.¹² The indoor dances rapidly became as official as the *bals populaires*, but the attendance at them was naturally limited. Only people who shared the revolutionary ideology and who were sufficiently senior in the republican hierarchy were invited – or, in some cases, urged to attend. These were the forerunners of the quadrilles in Napoleon’s reign because they were clearly intended to encourage the new military, political, administrative and commercial elites to rally round the revolutionary flag. However, these dances differed from the Napoleonic quadrilles because they did not possess a semi-public character.

The private indoor dances continued to form part of the public ceremonial, but over time they changed from limited-attendance to mass-attendance and became more frequent. Ceremonial was increasingly exploited as part of an all-encompassing propaganda masterplan unfolding in calculated stages over two decades. The role of dancing as part of public ceremonial in support of political power developed steadily over the years: from before the French Revolution; during the first years of the Republic; and even in official dances at court long after Napoleon’s abdication. The innovation during Napoleon’s reign was to

establish a middle way between private dances (that were primarily indoors) and mass gatherings (that were usually outdoors).

Social dancing in public watched by a selected audience swiftly became current in other nation states; sometimes this was sparked by a Revolution, as with the Inaugural Ball in the United States of America, which was instituted in 1789.¹³ In the event, it took the Republicans in Paris a little longer to introduce the public ball as a political statement reflecting their freshly-established power. Perhaps they were afraid that the stigma of the absolutist kings would attach to them. Whatever the reasons, it was only on 14 June 1801, twelve years after the storming of the Bastille, and after Napoleon had firmly established himself as the First Consul, that the first hesitant steps were taken in this direction. It was actually Maurice de Talleyrand (1754–1838), Minister of Foreign Affairs, who organized the first officially-documented dance at his private residence. A week later, this same ball was mounted with the same scores and dances at the private residence of Jean-Antoine Chaptal (1754–1832), Minister of Internal Affairs.¹⁴

Neither of these occasions were discussed by the historians mentioned above. Although these dances did not constitute part of the official ceremonial (because they were held in the private residences of civil servants and were composed for private events) the scores for these dances were nevertheless held with all the others in the same collections of the *Bibliothèque Nationale*. They were bundled together as *Divertissements de l'Empereur*, an indication that they were considered to belong to the same category of events. The folders containing their scores were already labelled *quadrille*. A geopolitical motive for their early appearance was not far to seek either. By the end of 1801, Napoleon was trying to consolidate his newly-acquired status in the aftermath of the Battle of Marengo (on 14 June 1800). The Second Coalition had disintegrated after its humiliating defeat at his hands; and their defeat was followed by three peace treaties – Lunéville in January 1801, Mortefontaine in September 1801 and more conclusively, Amiens in March 1802. In this period the French state once again resorted to cultural diplomacy – a science it had been instrumental in creating over centuries – making it possible to fête the glorious victory at Marengo, while gallantly inviting her defeated enemies to the party. After more than a decade of staunch, ascetic rule, the French state apparatus was more than willing to rise to such an occasion. Significantly, in order to ensure its success, they allowed the initiative be taken by one of the most illustrious representatives of the old nobility.

HOW TO INVITE YOUR ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES IN THE SAME ROOM?

Whatever they were, the quadrille performances of the new era were rapidly gaining an international reputation for themselves. However, this was only partly because they were linked to geopolitical motives like the resounding victories of the *Grande Armée*. In hindsight, the status-enhancing potential they

offered to the new generation of civil and military servants of the Emperor was probably determinative as well. Madame de Rémusat (1780–1821) recounted how international guests and ambassadors were earmarked for invitations as early as 1806; she also described the courtiers dressed in richly-embroidered uniforms.¹⁵ During the *Ancien Régime* only noble courtiers had been welcome at court dances—mere citizens being ineligible to be received at court. As of 1792 there was no longer a nobility in France, so it remained for the new court to find a means of discriminating between those who were welcome and those who were not.

The situation remained ambiguous for a while—since élites ceased to exist officially after 1792; but this changed rapidly after 1799. Napoleon's explicit intention was to support the elites that had raised him to the throne. We can follow this process in detail by examining the very numerous lists of hand-picked guests. Copied in a swift hand, like the list for the *Fête pour le Retour de la Garde Impériale*, which took place on 19 December 1807, contained no fewer than thirty categories of VIPs ranging from court dignitaries to military prefects, and including names drawn from the carefully-calibrated social categories within the republican establishment. This particular list shows us how new élites were systematically created between 1799 and 1807, a process that was to culminate in 1808 with the creation of the *Noblesse d'Empire*.¹⁶

The archived guest lists were probably hand copies of the official protocol lists, provided by the secretary of the *Grand-Maître des Cérémonies*, Louis Philippe, Comte de Ségur (1753–1830), who was appointed in 1803. They served as important and effective tools in securing the loyalty to the new regime of as many influential people as possible. To be invited to an important public event made it possible to flaunt one's allegiance to the new regime; the old, discarded and humiliated élites and the adherents of the new regime shared a common hunger for the recognition that an invitation bestowed. Therefore, the role of public ceremonies like the concluding ball of the *Fête pour le Retour de la Garde Impériale* should not be underestimated.

