

A Re-Examination of *port de voix* in the  
Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries:  
Possibilities in Vocal Performance

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The *port de voix* is one of those essential “graces” that give French vocal music of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries its particular character and expressiveness. Too often the multiple possibilities for realizing the *port de voix* in performance have tended to be overlooked by modern performers, even by those who specialize in baroque performance. The *port de voix* has been studied in the context of ornamentation in general and in the context of French airs in particular.<sup>1</sup> A re-examination is timely. There are so many subtle elements and fine details that must come together to bring a French air or cantata to life, that it is not surprising that some of the nuances of this ornament have fallen by the wayside. Because many of these nuances depended upon the intimate acoustic and accompanying vocal production associated with a *salon* or chamber performance, the subtleties of the *port de voix* are more difficult to achieve in larger modern concert halls. The *port de voix* is one of the more complex of the French *agréments*, because it simultaneously ornaments the harmony, the melody, and the rhythm, while enabling shading and inflection of the text. This article will discuss the various forms of the *port de voix*: the *port de voix simple*, also called the *port de voix plein*; the *demy port de voix*; the *port de voix glissé* (sometimes also called the *port de voix coulé*); the *port de voix perdu* (sometimes also called the *port de voix feint*); and the *port de voix pincé*. We will examine how the *port de voix* evolved in this period and clarify (and demonstrate with audio examples) some of the possibilities for interpreta-

1 See, for example: Putnam Aldrich, “The Principal Agréments of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1942); Frederick Neumann, *Ornamentation in Baroque and Post Baroque Music: with Special Emphasis on J. S. Bach* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 49–65; Sally Allis Sanford, “Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Vocal Style and Technique” (DMA diss., Stanford University, 1979), 213–18; and Catherine Gordon-Seifert, *Music and the Language of Love* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 193–5.

tion in performance of French music from the early seventeenth century through the reign of Louis XIV.

We generally think of the *port de voix* today as a single appoggiatura from below, most typically when the main note is approached melodically from the lower neighbor note. It is regarded as taking its time from the main note, usually half the value. This concept of the *port de voix* stems from a regularized, mid-eighteenth-century, Berlin-influenced point of view. Johann Joachim Quantz is one of the chief sources for this viewpoint. Quantz classifies the *port de voix* as a form of appoggiatura in his 1752 flute treatise. Quantz gives examples of short, but accented (i.e. on the beat) *ports de voix*. For longer note values on downbeats, Quantz indicates that the lower appoggiatura should be held for “half the value of the following principal note” and gives the following illustration, shown in figure 1.<sup>2</sup>

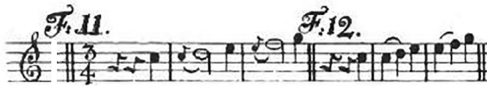


Figure 1. Quantz, *Versuch*, 1752, table 6.

According to Quantz, for dotted notes, the appoggiatura is held for two thirds of the main note value, and in compound meters where notes are tied, the appoggiatura is held for the value of the initial dotted note. His illustrations are given in figure 2.

In seventeenth-century France, however, the *port de voix* was quite a different ornament from the one that Quantz describes.



Figure 2. Quantz, *Versuch*, 1752, table 6.

2 Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch eine Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Boß, 1752), 79: “Hier wird der Vorschlag halb so lange gehalten, als die darauf folgende Hauptnote.”

### Mersenne's *port de voix*

Marin Mersenne provides the earliest theoretical discussion of the *port de voix*. Mersenne regarded the *port de voix* as the next most important ornament after the trill to learn in singing. In Mersenne's view:

...*ports de voix* render songs and recitatives very pleasant, and they alone, if well-executed, render voices estimable, even if they cannot do trills, whether articulated or not, because the spirit receives a singular contentment when it considers a voice when it proceeds as it should by all kinds of degrees and intervals...which animate the song, seeming to charm and transport the ear and the spirit of the listeners.<sup>3</sup>

Mersenne makes it clear that he is not discussing the general carriage of the voice, but an ornament that was usually not notated. His verbal and musical examples clarify that the *port de voix* was an ornament that came before the beat, taking its time from the preceding note:

But these *ports de voix* are not marked in printed scores; one does them in putting a dot after the note on which one begins the *port*, and then adding a black note, eighth or sixteenth, after the dot, which signifies that one must touch a bit the preceding tone to begin the note that follows.<sup>4</sup>

3 Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie Universelle*, vol. 2 (Paris: Sebastien Cramoisy, 1636), 355: "Après que l'on sçait faire ces tremblemens, qui servent aussi pour toutes sortes de passages, l'on doit apprendre à faire les ports de la voix, qui rendent les Chants, & les Recits fort agreeable, & qui seuls estans bien executez, rendent les voix recommandables, encore qu'elle ne puisse faire les tremblemens, soit martelez ou non martelez, car l'esprit reçoit un singulier contentement lors qu'il considere une voix qui se porte comme il faut par toutes sortes de degrez & d'intervalles, ...qui animent le chant, semblét charmer & transporter l'oreille & l'esprit des auditeurs." Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

4 Mersenne, *Harmonie*, vol. 2, 355: "Mais ces port de voix ne sont par marquez dans les liures imprimez; ce que l'on peu faire en mettant un point après la note, sur laquelle on commence le port; & puis en ajoûtant une noire, crochüe, ou double crochüe après le point, laquelle signifie qu'il faut seulement vn peu toucher la chorde precedente, pour y commencer la note qui suit."



