INTRODUCTION

Performance, Revolution, and the Military–Theatrical Complex

> *The separation of the stage and auditorium is something to be transcended. The precise aim of the performance is to abolish this exteriority in various ways: by placing the spectators on the stage and the performers in the auditorium; by abolishing the differences between the two; by transferring the performance to other sites; by identifying it with taking possession of the street, the town or life.*
>
> Jacques Rancière[1]

After storming the Bastille on July 14, 1789, Joseph Arné had little time to reflect on the significance of his actions. Earlier that day, the young soldier had led a daring assault, neutralized several guards with his bare hands, and supposedly disabled a cannon that was pointed at his charging comrades.[2] As the sun set, Arné was cheered by throngs of Parisians, who joined the young grenadier in patriotic songs, chants, and dances. The next morning, Arné was back in the streets, this time paraded triumphantly through the city on the back of a horse-drawn cart. Just six weeks later, he was portrayed on stage as the protagonist in *La Fête du Grenadier*, the first theatrical work dedicated to the July events.[3] On opening night, the real Arné was called up on stage to enthusiastic cheers. The *Orateur du peuple*, one of the many newspapers to emerge during the French Revolution, reported that Arné again made a curtain call, this time in early 1791, following the premiere of Harny de Guerville's *La Liberté conquise*, a play featuring a Bastille-like siege.[4] Arné the soldier, Arné the character, Arné the spectator, and Arné

[1] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York, NY: Verso, 2009), 16.

[2] For an account of Arné's role in the storming of the Bastille, see Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, *The Bastille: A History of a Symbol of Despotism and Freedom*, trans. Norbert Schürer (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 87–93.

[3] *La Fête du Grenadier, pantomime nationale et militaire mêlée de chants, de danses, et à spectacle* (Paris: Cailleau, 1789), performed at the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique on September 3, 1789.

[4] *L'Orateur du peuple* 18 (1791), 171.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the *national* hero were all part of a powerful military–theatrical experience that flourished at the end of the eighteenth century.

This book describes how the Arné phenomenon and related military–theatrical interactions emerged, transformed, and proliferated in France and in parts of its colonial empire during the second half of the eighteenth century. With close readings of plays and analysis of militarized performance environments, I trace the interrelation of the French military, dramatic literature, and theatrical performance from the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) through the French Revolution's most turbulent months in 1794. It should be stated from the beginning that eighteenth-century Francophone locales were not the only places in history with robust bonds between armed conflict and theatrical performance. Theater and war have always shared lexicons, strategies, and objectives. Military leaders discuss "theaters of war" and "theaters of operation"; theater professionals have deployed conflict themes in their plays to provide therapeutic support to civilian and soldier audiences,[5] bolster patriotism, and critique the status quo.

The most obvious overlap between war and performance – the display of military power in front of domestic constituents and foreign enemies – from *fêtes* at Louis XIV's Versailles palace to North Korean parades, creates a specific form of what Baz Kershaw calls an "*ideological transaction* between a company of performers and the community of their audience."[6] War has served as a potent commonplace – an immediate subject of community concern – that theater professionals, military officers, and government officials have mobilized to push geopolitical agendas and sell tickets to the playhouse.

War and soldiering in eighteenth-century France and in parts of its colonial empire, I argue, catalyzed new types of drama and theatrical performance, and fostered the expansion of theater into what were believed to be the geographical and social peripheries of the kingdom, and later, the Republic. Theater, in turn, emerged as a dynamic space in which French subjects (then citizens) could (re)imagine and (re)live armed conflict and military concerns as well as theorize new relationships among soldiers and

[5] A recent example of drama's therapeutic mission is *Theater of War Productions*, a New York-based company that stages dramatic readings of classical Greek tragedies (among other plays) for audiences of former soldiers. They have worked with the US Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Services, and other organizations to use theater to discuss the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and gun violence in veteran communities. For more information, see https://theaterofwar.com/about.

[6] Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), 16. Emphasis original.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

between military and civilian populations. As France moved into revolutionary processes of political, military, and cultural "regeneration," theater and war, but also civil and military societies, converged into a powerful force of repetitions, performances, and totalizing experiences: total theater for total war. Here I present an interdisciplinary framework, grounded in Theatre and Performance Studies, in literary analysis of drama, and in cultural, military and gender history, for interrogating the theater's engagement with military cultures and for reflecting upon the military's influence on eighteenth-century drama and theatrical performance.