The freshly-promoted citizens in arms—crowned with military glory acquired on many a European battlefield—could not afford to miss this roll call, indeed they might well expect it as of right. The opening dances—the *quadrilles d'honneurs*, as Stendhal called them—were strictly reserved for the recently-promoted military men from the Emperor's inner circle. These *quadrilles d'honneurs* effectively constituted a private ball, witnessed by all present, that took place before the public one, in which all could participate (Figure 1). This could be seen as a nod in the direction of the *bal de cour* tradition, with the onlookers just as important as the dancers.¹⁷ However, there were differences: instead of being composed of a select group of noblemen—as was the case before the Revolution—the onlookers now included representatives from all of the upper echelons of society and in much greater numbers than ever before. Napoleon distrusted the old nobility and deliberately outnumbered and side-lined them in these lavish, public events. Moreover, he wanted the world outside France to witness that he held all of France in his hand and that the republican,

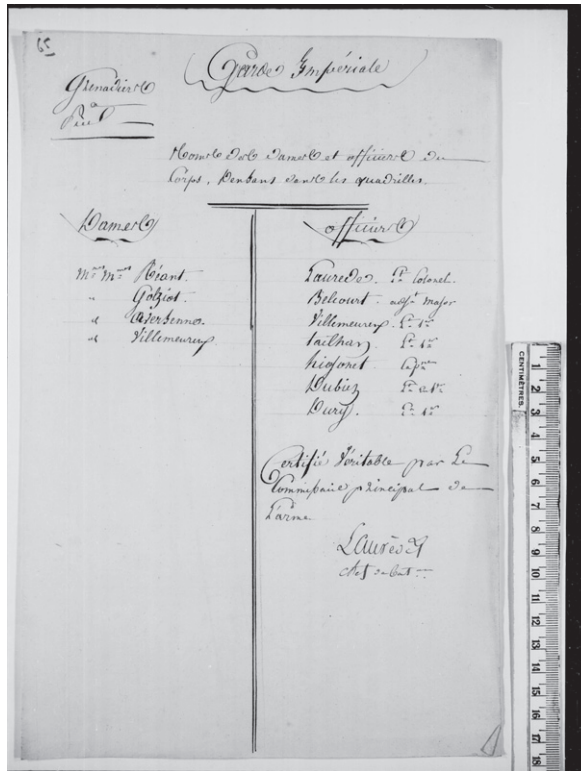


Fig. 1. ANF, Fonds Maréchal Bessières (XVIIIe–XIXe Siècles) 1814 1807, 32AP/10, 283 Mi 3, Nr 65: A sample list with the military dancers and their ladies *dansant dan les quadrilles* selected for the *quadrilles d'honneur* taking place during the *Fête pour le retour de la Garde Impériale*, which took place on 20 December 1807 on the initiative of Maréchal De Bessières.

well-ordered society he had shaped, was also disciplined and peaceful. Following the opening ceremonies, as Madame de Rémusat accurately noted, *la cour et la ville se mêlèrent*.¹⁸

THE SCHWARZENBERG TRAGEDY: SEPARATION OF THE MASSES AND THE ÉLITES

During Napoleon's long reign, there were noticeable shifts in the way that court culture expressed itself through public dances. The high-water mark of his success in the personal domain was his second marriage, to Princess Louise of Austria, in 1810. During the elaborate festivities surrounding their wedding, a novel separation between courtiers and the masses of civilians was introduced. The main difference with earlier, official *quadrille* performances, was that—as is often seen with aristocratic marriages—two separate events were created. The first was meant for the mass of the people. A second

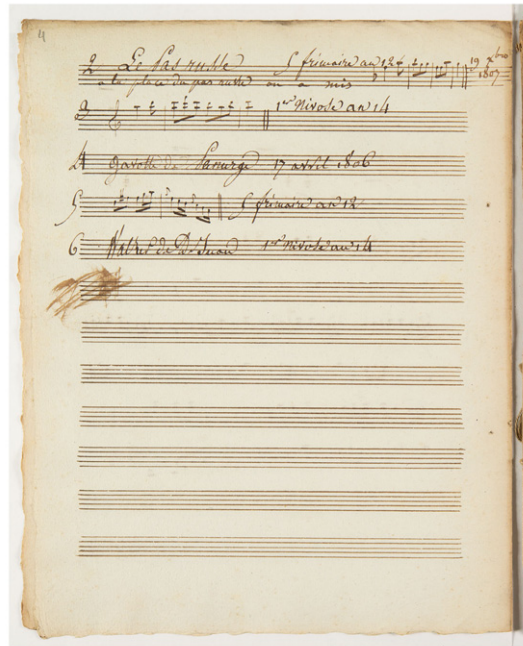


Fig. 2. BNF D–1854: List with part of the dance programme for Napoleon’s second marriage, the public ball was organized in the Chapelle Saint-Louis, changed into a ballroom after 1792. The small musical reference apparently sufficed for the experienced reader.