Figure 3. Mersenne, *Harmonie*, vol. 2, 355.

The example in figure 3b is worth noting, as it shows an application of the *port de voix* to ornament a passing note.

Mersenne then comments on the vocal execution of this ornament, suggesting a legato pitch slide that would later become associated with a variant of the *port de voix*, the *port de voix coulé* or *glissé*:

Finally, the voice glides and passes from *ré* to *mi*, as if it were pulling the *ré* after itself, such that it continues to fill the entire interval from the degree of *ré* to *mi* by an uninterrupted continuation, and that it renders the two tones sustained.<sup>5</sup>

The legato connection with a pitch slide that Mersenne is describing can perhaps explain the later terminological evolution of the term *port de voix* to mean portamento, but it is a mis-reading of Mersenne to interpret his description of the *port de voix* as *purely* portamento. Such a reading ignores the musical examples Mersenne provides, where there is clearly a reiteration of the lower note and a particular melodic shape to the ornament.<sup>6</sup> Mersenne is defining an ornament and describing its method of execution; he is not describing a general vocal technique. It is tempting to look at Mersenne's example in figure 3b as a French version of Caccini's *intonazione*, an ornament that begins a third below the main note and quickly fills in the interval. While Mersenne's *port de voix* shares some aspects of melodic contour with the *intonazione*, it differs in its execution, due to the fact that the time for the *port de voix* is taken from the preceding note and not from the main note, as in the *intonazione*. Mersenne's *port de voix* is also not the equivalent of Francesco Rognoni's *portar della voce*, which is a

5 Mersenne, *Harmonie*, vol. 2, 356: "Enfin la voix se coule, & passé de *ré* à *mi*, comme si elle tiroit le *ré* apres soy, et qu'elle continuast à remplir tout l'intervale, ou le degré de *ré* à *mi* par une suite non interrompüe, & qu'elle rendist ces deux sons continus."

6 See for example: *Grove Dictionary of Music*, online ed., s.v. "Portamento." Accessed March 7, 2013.



*Autre façon de chanter de Monsieur Moulinié.*

*Chant simple.*

N'esperez plus mes yeux De reuair en ces lieux la beauté la beauté que j'ado- re :  
re:Le Ciel jaloux de mon bô-heur, A rauy ma naisante aurore Par sa ri- gueur.

The musical score for 'Chant simple' consists of two staves. The first staff is a vocal line in G-clef with a treble clef and a common time signature. The second staff is a bass line in F-clef with a bass clef and a common time signature. The lyrics are written below the staves, with some words underlined.

*Port de Voix.*

N'esperez plus mes yeux De reuoir en ces lieux La beauté La beauté que  
j'ado- re: re:Le Ciel jaloux de mon bon-heur A rauy ma nais- san- te au-  
ro- re par sa ri- gueur.

The musical score for 'Port de Voix' consists of three staves. The first staff is a vocal line in G-clef with a treble clef and a common time signature. The second staff is a bass line in F-clef with a bass clef and a common time signature. The third staff is a vocal line in G-clef with a treble clef and a common time signature. The lyrics are written below the staves, with some words underlined.

Figure 4. Mersenne, *Harmonie*, vol. 2, 413.

specialized vocal technique for ascending stepwise passages that “is made by reinforcing the voice on the first note little by little, and then making a ‘tremolo’ on the first note before changing pitch.”<sup>7</sup>

It is most unfortunate that the specific *port de voix* examples of Mersenne, shown in figure 3, do not have any text underlay. Toward the

7 See Stewart Carter, “Francesco Rognoni’s *Selva de varii passaggi* (1620): Fresh Details concerning Early-Baroque Vocal Ornamentation,” *Performance Practice Review* 2 (1989): 5–33. The translation is Carter’s. See also Grove, s.v. “Portamento.” Just exactly what Rognoni means by *tremolo* here is open to debate, but I share Stewart Carter’s view that it would have been some kind of reiteration of the pitch. I view Rognoni’s indication of reinforcing the voice on the first note to mean a reinforcing of the breath stream rather than a crescendo per se (Carter’s view) or a pitch slide, with the *tremolo* being akin to an intensity vibrato rather than a throat-articulated trillo. Such a breath reinforcement enables a clean legato pitch change with minimal pitch slide.

end of Book 6 of *Harmonie Universelle*, however, Mersenne gives various diminution examples for Anthoyne de Boësset's famous air "N'esperez, plus mes yeux." One of them is a simple ornamentation of the bass line for the premier couplet by Etienne Moulinié. Mersenne titled this ornamentation *Port de Voix*. In his example, shown in figure 4, the underlay of the line "Le ciel jaloux," for example, makes clear that the second syllable of "jaloux" belonging to the main note is anticipated on the lower note, somewhat akin to the Italian ornament Christoph Bernhard described as *anticipazione della syllaba*.<sup>8</sup> [Audio example 1.]



Audio example 1. (The music examples play in Acrobat Reader.)