The dimensions of military–theatrical interaction explored in this book are numerous and diverse: plays depicting soldiers, performances in navy theaters and in other military venues, policies to compel soldiers to attend the theater, repertories of public theaters in provincial and colonial cities with significant military populations, the evolving relationship between theatrical diplomacy and armed conflict in colonial and occupied zones, soldier-actors and soldier-writers, the role of both theater and the military as "civilizing" and "urbanizing" forces, dramatic depictions of gender roles in battle and on the home front, public performances of coloniality and military rule, and theater as a tool for teaching combat skills, nationalism, sexuality, xenophobia, and more. Ultimately, I show theater's relationships with international military endeavors and domestic war efforts during a transformational era in global history.

Theater, War, and Revolution is the first study to treat war and soldiering as a category for eighteenth-century French-language theater productions. The book is nevertheless indebted to recent work that reassesses traditional value claims that scholars have made about the period's dramatic literature and performance practices.[7] Resisting the notions that tumultuous moments of conflict are barriers to artistic creation and that innovative

[7] Scholars of eighteenth-century British, German, and Dutch theater have demonstrated more of an interest than scholars of French-language productions in analyzing the relationship between theater and war. For example, on Britain, see, among others, Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793–1815* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995) and Neil Ramsey and Gillian Russell (eds.), *Tracing War in British Enlightenment and Romantic Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015). On dramatic depictions of war in German-language plays, see Anne Feuchter-Feler, *Le drame militaire en Allemagne au XVIII^e siècle* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005); Martin Kagel, "*La Chercheuse d'esprit*: Gender, Mobility, and the Crisis of Authorship in J. M. R. Lenz's Conception of Soldiers' Marriages," *German Life and Letters* 61, no. 1 (2008): 99–117; James Gibbons, "Politics and the Playwright: J. M. R. Lenz and 'Die Soldaten,'" *The Modern Language Review* 96, no. 3 (2001): 732–46; and Cornelis van der Haven, "Military Men of Feeling? Gender Boundaries and Military–Civil Encounters in Two German Soldier Plays (1760–80)," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41, no. 4 (2018): 511–26. For a take on the Dutch context, see the critical review of studies in Cornelis van der Haven, "Patriotism and Bellicism in German and Dutch Epics of the Enlightenment." *Arcadia* 47, no. 1 (2012): 54–77.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

dramatic practices disappeared in France during the late eighteenth century with the Enlightenment and returned only in the nineteenth century with Romantic renovations to the stage, I articulate the ways in which war and soldiering participated in and, at times, transformed the period's popular and experimental theater cultures.

My analytical readings and contextual analyses are informed by several critical practices and subdisciplines: military and gender histories; theories of engagement, reenactment, and "event" from Theatre and Performance Studies; historical analysis of theater building and theater administration initiatives; and close readings of dramatic literature and theatrical performances in France and in its most prosperous and brutal Caribbean colony of mostly enslaved black laborers, Saint-Domingue. My interdisciplinary approach draws from several key works in those domains.

I follow recent scholarship that presents France's eighteenth-century armed forces as inseparable from its cultural institutions and experiences.[8] The late Old Regime was witness to an intense period of military introspection and reform, particularly after France's devastating loss in the Seven Years' War. Theater came under the gaze of reform-minded army and navy administrators, who argued that theatrical performances and the culture of attending theater could educate servicemen and "improve" their behaviors. Military leaders at the highest ranks, such as the commander and Secretary of State Étienne-François de Choiseul-Beaupré-Stainville (the comte, then duc, de Choiseul), joined local *commandants* and *intendants* in the French provinces and colonies to argue for what they perceived as the social, cultural, and *operational* benefits of dramatic literature and, more acutely, theatrical performance. The military's optimistic take on dramatic performance led to theatrical building, financing, and programming initiatives. At the same time, French playwrights developed or