was held afterwards, in the more private space of Hôtel Schwarzenberg, the residence of the Prince of Schwarzenberg, Charles-Philippe de Schwarzenberg (1771–1820), the Austrian ambassador in Paris. That second dance turned into a real tragedy when the ballroom – a marquee erected in the park behind the ambassador’s residence – burned down. A *girandole* came too close to a freshly-painted backcloth, still wet with oil and turpentine, and, catching fire, set the entire room ablaze in minutes. The ambassador’s wife, the gifted Pauline d’Arenberg (1774–1810), perished in the fire with seven guests.¹⁹ The music for both occasions survives (Figure 2).²⁰

After this initial setback, Napoleon’s court gradually turned in on itself, possibly something that prompted Masson’s comparison with Louis XIV. However, more significant to him was the allegorical character of some of these more private dances, comparable in this respect to the *ballets de cour* performed by the Sun King from a tender age. Masson identified three such works, all from the post-*Sacre* period, and two of which were performed after Napoleon’s second marriage. In fact, the collection at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* contains at least six

similar allegorical dances from various periods of Napoleon's reign (most having scores extant) (Figure 2):

- 20/04/1806 – *Le Quatre Couleurs* (Abrantes, 1830/3 212–214 & Remusat 1880/3, 21–22)
- 20/12/1807 – *Les Peuples d'Europes* – BNF D – 18098 (1)
- 30/01/1808 – *Les Tyrolliennes* – BNF D – 18099 (1–8)
- 02/01/1809 – *l'Échiquier* – BNF D – 18101 (1–4)
- 26/02/1811 – *Le Zodiaque* – BNF D – 18173 (1–10)
- 11/02/1812 – *Le Zéphir* – BNF D – 18210

However, it is easy to challenge Masson's argument: the use of allegorical theatrical *intermezzi* was widespread in Europe between 1760 and 1830. The so called *redoutes* presided over by Goethe at the Weimar Court, were comparable occasions.²¹ *Tableaux vivants* or allegorical ballets performed in private spaces and organised and often partly performed by courtiers, were also fairly common. Despite Masson's claims, these kinds of entertainments were popular among European élites during the second half of the eighteenth century and beyond. It is hard to justify the limitation of an historical survey of such allegorical ballets to the period between Versailles, Louis XIV and Napoleon.

BACK TO THE SOURCES

In addition to the eyewitness accounts already mentioned, and the scores for many of the *Divertissements* in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, there are a number of records illustrating court entertainments preserved at the *Archives Nationales de France*. These records have not been studied before or linked to the musical sources from the *Bibliothèque Nationale*; they were hard to trace and they present interpretative difficulties regarding their provenance. A new catalogue of the scores was published as late as 1997 by the *Bibliothèque Nationale* but, even then, Dratwicki and Duflo and the staff of the *Bibliothèque Nationale* made erroneous assumptions about the material they encountered that did not reveal an institutional origin.

About one-third of the scores was entitled '*quadrille*', but many of the scores for dancing did not actually fit this category. Some of the scores were for ballet and, arguably, others were for the kind of *intermezzi* described by Madame de Remusat. The fact that so many scores were for dancing puzzled Dratwicki and Duflo, because they never imagined that this activity was so significant in Napoleon's court. Neither Fleischman, Prod'homme or Martens even mentioned dances or dancing as part of musical court ritual. In more recent years, Ivor Guest did mention the presence of ballet dancers from the *Opéra Impérial* at court, but only once.²² On 4 November 1810, Napoleon invited Gardel and his *corps de ballet* to give a special performance at Fontainebleau. Mr Guest considered the performances by dancers and other artists of the ballet *corps* of the *Opéra Impérial* outside their theatre to represent exceptional and irregular occasions. Consequently, his reporting of this eventuality was limited to the reciting of

an anecdote (concerning the robbery of carriages transporting the troupe and their performance clothes). However, a large proportion of extant scores carry handwritten notes attesting the involvement of dancers and choreographers from the *Opéra Impérial*. When we compare these scores with the eyewitness accounts it becomes abundantly clear that performances by the ballet of the *Opéra Impérial* at Fontainebleau, Saint-Cloud, Malmaison, Versailles, and the Louvre were not exceptional at all. One rather gets the impression that these performances were regular – an integral part of the programming of various institutions. Indeed, the archives of the *Opéra National* include numerous financial records listing remuneration for *fêtes à la cour* between 1800 and 1815.²³

However, the problems with the interpretation of these scores runs deeper. Dratwicky and Duflo were surprised to find that for the most part the scores were fragmentary, incomplete, and loosely-arranged. Most of the dancing scores for the *quadrilles* contained only a few bars of music, barely enough for one dance movement and mostly arranged for limited instrumentation. The musical material for these so-called *quadrilles* consisted of a bunch of scattered extracts from operatic – or even ballet – works. Surely, this could not be appropriate music for official dances, in which courtiers were expected to ‘shine’ in the presence of their newly-crowned Emperor? If one is not fully aware of the specific musical culture of the early quadrille years, this can indeed seem bizarre; but these were probably authentic scores used for prestigious public dances during the first decades of the nineteenth century. At least they would have been used in preparations for the events and rehearsals and perhaps even for the staging itself.