### Bacilly's *port de voix*

One of the most valuable mid- to late-seventeenth-century sources on French singing is Bénigne [Bertrand] de Bacilly's 1668 treatise *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*.<sup>9</sup> Bacilly's basic concept of the *port de voix*, which he calls either the *port de voix* or the *port de voix plein*, has an articulation and pitch treatment different from Mersenne's. Bacilly defines the *port de voix* as "the transport made by a stroke of the throat (*coup de gosier*) from a lower note to one above it."<sup>10</sup> Given his discussion of the *disposition de la gorge*, Bacilly clearly calls for the singer to use throat articulation to mark the arrival of the main note, which is then sustained. In the *port de voix plein*, this throat articulation of the main note should be done with what Bacilly terms *fermeté*, literally "firmness," implying that it should be done with solidity and authority.

8 See Cristoph Bernhard, "Von der Singkunst oder Manier," in *Die Kompositionslehre Heinrich Schützens in der Fassung seines Schulers Christoph Bernhard*, edited by Joseph Maria Müller-Blattau, 2nd ed. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1963), § 19–20.

9 Bénigne de Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter* (Paris: C. Blageart, 1688). Fairly recent research has discovered a different first name and other important details about the life and work of Bacilly. See Laurent Guillo and Frédéric Michel, "Nouveaux documents sur le maître de chant Bertrand de Bacilly (1621–1690)," *Revue de Musicologie* 97/2 (2011): 269–327.

10 Bénigne de Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 137: "Pour moy ie nomme Port de Voix (& assurement le mot mesme port sa signification) le transport qui se fait par un coup de gosier d'une Note inferieure à une superieure."

Figure 5. Lambert, Michel. *Les Airs de Monsieur Lambert*, 4.

As with Mersenne's *port de voix*, Bacilly's *port de voix plein* takes time from the lower note. Unlike Mersenne's *port de voix*, however, Bacilly's version of the ornament also takes time from the upper or main note, ornamenting the rhythm and the harmony by extending the lower note across the beat and delaying the arrival of the main note. The lower note of the *port de voix* is given considerably longer time in Bacilly's version of the ornament.

The example Bacilly references is from the end of the first half of Michel Lambert's air "Mon ame faisons un effort," which was published in 1669, as the opening song in the collection *Les Airs de Monsieur Lambert* (see figure 5).<sup>11</sup> Bacilly explains his preferred performance of the *port de voix* in his instructions for how to apply it to the word "mort" at the end of the first section of the binary air:

On the syllable "mort" on which the *port de voix* is done, one must assume the same *fa* that is on the preceding syllable, where rather one must divide the quarter note (*noire*) into two eighths, of which one will be on the syllable "la," and the other on that of "mort," before giving the throat stroke (*coup de gosier*) which makes the Port de Voix, in repeating (*doublant*) the *sol* and sustaining it after having repeated it. And this is not all; because what I said about the quarter being made into two eighths and leaving one just for the syllable of "la," one must not only borrow an eighth for this preceding syllable-

11 Lambert, Michel. *Les Airs de Monsieur Lambert*, *Maistre de la Musique de la Chambre du Roy*. Rue des petits champs, vis a vis la Croix chez vn Chandelier, Paris, monographic, 1669, 4.

ble, but one must also borrow by anticipation a bit of the value of the main note, in order to join with the value that has already been borrowed, so that the *port de voix* can be more perfect by a long sustaining of the lower note before the throat stroke, in which almost everyone is lacking.<sup>12</sup>

Bacilly's description yields a rhythmicization for the *port de voix* that might look something like that shown in figure 6<sup>13</sup> and sound something like that given in audio example 2.



Audio example 2.

Bacilly underscores that the execution of the *port de voix* involves three elements: the sustaining of the lower (accessory) note, the single reiteration with throat articulation of the upper note, and the sustaining of the upper (main) note.<sup>14</sup> This view hinges on the translation of the word "*doublant*" in Bacilly's description above. Catherine Gordon-Seiffert reads this differ-

12 Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 141: "Dans la syllabe morte, sur laquelle se fait le Port de Voix, il faut supposer le mesme fa qui est sure la precedente syllabe, ou plutost il faut diviser la noire en deux croches, dont l'une sera sur la syllabe la, & l'autre sur celle de mort, avant que de donner le coup de gosier qui forme le Port de Voix, en doublant le sol, & le sou'tenant apres l'avoir doublé. Ce n'est pas encore tou; car quoy que je dise qui'l faut d'une noire en faire deux Croches, & n'en laisser qu'une pour la syllabe de la, il ne faut pas seulement emprunter une Croche à cette syllabe precedente, mailil faut encore en emprunter par anticipation quelque peu de la valeur de la Notte superieure, pour joindre avec ce qui est déjà emprunté, afin que le Port de Voix soit plus parfait, par un long sou'tien de la Notte inferieure avant le coup de gosier, en quoy presque tout le monde manque." Compare with Austin B. Caswell, trans., *A Commentary upon the Art of Proper Singing by Benigne de Bacilly* (Brooklyn: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1968), 65. Caswell translates "coup de gosier" as "voice," an unfortunate word choice, as it misses Bacilly's indication of the articulation technique.

13 Compare to, for example, Caswell, *Proper Singing*, 66; and Gordon-Seifert, *Music and the Language of Love*, 193.

14 Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 137: "de sorte qu'il y a trois choses à considerer dans le Port de Voix (j'entens le plein & le veritable) à sçavoir, la Notte inferieure qu'il faut sou'tenir: le doublement du gosier, qui se fait sur la Notte superieure; & le sou'tien de la mesme Notte après qu'on l'a double."