[8] The most recent of these works include Ilya Berkovich, *Motivation in War: The Experience of Common Soldiers in Old-Regime Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Christy Pichichero, *The Military Enlightenment: War and Culture in the French Empire from Louis XIV to Napoleon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017); Julia Osman, *Citizen Soldiers and the Key to the Bastille* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015); and Arnaud Guinier, *L'honneur du soldat: Éthique martiale et discipline guerrière dans la France des Lumières* (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2014). This scholarship is indebted to "new military history," which encouraged historians around the turn of the twentieth century to engage more with broader cultural practices and problems in addition to the history of military strategy and policy. Works in this vein are numerous and too many to list here; key books discussing eighteenth-century France include but are certainly not limited to Alan Forrest, *Conscripts and Deserters: The Army and French Society during the Revolution and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) and Soldiers of the French Revolution (Durham, NC and London: Duke, 1990); Rafe Blaufarb, *The French Army, 1750–1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History* (Routledge, 2004); and David A. Bell, *The First Total War* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

expanded upon dramatic genres and modes that depicted with increasing detail the plight of the soldier, the complexity of military relationships in battle, and the role of both women and men on, especially insofar as the Revolution was concerned, an increasingly militarized, anxious, and vigilant home front. Storied theatrical institutions such as the Comédie-Française, but also new and ephemeral venues in provincial and colonial cities and towns, performed works about military patriotism, desertion, specific battles, child heroism, female soldiers, and sacrifice to the war cause.

With attention to military-themed drama and performances in places with significant soldier populations, I follow recent studies on the role of theater in urbanization, colonization, and geopolitical expansion.[9] Military patrons, whether they were avid theatergoers or obliged to attend performances by government decree, transformed the environment inside the playhouse. A tight lens on specific audiences informs several of this book's chapters. For example, I detail the successful performance history of Pierre-Laurent de Belloy's *Le Siège de Calais* (1765), a popular tragedy with military and patriotic themes. Included in this analysis is a reflection on parodies of de Belloy's play that focus on military recruitment strategies and on readings of *Le Siège de Calais* at military bases and barracks on the northern front. Soldiers who had witnessed de Belloy's tragedy wrote that they identified with the characters and contexts, and that they were encouraged by the play to reenlist and recommit to France's armed efforts. Old-Regime military–theatrical overlaps evince flashpoints of change to dramatic generic norms and military traditions. But the performances and associated media generated by *Le Siège de Calais* or by any *ancien régime* production paled in comparison with what would happen during the Revolution. Joseph Arné's celebrity status in 1789, for example, would have been politically and aesthetically unthinkable several decades earlier.

[9] On the relationship between theatrical performance and geopolitical expansion, see Lauren R. Clay, *Stagestruck: The Business of Theater in Eighteenth-Century France and Its Colonies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013); Ellen Welch, *A Theater of Diplomacy: International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); and Rahul Markovits, *Civiliser l'Europe: Politiques du théâtre français au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2014). On the rise of military themes in dramatic literature and on the relationship between military or patriotic themes and state building and colonization, I follow in the wake of Philippe Bourdin 's *Aux origins du théâtre patriotique* (Paris: CNRS, 2017), Renaud Bret-Vitoz 's *L'Éveil du héros plébéien, 1760–1794* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2018), Clare Siviter 's *Tragedy and Nation in the Age of Napoleon* (Liverpool: Oxford Studies in the Enlightenment and Liverpool University Press, 2020), and the multiple authors who contributed to Jeffrey Leichman and Karine Bénac-Giroux (eds.), *Colonialism and Slavery in Performance: Theatre and the Eighteenth-Century French Caribbean* (Liverpool: Oxford Studies in the Enlightenment and Liverpool University Press, 2021).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This book describes a path to the Revolution's outpouring of military events, plays, and performances – a holistic program, which sought to use theater to strengthen "the bond between the civilian and military worlds, between war and nation."[10]

Military plays depict battle strategies, cataclysmic attacks, stunning victories, and debilitating losses. Many of these works are packed with action and most reflect on the qualities of men and women who endure and "succeed" in war. Another domain of research that informs my project is early modern and modern European and transatlantic gender studies, particularly scholarship on masculinity, rights feminism, and theatrical representations of gender norms and subversions.[11] Playwrights and military administrators shared questions and concerns about men and women at war, for example, *what kind of man leaves or stays at his post? What are the most essential attributes of a soldier, and are they innate or can they be taught? How should women contribute to violent, armed conflict?* I ask and attempt to answer these questions and others related to gender in my examination of drama written and performed at a moment when opinions regarding manhood and womanhood – but also pedagogy, political participation, and the individual's affective relationship to new ideas of "nation" – were called into question both by the turbulent domestic politics of the Revolution and by the proliferation of France's armed forces across Europe, the Caribbean, and beyond.