At that time, the dancing dictated the arrangement of the accompanying music. Eyewitness accounts sometimes explicitly mention the use of opera music for dancing during this era. Extracts from overtures and arias were executed as closely to the original as possible, albeit far slower than the 120 bpm in use for the eighteenth-century *contredanse à la française*; this was to allow the virtuoso dancers trained in the early *quadrille* style to perform their sometimes acrobatic pirouettes and ballet-like leaps.²⁴ The fact that these scores merely contained the rudiments of melodies and scant arrangements, vouches for their historicity rather than the opposite. As the dance dictated the musical phrasing, orchestras at the time would collectively improvise their music while the dancing was being executed, varying the melodies each time the dances were performed to accommodate the dance movements. Even the folders from this collection, with music for the ballet intermissions to be executed by professional dancers, contained only a reduced score for a few instruments, known as *violon répéteur*.²⁵ As the name suggests, these were normally used for dance rehearsals, but, the material in this collection indicates that they were probably used also for the actual performances.

Dratwicky and Duflo were also mistaken in the distinctions they made between *divertissements* and *quadrilles*. The two categories were suggested by the titles on the archived scores; the authors took it upon themselves to find a specific artistic reason for these categories. They suggested that the works carrying the title *quadrille* were danced by amateurs, while the ones called *divertissements* were

for ballet and danced by professionals. If we compare the dates on the scores with Masson's compilation of eyewitness accounts, this can be questioned: the *quadrilles* from 1808 danced at the home of the freshly-promoted Duchesse de Berg (Caroline Bonaparte also known as Madame Murat) to the theme 'Tyroliennes'; those danced during the carnival of 1810 to the theme 'sorceress chess'; the quadrille from 26 February 1811 danced to the theme 'the zodiac;' and the one from 11 February 1812 danced to the theme 'the Zéphir' all proved to be collaborations between professional ballet dancers and courtiers, performing together.

Dratwicki and Duflo tried to establish a more informed chronology of the events, scrutinizing Tulard's and Garros' work in the quest for information about possible gatherings for which the dances could have been intended.²⁶ They compared the dates on the scores with the information they gleaned elsewhere. Their only conclusion was that the number of musical events increased dramatically after the *Sacre* – which is obviously true from the evidence of these sources. Only six dances were found between 1801 and Napoleon's Coronation (an average of three each year). Fifty-one performances were found in the remaining nine years of Napoleon's reign (an average of five per year).

However, there are several reasons to doubt the completeness of the collection and the reliability of the dates found on the scores. It may be even too early to conclude that the ritual of Napoleon's court gained new impetus after the *Sacre*. Firstly, most of the material was meant to be *Unterhaltungsmusik* that could easily be re-used when the occasion arose, with indications that this was regularly the case. One of the scores from the folder entitled *Quadrille pour la fête donnée à leurs Majestés par la Garde Impériale le 24 Juin 1810*, has a short list on the reverse of page two with the following titles, dates and musical references (with a couple of bars of music to indicate the main musical theme – Figure 2):

- 2) Le Pas Russe – à la place du Pas Russe on a mis: 5 frimaire an 12 (19 Xbre 1807)
- 3) 1 nivose an 14
- 4) Gavotte de Panurge 17 avril 1806
- 5) 5 frimaire an 12
- 6) Walzer de Don Juan – 1 nivose an 14
- 8) 23 prairial an 9
- 9) 6 nivose an 13.²⁷

These notes seem to indicate that material composed for earlier occasions was subsequently re-used:

- Nr. 2 Pas Russe: probably the dance as was performed at the *Fête pour le retour de la Garde Impériale* on the 20 December 1807 – BNF D-18098 (1)
- Nr. 3 & 6 were probably first danced on 22 December 1805 for an unattributed event – BNF D-18177 & D-18176.
- Nr. 4 could be the work danced at Saint-Cloud on April 17th, 1806, a few days before the one Madame Remusat mentions as taking place in Paris

- Nr. 5 could have been danced during an evening with Joséphine De Beauharnais 27 November 1803 – BNF D – 18087 (1–6), & D – 18118
- Nr. 8 was could be a reprise of the first *quadrille* in the collection, danced at the residence of Tayllerand on 12 June 1801 – BNF D – 18086 (1–8).
- Nr. 9 was probably the *quadrille* danced at the *Fête des Maréchaux*, 27 December 1804 held at the Rue Chanteraine – BNF D – 18123.

This survey strongly suggests that there existed a practice of extensively re-using musical scores from this collection – and probably on occasions yet to be discovered (additional information could facilitate further cross-linking with the archived dances.)

This small list in itself bears further examination. Only Nr. 1 and Nr. 8 of the entire set were loosely scored for one violin and a bass. In its current form the list merely provides an impression of what the intended dance programme of the evening would have looked like. One can speculate that such documents might have supported an approach to patrons by the artistic staff making a proposal for an event, as the listed documents themselves would not have sufficed for a performance. Therefore it is most unlikely that the collection is complete, containing all the scores for all the events.