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in alto clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The lyrics are: 'pres de la mort' on the top staff, and 'de la mort' on the middle staff. The bottom staff has a triplet of eighth notes marked '3' and a quarter note marked '43'. The music features a long note on 'mort' in the top staff, which is realized in the middle staff as a long note followed by a slide down to a lower note, and then a final note.

Figure 6. Bacilly's *port de voix (plein)* approximate realization.

ently and interprets Bacilly as calling for a *pincé*.<sup>15</sup> Gordon-Seiffert has been influenced perhaps by Frederick Neumann's "tentative interpretation" of Bacilly's *port de voix* as terminating in a *pincé*.<sup>16</sup> Neumann considers Bacilly's "descriptions and classifications for the various types of this ornament" as "often vague, ambiguous, and inconsistent." I take quite a different view. Though Bacilly's French syntax can sometimes get elaborate and requires some care in reading and translating, he is generally so explicit, meticulous, and detailed throughout the *Remarques curieuses*, even going so far as to guide the reader to the exact page number in every book of airs that he references, that if he had wanted both the *sol* and *fa* to be repeated, as in a *pincé*, he most certainly would have said so. There is no basis for regarding Bacilly's *port de voix plein* as involving a *pincé*. This is an aspect where Bacilly's *port de voix* differs significantly from Montéclair's, which will be discussed later in this article.

Bacilly's version of the *port de voix* differs most strikingly from Mersenne's in the prolongation of the lower note into the time of the resolution. This lengthening enables considerably greater embellishment of the harmony and likely explains why Bacilly does not call for any pitch slide, which would weaken the dissonance. It also allows the singer considerable finesse in the inflection of the word "mort" in his example. In all likelihood the singer would also "double" (i.e., elongate) the initial consonant m.<sup>17</sup>

For both Mersenne's and Bacilly's *ports de voix*, the early arrival of

15 Gordon-Seiffert, *Music and the Language of Love*, 193.

16 Neumann, *Ornamentation*, 55.

17 For detailed discussion of French expressive consonant doubling, see Sally Sanford, "A Comparison of French and Italian Singing in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 1(1995): § 6.1 ff.



Figure 7. From Lambert "Mon ame faisons un effort," double, 6.

the syllable can throw a bit of a curve ball to the continuo player(s), who nowadays are used to carefully coordinating their bass lines to a singer's syllables. With a bit of practice, however, the signals that a singer gives can become quite clear, and the ornament becomes a wonderful decoration of the rhythm, rather than sounding like an instance of faulty ensemble.

Bacilly indicates that it was customary sometimes to notate the pre-beat beginning of the *port de voix*, but not customary to notate the considerable prolongation of the lower note. He refers to the example shown in figure 7, from Lambert's ornamented *double* for the second verse of "Mon ame faisons un effort," saying that the example "can serve for all the others" and that it demonstrates that one "marks the grace note one way on paper and yet sings it another way."<sup>18</sup> This is one of the most explicit statements in any treatise on singing from the baroque period pointing to a discrepancy between notation and performance. Because the prolongation of the lower note of the *port de voix* is not notated and, therefore, the exact duration is left up to the performer, the expressive possibilities in performance are greatly expanded for the singer.

In order for the *ports de voix* to make a song "perfect," one must know where to place them. The *port de voix plein*, according to Bacilly, is suitable on principal cadences.<sup>19</sup> Bacilly draws from the airs of Lambert to illustrate the types of musical contexts for which the *port de voix plein* is appropriate. The first example, from "Que me sert-il d'estre fidelle" is the final cadence that concludes the air on the word "hayne" in the soprano voice. Lambert has indicated a *port de voix*. This is shown in figure 8, circled in red.

18 Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 143: "Cet Exemple peut servir pour tous les autres, qui font voir que pour la grace de la Notte de Musique, l'on marque sur le papier d'une manier, & l'on chante d'une autre."

19 Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 143.

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for a piece by Lambert. It consists of three systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a bass line (bass clef). The lyrics are written below the notes. In the first system, a blue circle highlights a note in the vocal line. In the third system, a red circle highlights a note in the vocal line. The page number '45' is in the top right corner.

Figure 8. From Lambert, "Que me sert-il d'estre fidelle," 45.

Bacilly also calls for a *port de voix plein* in an earlier cadence in the same air, on the final syllable of the word "vaine," also shown in figure 8, circled in blue. The *port de voix* on "vaine" has not been indicated in the notation by Lambert. Bacilly regards this as a significant cadence and on a par in importance with a cadence ending a section or an entire piece. He is careful to note, in these and other examples, that deciding what ornament (or what form of an ornament) is appropriate depends on good taste and that one cannot establish a definite rule.<sup>20</sup> He also provides examples where one should either suppress a *port de voix* or do something almost imperceptible in situations where it is important to maintain "a certain simplicity of pronunciation." [Audio example 3 including all of the music in figure 8.]



Audio example 3.

<sup>20</sup> Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 146.