I thus combine several crucial strands of eighteenth-century scholarship – cultural military history; theater, drama, and performance studies; and gender studies of militarized men and women – into an analysis of theater's influence on military norms and practices as well as the military's role in creating new forms and experiences of drama and theatrical performance. My focus on military–theatrical overlaps, including plays from

[10] Marie-Cécile Thoral, *From Valmy to Waterloo: France at War, 1792–1815*, trans. Godfrey Rodgers (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), 2.

[11] The list is long, but seminal works on eighteenth-century masculinity include Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of the Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), and sections of Sarah Meltzer and Leslie Rabine (eds.), *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). I am also indebted to more recent works in women, gender, and sexuality studies that pertain specifically to theater or to the military: Wendy Nielsen, *Women Warriors in Romantic Drama* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2013); Annelle Curulla, *Gender and Religious Life in French Revolutionary Drama* (Liverpool: Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment and Liverpool University Press, 2018); Michael Hughes, *Forging Napoleon's Grande Armée: Motivation, Military Culture, and Masculinity* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2012); and Brian Martin, *Napoleonic Friendship: Military Fraternity, Intimacy, and Sexuality* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2011).

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outside of the traditional French-language dramatic canon and productions at theatrical venues that have been rarely discussed (or discussed as an ensemble) by scholars, enables me to delve into what is often considered the French "periphery." While many books about eighteenth-century French theater focus exclusively on Paris, this study presents performances in militarized ports and border cities around metropolitan France and in the crown's most *theaterphilic* plantation-based colony, Saint-Domingue. The reasons for and the difficulties of conducting research in provincial and colonial spaces are discussed at length in the introduction to Chapter 3. I only state here that my intention is to follow soldiers, wars, actors, and plays to locales of intense interaction. Contexts with large soldier populations (or significant soldier populations in comparison with civilians) and specific objectives regarding theater and soldier leisure were often far from the French capital and in places of geopolitical desire, strategy, and conflict.

The close readings and critical reconstructions in this book connect aspects of theater (texts, performances, actors, authors, managers, and spectators) to military entities and structures (soldiers, orders, sanctions, policies, garrisons, anxieties, and strategies). These mechanisms, both the material and the symbolic, converge most forcefully in the *military–theatrical complex*, a term I coin based on another, more famous neologism, the *military–industrial complex*. More information on the complex will help illustrate its heuristic potential. The US President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a five-star general and commander in the Second World War, described the military–industrial complex in his Farewell Address to the Nation on January 17, 1961:

> A vital element in keeping the peace is our military establishment. Our arms must be mighty, ready for instant action, so that no potential aggressor may be tempted to risk his own destruction [. . .] This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence – economic, political, even spiritual – is felt in every city, every statehouse, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society. In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military–industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist.[12]

[12] "Eisenhower's Farewell Address," January 17, 1961. Reprinted in the *American Experience* series by PBS, www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/eisenhower-farewell. Eisenhower was the

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Eisenhower used the term during the throes of the Cold War, a context with technological, social, and cultural characteristics that were patently different from France's conflicts of the eighteenth century. But his notion of the military–industrial complex connects to my idea of the eighteenth-century French military–theatrical complex in several ways.

First, Eisenhower identifies a productive *relationship* between military and non-military government entities for the purpose of harnessing a more powerful and efficient fighting force. Government bureaus, including civilian administrative units, are subsumed into the military endeavor. Defense protocols and structures are assisted and rendered more pervasive by harmonizing the efforts of the country's social, political, and economic organs. The military then channels the energy and resources of people, structures, and mechanisms that were previously unrelated or more loosely linked to the military.

Second, the relationship described by Eisenhower includes characteristics of *totality* and an almost uncontrollable *proliferation* of the military, and the military state, into all aspects of life. Eisenhower questions, and ultimately comes to fear, the military's "acquisition of unwarranted influence," even in locations and institutions that were far from conflict zones. And third, the complex is highly *performative*. In addition to neutralizing the enemy on the ground, in the air, and across the seas with advanced technology and superior strategy, a goal of the complex is to project outward a performance of power so that "no potential aggressor may be tempted to risk his own destruction." Through tight relationships among government offices, the military, academic research, and private manufacturing, the United States has gained, according to Eisenhower, a total performance of power with influence abroad, but which can also be felt in the smallest towns at home. The complex's performance, in short, should prevent, even negate, the utilization of its destructive weaponry.