This short list also reveals a possible structure for the public dances organised for Napoleon's court: opening with a ceremonial march (*polonaise*) – *quadrille* – another dance – another dance – etc. – *quadrille* – finale (exiting with a *polonaise*). This structure was also noted for the ball organized in honour of the first marriage of the Prince de Bade and Stephanie de Beauharnais in 1806 (BNF D – 1813), and again for the ball at Hôtel Schwarzenberg for Napoleon's marriage in 1810 (BNF D – 18155). Mainly for this reason, I consider the use of the titles *quadrille* or even *divertissement* on some of the folders confusing. Most scores for dances mention a number of different dances to be performed.

Dratwicky and Dufflo established a list of all the dance names from all the scores, categorized by country. At the start of the nineteenth century these dances were seldom attributed unequivocally to nations. The mere fact that a tune had a title referring to a dance name is seldom a true indication of it actually being a dance performed during a ballet or ball. The obvious example being the minuet, which was only rarely danced at the French court at the time, and doubtless refers to the musical form in some cases. The same may be said of the *gigues*, *rigaudons*, *passepieds* and *chaconnes* appearing on the same list.

The contrafact²⁸ model used for scoring dances in the *quadrille* culture of the first decade of the nineteenth century, allowed for virtually every musical source (including popular opera arias) to be reshuffled, re-used and danced to. Any melody originally used for one dance could serve to accompany a more recent one. The same musical scores could be used to accompany different dance forms. The names of dances on the top of scores therefore offer little accurate guidance as to the dance forms for which they were used. The *waltz*, *allemande*, *anglaise*, *polonaise*, *march* and *gavotte (de vestris)* appeared regularly on dance programmes for dances in France. It should not come as surprise that they all figure frequently in this extensive collection.

WHAT WERE THE INSTITUTIONAL DRIVING FORCES BEHIND NAPOLEON'S COURT CULTURE?

The regularity of the musical ceremonial organized by and for Napoleon's court suggests institutional support. Interestingly, there is no historical mention of this. It is not plausible that these frequently-occurring events with their organisational challenges could have been improvised at the last minute, year after year. The revolutionary fervour of the new regime led to the scrapping not only of the court and of the nobility, but also of most institutions that had supported them logistically. In fact, responsibility for these new danced events probably fell to an organisation that stemmed from the *Ancien Régime*—*Les Menus-Plaisirs (du Roy)*. Hitherto this institution has been studied with regard to French court culture before the revolution. It dates from the sixteenth century and provided all kinds of entertainment for the king and his retinue, such as dinner parties, fireworks, dances, and even public festivities. Administratively, it reported to the Privy Council, the archives of which were recently reclassified by the *Archives Nationales de France*.²⁹ Previously, the *Menus-Plaisirs* were considered a purely royal prerogative that ceased when the monarchy was abolished. Following the reorganization of its records by the National French Archives a gap in the chronology from just after the revolution until after the restoration of Louis XVI (between 1792 and 1818) which had been thought to exist was filled, apart from a short break between 1792 and 1793.

The *Menus-Plaisirs* had always drawn upon the pool of talent represented by the *Opéra Royal* and the pupils of the *Académie Royale de Danse* (founded in 1669) and the *Académie Royale de Musique* (founded in 1661)—later to become the *École Royale de Déclamation et de Chant* (from 1784). In these institutions, youngsters from all over France (and even those born outside France) were trained to become leading actors and dancers of the privileged theatres, enjoying royal protection in the French capital. One little-known duty of the pupils was to perform in the *Menus-Plaisirs du Roy* whenever the court demanded it.

The main reason that the *Menus-Plaisirs* has not been identified as responsible for Napoleon's court ritual is owing to the confusion surrounding the transition from the old Royal Academy system to the new National Conservatory. The *Conservatoire National* in Paris was founded in 1793 and its work was originally and exclusively based on the musicians and conductors of the *Gardes Nationales*, previously known as the *Gardes Royales*. This was the first modern conservatory in the world, which took as its foundation one of the two top-tier French military orchestras (the other was the *Gardes Suisses*). For the *Convention Nationale* it was a logical choice to replace the existing Royal Academy system with a successor more loyal to the new regime, which called initially for mass propaganda with a military slant. However, the original propaganda mission of the reformed institution proved to be short-lived. Constant Pierre, among others, stressed the importance of the revolutionary years and the repertoires associated with these.³⁰ But in practice this related only to the first couple of years of the institution founded in 1793. After Napoleon's

rise to power, in 1799, most revolutionary entertainments supported by the military orchestra of the *Conservatoire National*, were abolished altogether. From that juncture, the transition to a new version of the *Menus-Plaisirs* seemed inevitable.