### Bacilly's *port de voix* variants

Bacilly also describes several variants of the *port de voix* that he puts under the category of the *demy Port de Voix*. In the *demy-port de voix*, one begins just like the *port de voix plein*, sustaining the lower note and giving a throat articulation to the upper note, but then one does not sustain the upper note. The throat articulated upper note in the *demy-port de voix* is executed much more “delicately” and without marking it with the “fermeté” used in the *port de voix plein*. [Audio example 4, illustrating blue circled area from figure 8.] Additional variants of the *demy-port* include the *Port de Voix glissé en coulé*, where the passage from the lower note to the upper is slurred instead of articulated and the upper note is sustained for its full value. Though Bacilly does not mention a pitch slide specifically, it is suggested by the term *glissé*. This variant of Bacilly's *demy port de voix* is the closest to Mersenne's description of the *port de voix*. [Audio example 5, illustrating *port de voix* 6 from figure 10b.] Another of Bacilly's *demy-port de voix* variants he called the *port de voix perdu*, where the lower note is held for virtually the full value of the upper note and then the upper note is barely graced. This is rarely heard in performance today, but it is worth reviving, as it is wonderfully expressive in the right context. [Audio example 6, illustrating *port de voix* 9 from figure 10b.]



Audio example 4.



Audio example 5.



Audio example 6.



Figure 9. From Lambert “Inutiles pensers,” 8.

Determining which is appropriate, a *port de voix plein* or some form of a *demy port de voix*, obviously depends on the musical and rhetorical context. Bacilly indicates that sometimes a *tremblement* is preferable to a *port de voix*, as in the example shown in figure 9, on the final syllable of the word “*desespoir*.” Lambert did not give any performance indications for this cadence.

Bacilly gives a thorough list of appropriate *port de voix* selection for his own air “*Après mille rigeurs*,” from *Les trois Livres d’Airs* (1668)<sup>21</sup> that has been summarized in figures 10a and 10b.<sup>22</sup>

Bacilly highlights the important elements in the performance of the *port de voix*. Concerning the *port de voix plein*, he writes:

21 Bertrand de Bacilly, *Les trois livres d’Airs regavez de nouveau en deux volumes augmentez de plusieurs airs nouveaux, de chiffres pour le théorbe, et d’ornemens pour la méthode de chanter, seconde partie, “Après mille rigeurs”* ([Paris]: Compositeur Éditeur, 1668), 73–74.

22 Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 157 ff.

Although all those who sing pride themselves on the *port de voix*, I find nothing so rare, and nothing shows as much to reveal that one has been well-schooled, as to perform well the true *ports de voix* that are made in singing, with the solidity and the weight that are necessary for them. Some do not sustain the lower note enough, and have too much haste and too much alacrity in the transition [to the main note] (which is the most frequent shortcoming). Others do not reiterate [*doublent*] with enough firmness in the throat, imagining that to do so is too rough [*rude*] or sometimes due to a defect of Nature. And others, finally, do not sustain the upper note enough, either from nonchalance or ignorance, believing this unnecessary [*inutile*].<sup>23</sup>

For the *demy port de voix*, Bacilly points to similar faults in performance: not sustaining the lower note long enough, or making the articulation of the upper note too strong (ie, an appropriate amount of “*fermeté*” for the *port de voix plein* is considered harshness [*rudesse*] in the *demy port de voix*.)<sup>24</sup>

Bacilly also expands the melodic context for the *port de voix*. Though we have largely looked at instances where the *port de voix* involves a lower neighbor note going to the main note above, Bacilly also allows for the *port de voix* on intervals ranging from a second to the sixth below. When doing a *port de voix* over an interval of a fourth, Bacilly is explicit that there should be no sounding of any pitches between them.<sup>25</sup> However, for the *port de voix* from a third below, there should be a pitch slide, sounding the second.<sup>26</sup>

23 Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 139: “Quoy que tous ceux qui chantent, se piquent de Port de Voix, ie ne trouve rien de si rare, & rien ne fait tant connoistre que l’on ait esté en bonne Ecole, comme de bien former les vrais Ports de Voix qui se font dans le Chant, avec la solidité & le poids qui leur est necessaire. Les uns ne soustiennent pas assez la Note inferieure, & ont trop de haste & trop d’empressement de la porter (qui est le defect le plus frequent.) Les autres ne doublent pas assez ferme du goisier, s’imaginant que cela est trop rude, ou bien souvent par un defect de Nature: Et les autres enfin ne soustiennent pas assez la Note superieure, soit par nonchalance, ou par ignorance, croyant que cela est inutile.”

24 Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 139.

25 Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 149: “sans passer en aucune maniere par les Nottes qui font entre deux, en disant mi mi la la.”

26 Bacilly, *Remarques curieuses*, 150: “dans le Port de Voix qui se fait sure une Tierce, on passe par la Second, en disant re re mi fa.”

Figure 10a. Bacilly, *Les trois livres*, “Après mille rigeurs,” 73.

1. *Après* to *mille*: no ornament; 2. *rigueurs*: *port de voix plein*; 3. *partez*: one could do any *port de voix*, but best would be the *port de voix glissé* or *perdu*; 4. *Climene*: one could do a *port de voix* from the fourth below, but better to do nothing; 5. *des maux*: *port de voix glissé* with pitch slide.

Figure 10b. Bacilly, *Les trois livres*, “Après mille rigeurs,” 74.

6. *helas*: *port de voix glissé*; 7. *cruelle*: *port de voix perdu*; 8. *cruelle*: *port de voix plein*; 9. *cruelle*: *port de voix perdu*; 10. that which is suited to the end of an air.

Bacilly's various versions of the *port de voix* were likely standard options in France for the mid-to-late-seventeenth century and likely continued as performance possibilities into the first quarter of the eighteenth century. [Bacilly's ports de voix can be heard in audio example 7 illustrating the music in figures 10a and 10b.]