By the end of his presidency, Eisenhower had turned against the complex's powerful reach. But, in the immediate post-war years, he and others were optimistic about its effect on US wartime capabilities and its potential to help academic research, fill the coffers of emerging technology companies, and rebuild the country's post-war, post-depression economy. Faith in the military's role in civilian domains and structures also characterized the government officials, military officers, playwrights, and other operatives

first to use the term, but the speech was most likely penned by his speechwriters at the time, Ralph E. Williams and Malcolm Moos. For more information, see Charles J. G. Griffin, "New Light on Eisenhower's Farewell Address," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (1992): 469–79.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

who used artistic, political, and financial strategies to construct a French military–theatrical complex during the second half of the eighteenth century.

From implicit, even unintended relations between theater and the military to explicit uses of drama and performance by army and navy administrators, this study provides a holistic if not comprehensive account of the links between theater and soldiers in the age of the French Revolution. Some terminology should help differentiate among the relations discussed in the following pages. At times, I will address the *military–theatrical complex* – the conscious, deliberate collaboration between the military and the theatrical world mentioned above. At other times, I concentrate on *military–theatrical overlaps*, *relations*, or *interactions*, which are less structured bonds. And still elsewhere, I unearth the *experiences* that resulted from military–theatrical complexes and relations, which turn the lens from the entities, actors, policies, and structures themselves to how these aspects were felt, lived, enjoyed, and critiqued both by soldiers and by civilians. The lines between these categories are often faint, and most chapters will include layered analysis of each military–theatrical form.

Not everybody supported France's increasingly visible military culture after the Seven Years' War. Enablers and detractors of military influence waged cultural war on stage and on the dramatic page. For example, I describe a heated debate on the causes of desertion and on the fundamental traits of the "military man" that was carried out through textual editing and with performances in front of sailors and soldiers at a naval theater. Anti-war writers, such as Louis-Sébastien Mercier, latched on to a vogue of military-themed playmaking to warn spectators and readers of France's increasingly bellicose ideals. Mercier deployed a specific type of theater, the *drame* (or *drame bourgeois*), which was associated with Enlightenment reform and critique, to spread theories of peace and cosmopolitanism and to sow doubt in absolutist and expansionist politics. At the same time, Joseph Patrat, an opportunistic playwright in the French provinces, worked with military administrators to alter Mercier's anti-war play *Le Déserteur* by changing the dialogues and characters, and by staging a pro-military version of *Le Déserteur* at the Théâtre de la Marine in Brest, France's only public theater to be financed by its navy.

Mercier and Patrat diverged on war, but agreed that dramatic performance offered them the possibility to change the values and behaviors of spectators. Belief in the epistemological and communal powers of theatrical performance characterizes the discourses, texts, artistic works, and institutional reforms of a diverse group of eighteenth-century French writers and war administrators. Reformers both of dramatic literature and of the military

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pitched theatrical performance as a socializing process and a way to increase harmony across disparate groups, perfect the French-language skills of spectators, and teach French men and women (as well as foreigners and colonists) valuable historical, military, and political lessons about an increasingly self-aware *nation*. Although it took on different features in different locales, the military–theatrical complex was a structure that looked both inward and outward. It was part of a larger mission to promote cultural norms and a more coherent "French way of life" at a moment of European conflict and during the rise of the modern nation-state.[13]

The lofty objectives of administrators and theater professionals were difficult to achieve. A harmonious, pedagogical, and *useful* military–theatrical complex was more of an aspirational goal than an actual description of the French military's relationship with theater. Several sections of this book demonstrate that theatrical performances with strong military presences and themes were often locations of disaccord, aggression, and the projection of difference and dispute. Performances were rarely, if ever, ludic moments of community building, learning, and shared aesthetic appreciation. Critics could not help but see stark differences between the intentions of playwrights and administrators, on the one hand, and the dangerous realities of warfare, colonial occupation, and everyday military service on the other. The disparity between the goals of administrators and some of the actual lived experiences inside the theater proved the limits of any universal theories of theatrical experience or performance appreciation. The military–theatrical complex calls for site-specific inquiry and constitutes an alternative model for accessing and defining capacious notions such as eighteenth-century theatrical "experiences," "cultures," or "events."