There was also a social-historical reason that explained this development. The military musicians of the *Gardes Nationales* that formed the basis for the new *Conservatoire National*, traditionally saw themselves as artisans rather than artists—in this regard they were similar to their colleagues who had toiled under the former, Royal, system abolished by the revolution. In fact, the musicians of *Gardes Royales*, as their original name indicates, had served the royal family before, and were fully aware of what an involvement in the *Menus-Plaisirs du Roy* meant.³¹ Their multifaceted role remained largely unchanged when they were asked to form the new *Conservatoire National*. Intrinsicly their mission remained the same; what they had to play and under which circumstances depended on the whim of their patrons. Between 1793 and 1803 (*Sacre*) their patrons changed more than once and they changed with them.

The archival records illustrate this bumpy course. Between 14 July 1789 (the storming of the Bastille) and the 10 August 1792 (the abolition of the French monarchy) the *Menus-Plaisirs du Roy* continued to function as of old. Under the new regime their effects were commandeered immediately as state property, and an inventory was commissioned—it was only delivered on 2 April 1793. Consequently, the historical records of the *Menus-Plaisirs* began to run in parallel with those of the newly founded *Conservatoire National*. Two factors are significant in understanding this: the *Gardes Nationales* were quartered in the school of the *Opéra National*; and a collaboration between the instructors of both institutions was established to facilitate the work of the *Menus-Plaisirs* at an early stage of its transition.

The collocation of a rich store of theatrical resources including stage decorations and costumes combined with a professional training institution (for those whose performances were to divert their ruler) was not a novel concept. The ballet school of the *Opéra Royal* utilized the facilities of the *Menus-Plaisirs* containing the resources of the royal opera house (including costumes and scenery) from 1713. The *Ancien Théâtre Comique de la Foire Saint-Laurent* had been commandeered by the government and was subsequently dismantled and rebuilt inside this building. It served as a practice-room for rehearsing new and lesser-known opera or ballet works and also trained artists for the *Menus-Plaisirs* as well. This was a priceless asset with its combination of skilled pupils, teachers, materials and a rehearsal theatre. The *Conservatoire National* (soon to become *Impérial*) moved into its buildings in 1796

It took a mere three years (1796–1799) to transform itself from a military institute for propaganda into a custom-made facility exclusively at the service of Napoleon's court. One major development was the donation of an entire musical library from the *Menus-Plaisirs* to the Conservatory in 1797. From 1803 the *Grand-Maître des Cérémonies* and his secretary personally supervised the appointments of the conservatoire's teaching staff, demonstrating just how closely the court

became involved in managing this process.³² The meticulously-kept register of loans from the stores of the *Menus-Plaisirs* and the *Garde-Meuble* captures the frequency with which teachers at the conservatory (often combined with the musicians and dancers of the *Opéra National*) performed outside their official commission. The remarkable degree of detail available has the potential to facilitate a more exact estimation of the frequency of various entertainments at Napoleon's court than the scores in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* can provide.³³

The increasing need for competence in social dancing led to the appointment of a professionally-staffed, social dancing class in the Conservatoire National, led by Jean-Étienne Despréaux (1748–1820).³⁴ Pierre Constant suggested that pupils destined to be singers in the theatre should be required to learn ways of impersonating different characters, and thus learn how to move or dance like their real-life counterparts. Over time the importance of the *quadrille* performances became more established, and so did Despréaux's leadership role in organising them; the *Journal d'Empire* of 21 December 1807 – soon after his nomination as dancing master at the Conservatoire National – described him as already possessing quite a reputation in training young artists in this type of performance.

*After the firework display and S. M. had returned to take her seat, the ball was opened she deigned to honour it with her presence for several hours. In the first quadrille, we saw S. A. I., the Grand Duchess of Berg, Prince Borghese, the Duke of Arenberg, and Madame de Chevreuse. Meanwhile, a splendid buffet was set up on a large number of tables in the apartments on the ground floor. Refreshments of all kinds were distributed with care and attention in the rooms above. The fog, having become thinner, it was easier to see the illuminations of the Champs-de-Mars, and ... all the surrounding avenues, making access by horse carriage possible. ... Large fires were lit in the courtyards for the people outside, whose presence further contributed to the magnificence and picturesque effect of this element of the decorations. Finally, the charming women of the capital, the golden youth of the court and army, all the great dignitaries, all the distinguished foreigners in Paris, had been invited and had committed themselves to the festivities. ... The officers of the guard did the honours with all the elegance of French fashion. It was past midnight when H.M. Empress withdrew. The Grand Duchess of Berg stayed until five o'clock in the morning, animating and embellishing everything with her presence. The details of this remarkable, well-ordered and tasteful feast had been overseen by M. Despréaux, who excels at producing such enchanting entertainments.*³⁵

PIERRE GARDEL AND LES MENUS-PLAISIRS

Pierre Gardel's name appears in this article from the *Journal d'Empire* quoted above in connection with a ballet *intermezzo* as well. His name crops up consistently in the sources consulted for this article. It appears that the advancement of political propaganda through public entertainments must have been a favourite activity of his – and one that is seldom referred to. Throughout his long career Gardel was often involved in public dancing performances in Paris – whichever way the wind was blowing at the time. He was primarily motivated by the desire to sustain his artistic career; and unlike other dancers, he was able to play the role of the courtier convincingly, something that gave him an edge.