Audio example 7.

### Rousseau's *port de voix*

In his 1678 treatise on singing, *Methode claire, certaine, et facile, pour apprendre à chanter la musique*, Jean Rousseau, who is known today more as a viol player and theorist than as a singing pedagogue, also describes a *port de voix* that resembles Mersenne's version of the ornament more than Bacilly's. Rousseau's term for this ornament is the *port de voix par Anticipation de valeur & de son*. He writes:

The *port de voix* consists in naming [i.e., sounding] a note on a part of the note that precedes it by anticipation of the value and the pitch, or by anticipation of only the pitch, before carrying it to the pitch that is natural to it.

The *port de voix by anticipation of the value and the pitch* is done when one ascends by conjunct steps from one note to another of greater duration.<sup>27</sup>

Rousseau's examples for this type of *port de voix* are shown in figure 11.

Rousseau says that the *port de voix* can be done when moving between notes of equal value, but cautions that the tempo must allow for it, so that

27 Jean Rousseau, *Methode claire, certaine, et facile, pour apprendre à chanter la musique* (Paris: Chez l'auteur, et chez C. Ballard, 1683), 50: "Le Port de voix consiste à nommer une Note sur une partie de celle qui la precede par Anticipation de valeur & de son, ou par anticipation de son seulement, avant que la porter au son qui luy es naturel. Le port de voix par Anticipation de valeur & de son se fait quand on monte par degrés conjoints d'une Note à une autre de plus grande valeur." See also Robert A. Green, "Annotated Translation and Commentary of the Works of Jean Rousseau," (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1979), 223.



Figure 11. Rousseau, *Methode*, p. 51.



Figure 12. Rousseau, *Methode*, 52.

the rhythm is not disrupted, provided one is on a long syllable. He also indicates that a *port de voix* can be done after a trill when the line ascends in conjunct motion. His examples are given in figure 12.

From the examples in figures 11 and 12, it does not appear that Rousseau's norm for the *port de voix par Anticipation de valeur et de son* involved any prolongation of the lower note into the time of the main note, but, because this aspect of realization was not notated, we cannot be absolutely certain. Rousseau does not mention any prolongation of the lower note.

The *Methode* is an important source in the history of the *port de voix*, because it is the first French source on singing to describe a *port de voix* beginning with the main note on the beat, a version that Rousseau termed the *port de voix par anticipation de son*. He indicated that it is only done when ascending stepwise from a short note value to a longer note value, as shown in his example in figure 13.<sup>28</sup> It would seem from his examples that in both forms of the *port de voix*, the lower note is always relatively short. In common time at a slow "grave" tempo, its duration is a quarter of the value of the main note, substantially shorter than in either Quantz's or Bacilly's versions of the ornament.

Rousseau also describes a *port de voix* in the (sung) bass lines of *airs* and *récits* for ascending and descending leaps of a fourth and a fifth, when there is a syllable change (see example 14).

28 Rousseau, *Méthode à chanter*, 52: "Le Port de voix par Anticipation de son seulement se fait en montant d'une Note brève à une qui vaut deux fois le double de sa valeur ou plus comme d'une croche ou double croche à une noire pointée où à une blanche."



Figure 13. Rousseau, *Methode*, 52.

In his viol treatise of 1687, Rousseau indicates that the *port de voix* should always terminate with a “*martellement*” in imitation of the singer, who “does this naturally with a small agitation of the throat.”<sup>29</sup> Neumann has interpreted Rousseau here as calling for a *pincé* at the end of the *port de voix*,<sup>30</sup> but Rousseau does not use the term *pincé*. Rousseau defines “*martellement*” as follows:

The *martellement* is done when the finger touching a string beats two or three small strokes narrower and faster than in a trill and then rests on the fret.<sup>31</sup>

In his article on Rousseau, Robert Green points to the fact that the word *martellement* was used interchangeably with the word *batement* in many viol sources.<sup>32</sup> However, Rousseau reserves the term *batement* for a two-finger vibrato.<sup>33</sup> Rousseau’s description of the *martellement* suggests an ornament that is not a *pincé*, as Neumann assumed, but rather a one-finger vibrato, an ornament imitating a vocal vibrato produced with the throat, and not the claveciniste’s *pincé* or mordant. Green suggests that what be-

29 Jean Rousseau, *Traité de la Viole* (Paris: Christoph Ballard, 1687), 87: “Le Martellement est toujours inseparable du Port de Voix, car le Port de Voix se doit toujours terminer par un Martellement. C’est un agrément que la Voix fait naturellement par une petite agitation du gozier [sic]...”

30 Neumann, *Ornamentation*, 57.

31 Rousseau, *Traité de la Viole*, 87: “Le Martellement se fait, lors que le doigt touchant une Note bat d’abord deux ou trois petits coups plus serrez &: plus pressez que ia Cadence, &: qu’il demeure en suite sur la Touche.” In *Interpretation of the Music of the 17th and 18th Centuries*, p. 213, Arnold Dolmetsch has translated this as: “The martellement is done when the finger playing a note first beats two or three times more quickly and lightly than for a shake, and remains on the fret afterwards.”

32 Robert A. Green, “Jean Rousseau and Ornamentation in French Viol Music,” *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America*, 14 (1977): 36.