The specificity of military–theatrical experiences is further untangled with more critical definitions of performances as unique types of "events."[14] Christian Biet's notion of the theatrical *séance*, a theatrical meditation on apparatus (*dispositif*) theories by Michel Foucault[15] and

[13] Markovitz, *Civiliser l'Europe*, 19. Markovitz goes on to show that the popularity of French drama and theatrical performance in eighteenth-century Europe was less of a spontaneous phenomenon or evidence of any "innate" excellence of French literature than a concerted effort to use theater as soft power in France's military and diplomatic strategies.

[14] My definition of "event" is grounded in Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein's matter-of-fact description of it as "something unplanned, with unforeseeable circumstances." See Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein, "Introduction," in *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions*, ed. Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), 20.

[15] See the interview conducted with Foucault in "Le jeu de Michel Foucault," *Bulletin périodique du champ*, in Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, trans. Colin Gordon (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1980).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Georgio Agamben,[16] recovers experiences that are often absent in traditional definitions of theater.[17] According to Biet, the flow of information, including feelings of pleasure or displeasure during a theatrical performance, is more complicated than an unhindered, one-directional transfer of the actors' words and gestures into the consciousness of spectators. Theater is not a purely literary product, nor is it a straightforward audio-visual transmission of a dramatic text, political message, or philosophical viewpoint. Spectators arrive at the theater with disparate goals, sensory information originates from different sources in the auditorium, and stimuli deployed in a theater confront a spectator's lived experiences, expectations, and biases. One spectator's engagement with a play can be very different from another's.[18] The experience is informed by features beyond the actors' performances, including the architecture of the building, political contexts, social class, linguistic proficiency, sounds and distractions, fires, violent disturbances, and more.

Theater is an apparatus of discourses, power relations, bodies, expectations, and feelings. Theatrical events "are capable of representing and being influenced by any aspect of the world, in a multitude of modes, means, and manners. They also engage with alternative and possible worlds, the 'as if' versions of existence."[19] Fiction collides with material realities (bodies, seats, auditoriums), as well as with symbolic processes grounded in social norms, economics, and geopolitics. About the intersectional discourses and structures at play during the theatrical event, Biet writes that the

> théâtre, socialement et esthétiquement, serait alors un *dispositif* qui rassemble, qui permet que des regards se croisent et parfois se focalisent sur un point particulier (la scène, l'orchestre). Il a ainsi une fonction dont on pourrait dire qu'elle est socialement unifiante, ou unificatrice. Toutefois, ce lieu d'où l'on voit, de même que les lieux que l'on regarde, sont absolument partagés, à tous égards non unis – plus que désunis –, et surtout diffractés au sens où chacun ne voit ni ne regarde la même chose.[20]

[16] Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[17] Christian Biet, "Séance, Performance, Assemblée et Représentation: Les jeux de regards au théâtre (XVII^{e}–XXI^{e} siècle)." *Littératures classiques* 82, no. 3 (2013): 79–97.

[18] In addition to Biet's article, see Susan Bennett's discussion of the "universal experience" and its limits: Susan Bennett, "Universal Experience: The City as Tourist Stage," in *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, ed. Tracy C. Davis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 76–90.

[19] Thomas Postlewait, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 12.

[20] Biet, "Séance, Performance, Assemblée et Représentation," 81.

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> theater, socially and aesthetically, would then be an apparatus (*dispositif*) that brings people together, that allows eyes to meet and sometimes focus on a particular point (the stage, the orchestra). It thus has a function which one could say is socially unifying, or unificatory (*unificatrice*). However, this place from which we see, as well as the places we look at, are absolutely shared, in all respects not united – more than disunited – and above all diffracted in the sense that each person neither sees nor watches the same thing.

The tension between belonging and distance, unification and difference, identification and repulsion that is inherent to any theatrical performance was intensified by the military's presence. This effect characterized theater events throughout the French empire, and especially in Saint-Domingue, where military tensions were exacerbated by the racial and socioeconomic violence of the colony. The reification of difference, combined with the economic and affective dependences that characterize plantation societies, created a context in which the paradox of necessary closeness to radical otherness was played out in the colony's theaters. The military's presence in the island's theaters, at least in part, complicated attempts to aestheticize or universalize a culture of theatergoing. Soldiers negated the white elite class's desire to distance local theatrical experiences from the constant social performances of the colony's anxieties and tensions. The military was asked to keep the peace and enable the aesthetic event. And yet, according to many colonial theater patrons at the time, the very presence of soldiers and sailors in the auditorium prevented any normative aesthetic processes (at least as far as eighteenth-century metropolitan France prescribed) from transpiring.[21] The colonial context features prominently in this study as an example of the eighteenth-century military–theatrical complex and as a counterexample to normative and universalist claims about theatrical experience.