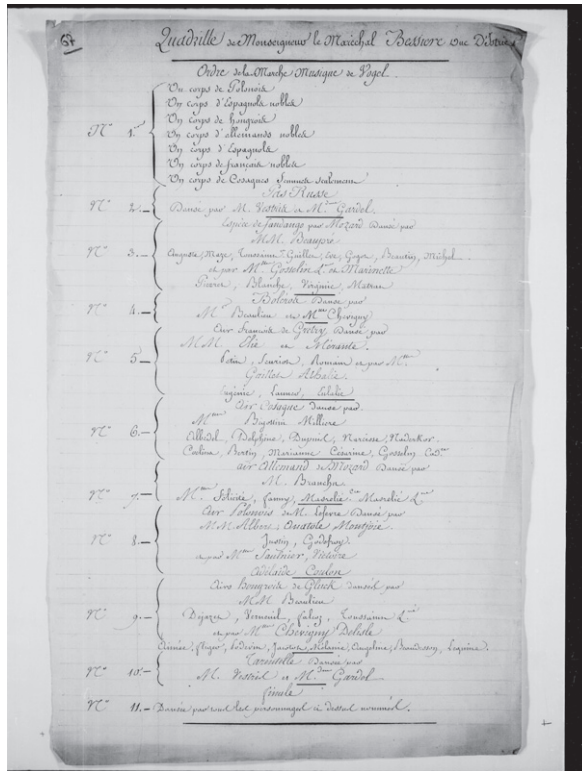


Fig. 3. ANF, Fonds Maréchal Bessières (XVIIIe–XIXe Siècles) 1814 1807, 32AP/10, 283 Mi 3, Nr. 67: Gardel's proposal for the quadrille danced at the *Fête du Retour de la Garde Impériale* December 20th, 1807 again at the former *Chapelle Saint-Louis* at the Military Academy in Paris. This part of the dance programme only lists the ballet part of the evening. It was followed by two *quadrilles d'honneur* and the conclusive ball for the gathered masses.

Gardel started his career as the personal dancing-master of Marie-Antoinette. Before taking up a role as main choreographer at the *Opéra Royal*, he arranged her ‘intimate shepherds’ dances at *Le Petit Trianon* in *Versailles*. After the revolution, he turned his coat and assisted Louis David with choreography designed to motivate crowds at Revolutionary Festivals.³⁵ Later, he reverted to the role of courtier at Napoleon’s court assisting in all sorts of capacities, from teaching newly-promoted generals how to walk and bow to devising court ballets. Gardel proved to be a survivor, a Jack-of-all-trades. Like Despréaux and the Comte de Ségur, he should be seen as a bridging figure who brought some of the magnificence of the *Ancien Régime* back into Napoleon’s court. Through his unmatched skills in choreography the *Menus-Plaisirs* regained its international reputation and influence throughout Europe.

There is no evidence that Gardel was involved in staging elaborate *quadrilles* for social dancing. He appears to have preferred working with his professional dancers while Despréaux catered for the social dancers (Figure 3). Dratwicky and

Duffo state he confined himself at court to mounting productions of existing ballets from the *Opéra Impérial*, implicitly assuming, as Ivor Guest did, that he never produced original works intended for the court. There is evidence that some of Gardel's ballet choreography performed at court had not been performed first on the *Opéra Impérial* stage (and subsequently before courtiers at The Louvre, Saint-Cloud, Versailles or Malmaison). For example, Gardel's *Paul et Virginie* was premiered at Saint-Cloud before it became a major success at the *Opéra Impérial*, as the programme for the ballet confirms:

PAUL ET VIRGINIE

BALLET PANTOMIME EN TROIS ACTES
DÉDIÉ A SA MAJESTÉ L'IMPÉRATRICE REINE PAR
M. GARDEL

Maître des Ballets de SM L'EMPEREUR et Son Chef de la danse
de l'Académie Impérial de
Musique et Membre de la Société Philotechnique

Musique de M. Kreutzer premier Violon de la Chapelle de Sa Majesté
Représenté devant LEURS MAJESTÉS sur le Théâtre de St. Cloud
le jeudi 12 juin 1806 et sur celui de l'Académie Impérial de Musique
le mardi 24 du même mois.³⁶

Paul et Virginie, based on the eponymous³⁷ novel by Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737–1813), is set on the French-colonial Island of Mauritius. The story depicts a love affair of a creole couple. As Empress Josephine was herself of creole origin, Gardel naturally dedicated the work to her. Consequently, he planned to stage it in the theatre at Saint-Cloud, her personal *château*. Exceptionally for such a work at least some of its original score was preserved because it was restaged during the 1811 and 1813 seasons of the *Menus-Plaisirs*.³⁸ The twelve-day interval between the premiere and the *Opéra Impérial* performance was possibly needed to transport its sets and costumes back to Paris. Ivor Guest's implicit assumption that Gardel exclusively composed his new ballets for the stage of the *Opéra National/Impérial* is therefore questionable.