33 Rousseau, *Traité de la Viole*, 100: “Le Batement se fait lorsque deux doigts estant pressez l’un contre l’autre, l’un appuye sur la chorde et le suivant la bat fort legerement.”



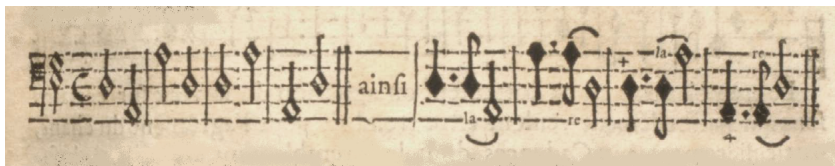


Figure 14. Rousseau, *Methode*, 53.

gan as an instrumental ornament imitating the voice subsequently led to the voice imitating that imitation.

That Rousseau does not mention either a *pincé* or a *martellement* in conjunction with his discussion of the *port de voix* in his vocal treatise is not an issue of oversight on his part. It indicates both a difference between vocal and instrumental practice and an evolution in the performance of the *port de voix* between the 1678 first edition of the *Méthode*, and 1687, when the *Traité de la Viole* was published.

### Montéclair's *port de voix pincé*

Michel Pignolet de Montéclair briefly discusses the *port de voix* as part of a comprehensive discussion of French *agréments* in his 1736 *Principes de Musique*. His comments echo many of Rousseau's. Montéclair says the *port de voix* is used primarily to ornament a melodic line that is ascending stepwise, especially when ascending by half-step, to ornament the upper arrival note. He also indicates that the *port de voix* is sometimes marked in a score by a small note, by a line, or by a small v sign. From the examples shown in figure 15, it is clear that Montéclair's *port de voix* begins in the time of the upper note, i.e. on the beat.<sup>34</sup> This is borne out in his cantatas as well, where the notation indicates, usually by a small note and not by a sign, that the majority of the *ports de voix* begin on the beat. A typical example, from Montéclair's cantata "La Fortune,"<sup>35</sup> is shown in figure 16, clearly notating the on-beat performance.

Unfortunately, Montéclair is silent on the duration of the lower note.

34 Michel Pignolet de Montéclair, *Principes de Musique* (Paris: rue St. Honoré, 1736), 79.

35 Michel Pignolet de Montéclair, *Cantates à voix seule et avec simfonie... Premier livre qui contient six cantates françoises et deux cantates italiennes. Les paroles des cantates marquées d'une étoile sont de M. Liebaux*, (Paris : l'auteur : Foucault, [ca 1709]), 6.

Le Port de voix.

Lorsque le chant monte par degrez conjoints, d'une note foible, D, à une note forte, E, pour se reposer sur la dernière de ces deux notes, on pratique souvent le Port de voix; sur tout quand l'intervalle n'est que d'un demi-ton. On ne le marque pas à tous les endroits où il faut le faire, le gout et l'expérience donnent cette connoissance.

Le Port de voix se marque quelquefois, par une petite note postiche, F, qui luy sert de preparation et qui prend le nom de la note forte, G, à laquelle elle se lie, et sur laquelle il faut elever la voix. On le marque aussi par ce. Signe, V, H. Le Port de Voix, I, est le renversement du coulé K. Je croy que ce signe, /, seroit plus convenable que le signe, V, pour marquer le Port de voix.

The musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff shows a sequence of notes with various ornaments and signs above them: D, E, D, E, followed by a note with a 'port de voix' sign, and another with a 'port de voix' sign. The bottom staff shows a sequence of notes with various ornaments and signs below them: 'mi fa-a' with 'Port de voix' and 'F G' signs, 'mi fa-a' with 'port de voix' and 'H V' signs, 'fa mi-i' with 'Port de voix' and 'I' sign, 'mi fa-a' with 'Coulé' and 'K' signs, and 'sol la-a' with 'port de voix' and '/' sign.

Figure 15. Montéclair, *Principes de Musique*, 79.

He also gives no indication about the passage from the lower note to the upper note, whether throat articulated, slurred, or with a pitch slide. It is likely that all are still performance possibilities. It is important to note that Montéclair describes the *son glissé* as a separate ornament; so that what began in the context of the *port de voix* has, by the first quarter of the eighteenth century, become an ornament in its own right, applied in expanded melodic contexts involving both ascending and descending stepwise (often chromatic) motion.<sup>36</sup>

Montéclair's most interesting comments about the *port de voix* concern its termination. He makes his comments not in the context of his treatment of the *port de voix*, but later in the treatise when discussing the *pincé*, or *mordant*, where he says "the *port de voix* is always followed by (*toujours accompagné de*) a *pincé*."<sup>37</sup> His example is shown in figure 17. "Always" is a rather strong prescriptive in the context of an ornament with such a varied history and so many variants, such that I am doubtful that the "always" should be applied to the music of any composer other than Montéclair, and perhaps not even "always" for his music.