CONCLUSIONS

Masson's view of Napoleon's attitude to music, would lead one to anticipate the development of a more elitist style of dancing at his court. Masson's point of view, popular among certain historians, was that Napoleon transformed himself into a new version of the Sun King from the moment he crowned himself as Emperor of the French. In fact, he never entirely renounced his populist approach – and with reason.

The fact that Napoleon was crowned Emperor of the French, and not of France, was significant with regard to dancing: he reigned over a people and

not over a territory. Through his military prowess and the legal powers he invoked, he forced entire populations into French citizenship. His *Grande Armée* soon evolved into a transnational melting-pot in which careers were made on the battlefield. These factors help to explain his principal motive in transforming court culture and promoting social dance. Ambitious young men who wanted to join the ranks of the old élites needed not only victory in battle, but proficiency as dancers.

The public ceremonial of the *quadrille* dances discussed in this article bears little comparison with the Sun King's court rituals. The only apparent continuity between these two epochs was in the use of allegorical choreography; on the other hand, the institutional continuity that links Napoleon's reign with the more recently-abolished *Ancien Régime*, has previously escaped notice, as we have seen above. The regular involvement of official institutions in the *Divertissements de l'Empereur* created professional networks of musicians and dancers. These relationships were established by appealing to archival sources related to the *Menus-Plaisirs* and the *Conservatoire National*—these sources therefore merit further exploration.

The link with the past was also demonstrated in the involvement of individual courtiers and artists engaged by court before the Revolution. Gardel and Despréaux, the two main choreographers staging the dance performances of the *Menus-Plaisirs*, were the leading lights. Supervisory leadership came from the *Comte de Ségur*, acting *Grand-Maître des Cérémonies* from 1803—but in spite of their obvious talent and experience in organizing court ceremonies, the choreographers and the master of ceremonies were not always allowed much leeway in fulfilling their duty. Napoleon personally took the reins—he had to perform an extremely difficult balancing act, the result of which confirmed his ability to stay in power.

On the one hand, Napoleon strove to achieve a modern social order in which noble rank or the pretence of noble rank no longer accorded precedence; but he also needed the support of the old nobility to legitimise his rule. At the same time, the new generation of uniformed military personnel that he had raised and whom he could trust with his life, was waiting in the wings, to enter the world's stage, longing to impress. These men had to move to the centre of a transformed ritual without sidelining the old nobility completely.

An important aspect of the so-called *quadrilles* was the engineering of a seamless transition from ballet to social dance—often in the course of a single event. A staged ballet by Gardel would open the evening, followed by the proper *quadrille* rehearsed by a select few, coached by Despréaux, eventually followed by the *bal public* in which courtiers and citizens danced together. All these different performances shared a common choreographic language based on *contredanse à la Française* in combination with more advanced ballet steps. The main difference between the ballet part and the public dancing was that the ballet part was performed by professionals, also trained in the art of pantomime. They conveyed a story without words, by mime and dancing. The *quadrille d'honneur* reflected the hierarchy of the new regime; after this a large number of *quadrilles* formed up,

involving all the other dancers present. The massiveness of the crowds caught the attention of all present as something exciting and novel. It marked a clear break with the *Ancien Régime*, but on the other hand, these quadrilles relied very much for their distinctive qualities upon the traditions of the former institutions, now consigned to history.

Both aspects of dancing – ballet pantomime and *quadrilles* – remained highly influential in continental Europe in the decade after Napoleon's abdication. The choreographic quality of the *quadrille* dances, as described in this article, and the prestige they conveyed, are essential to an understanding of their durability. It is perhaps surprising that the dancing style adopted for the ritual of the new court originated in the military dancing culture of the French *Grande Armée* and the *quadrille* convention and repertory. This French dancing style with its matching repertoire was eventually embraced and appropriated in the social dances of former adversaries. That this new style worked itself into the hearts and minds of all of Europe – in spite of all the bloody conflicts in which they had lately engaged – is frankly astounding; the popular origin of the *quadrille* in the ballrooms of Paris proved to be the secret of their success. Under the *Ancien Régime* the mere thought of common ballroom dances evolving into court dances in less than a generation, would have been unthinkable. Under Napoleon's reign this was considered a sign of the times and positively embraced.

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NOTES

Unless otherwise specified, all translations are the author's own.

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- le premier vendémiaire de l'an sixième de la République française une et indivisible [22 septembre 1797]. Ce registre contient aussi les demandes faites aux différents fournisseurs. (132 folios), O/2/369: Dépôt des fêtes nationales. Registre de sorties d'effets du premier vendémiaire an 7 au 31 décembre 1807. (307 folios), O/2/576: Magasin des Menus-Plaisirs ou dépôt des fêtes. Sorties de meubles et effets. Pages numérotées 1-95 (1808-1814) et 223-257 (1815).*
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- O/2/368: Registre des effets sortis du Dépôt des fêtes nationales, commencé le premier vendémiaire de l'an sixième de la République française une et indivisible [22 septembre 1797]. Ce registre contient aussi les demandes faites aux différents fournisseurs. (132 folios).
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