36 See Montéclair, *Principes de Musique*, 89.

37 Montéclair, *Principes de Musique*, 84. The italics on "always" are the author's.



The image shows a page of musical notation for a recitative. The title "Recitatif" is written at the top left. The music is in common time (C) and consists of four systems of staves. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a basso continuo line (bass clef). The lyrics are in French and are written below the vocal line. Several musical phrases in the vocal line are circled in red, highlighting specific articulation points. The lyrics are: "Comblé de biens, comblé d'honneur, Suivi par tout de l'abon-"; "dance, Quels chagrins inquiets, m'enlevent la douceur Du repos qui fai-"; "soit mon unique espe-rance? Ah! je le re-co-"; "nois les grandeurs; l'opulen-ce, Ne font point le vrai bonheur." The basso continuo line includes figured bass notation such as 6, 6, x5, x6, 6, x5, 7, x, 6, 6, 3/4, 3.

Figure 16. Récitative from Montéclair, *La Fortune*, 6.

You can hear the Montéclair-style of *port de voix*, the *port de voix pincé*, beginning on the beat and terminating with a *pincé* in audio example 8, which has the music from figure 16. Because there are so many *ports de voix* in such close succession in this example, it is certainly conceivable that if the performer would not have varied the termination, at the very least s/he would have varied the length of the lower note depending, of course, on its duration. You will hear that the *pincés* give a more delicate texture to the *ports de voix* and to the music as a whole.

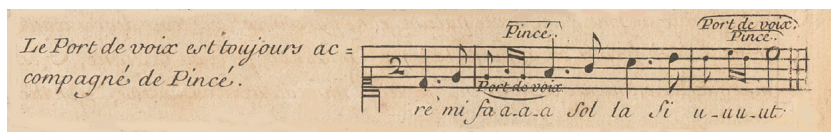


Figure 17. Montéclair, *Principes*, 84



Audio example 8.

### Options for performance in early eighteenth-century France

In the cantatas of Louis Nicolas Clérambault, one finds clear notational indications for both the “early” Bacilly-style *port de voix* as well as the “later” on-beat Rousseau-style *port de voix* with the likely option of a Montéclair-style *port de voix pincé* termination.<sup>38</sup> In Clérambault’s delightful *L’Amour piqué par une abeille*, the first cantata in his first book of cantatas (1710),<sup>39</sup> he uses two different notations for beginning the *port de voix*, a small ornamental note for beginning on the beat and writing in a shorter note value for the pre-beat onset. In figure 18, taken from the opening recitative of this cantata, the notation suggests on-beat *ports de voix* for the words “*amours*” and “*lieux*” (circled in blue) while pre-beat onsets are indicated for the words “*toujours*,” “*constance*,” and “*l’univers*” (circled in red). In this recitative, the performer has greater performance flexibility in the duration of the lower-note in the pre-beat *ports de voix* than in the on-beat ones, though the duration of the lower note is not fixed, and could range from one-fourth to one-half of the value. In the final *port de voix* of the example, we have chosen to combine the Bacilly-style of a pre-beat *demy port de voix glissé* with an elongated lower note and a Montéclair-style *pincé* termination. [Audio example 9 illustrating the music in figure 18.]

38 Neumann, *Ornamentation*, 57, has also pointed to the “written-out pre-beat Vorschlag in the music of Clérambault and Campra” as “truly representative of this continuing vocal preference,” but he does not mention the on-beat performance options.

39 Nicolas Clérambault, *Cantates françaises à I et II voix avec symphonie et sans symphonie... Livre premier*, (Paris: Foucault, 1710).

*L'AMOUR PIQUÉ PAR UNE ABEILLE.* 1

*Cantate I<sup>re</sup>*  
*a voix seule.*

*Dans les Jardins enchanterez de Cythere ve-*  
*nus r'assembloit les amours, La froide indifférence et la raison se-*  
*vere De ces aimables lieux sont bannis pour toujours. Mille am<sup>rs</sup> foru-*  
*nez conduis par la constan- ce Y reçoivent le prix des vœux qu'ils ont of-*  
*ferts. Et tout y ressent la présence Du Dieu charmant qu'adore l'univers.*

Figure 18. Récit from Clérambault, *Cantates françaises*, “L’Amour piqué par une abeille,” 1.



Audio example 9.

Clérambault uses the *port de voix* as part of the opening theme for the final aria of the cantata, shown in figure 19. The notation implies an on-beat performance in this instance. Given the duration of the main note on the final syllable of “*vainqueur*” and the number of times it is repeated, the singer has plenty of time and several opportunities to “play” with the ornament, using different variants of the *port de voix*, varying the length of time the lower note is sustained and varying the termination (with or without a *pincé*).

In conclusion, we see that the *port de voix* evolved considerably during the course of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries from Mersenne to Montéclair. It is clear that we have to take into account the time period of the vocal music we are performing, as well as the specific musical and expressive context, in order to match our interpretations of this ornament appropriately to music. Our aim in this re-examination has been to offer a fresh perspective on the interpretive possibilities in the performance of the *port de voix*—one of many *agréments* with multiple options in their realizations—in the hope that performers will make greater and more historically-informed use of this variety, for it is the subtle variations in the vast array of delicate nuances that make French baroque vocal music so special.

Sally Sanford is a professional singer,  
voice teacher, and independent scholar.

10

*AIR.*

*Gracieux et gay.*

*les crochets inégaux.*

*Charmant vainqueur* tu nous ex - po - ses A des maux cent

*fois plus pressants* Par les pei - nes que tu ressents Juge des

maux que tu nous causes. *Charmant vainqueur*

tu nous expo - ses A des maux cent fois plus pressants Par les

Figure 19. Aria from Clérambault, *Cantates françaises*, "L'Amour piqué par une abeille," 10.

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