The dispersive, even menacing, features of the military–theatrical complex were most palpable in a colonial context, but provincial theaters in France were not immune to conflictual performances of military behaviors

[21] See Chapter 3 for more information on the relationship between colonists and soldiers in Saint-Domingue's theaters. On the topic of normative experiences and eighteenth-century spectator behavior, I am indebted to Jeffrey Ravel's scholarship on eighteenth-century *parterres*. Ravel's study pulls (mostly Parisian) theatrical experience away from notions of courtly politeness and deferential aesthetic appreciation. I transport several of Ravel's theses into places of even more tumult and raucous behavior by focusing on soldiers (who constituted just one of many groups in the parterres studied by Ravel). For more information, see Jeffrey S. Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theatre and French Political Culture, 1680–1791* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1999).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and anxieties. One goal of this book is to establish alternative models for comparing theater and performance between colonial contexts and metropolitan France. Thanks to recent studies by Laurent Dubois, Lauren Clay, David M. Powers, Bernard Camier, Julia Prest, and others, we no longer need to view colonial theaters as lackluster attempts to replicate Parisian polite society and perceived metropolitan aesthetic norms.[22] This research, which is indebted to the Haitian historian Jean Fouchard's groundbreaking work on Saint-Domingue's stages, highlights a vibrant theatrical culture with innovative practices such as creole-language performances, dramatic depictions of recent political and military events of local importance, and casts of actors from metropolitan France who sometimes performed alongside mixed-race actors from the colonies.[23]

My intention is to add to this recent burgeoning of scholarship on theater in colonial Saint-Domingue by showing the military–theatrical complex's development on the island, its links to colonial political and social apparatuses, and its relationship – both similarities and startling differences – to military–theatrical experiences in metropolitan France. This analysis (mostly in Chapter 3) sets up the last two chapters of my book, where I show a concerted effort during the French Revolution to capitalize on but change fundamentally the Old Regime's military and theatrical cultures. The pre-1789 military–theatrical complex, especially as it was constructed and deployed in a colonial context, provides a framework to study military–theatrical experiences in the *métropole*. I follow the flow of soldiers and actors in both directions, from "center" to "periphery" and vice versa, to show new theoretical centers and sources of influence.[24] The Old-Regime military–theatrical complex becomes a model to both follow and spurn in French Revolutionary military–theatrical efforts, which sought to ramp up interactions between soldiers and theatrical performances but scale down their more divisive and "othering" features.

My work on French Revolutionary-era theater takes on historiographical claims about invention and novelty in drama and theatrical performance in the evolving context of France's war efforts. I describe several

[22] See Chapter 3 for a review of studies on the colonial theaters of Saint-Domingue.

[23] See Jean Fouchard, *Le théâtre à Saint-Domingue* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'État, 1955); see also Jean Fouchard, *Artistes et repertoire des scènes de Saint-Domingue* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'État, 1955).

[24] It should be noted, however, that the "flow" of mostly white soldiers and actors differed drastically from the "flow" of Saint-Domingue's most populous group – enslaved black men and women – the majority of whom (or whose parents or grandparents) were kidnapped in Africa and transported in horrific conditions across the Atlantic.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

continuations of the Old Regime's military–theatrical complex to show the expansion of dramaturgical processes and performance practices that were already in place before the storming of the Bastille. Post- and pre-1789 dramatic authors deployed military themes in their works, depicted battles and conflicts of national importance, and opened dramatic representation to increasingly diverse swaths of French society. But the main argument here is that there was far more invention and creation than stagnation and respect for tradition in Revolutionary theater, and specifically in performances of military themes, events, and concerns. Many plays performed during the Revolution were indeed written before 1789, yet Old-Regime works were deployed through the evolving lens of the Revolution's volatile political, social, and military endeavors. While I recognize the merits of scholarly works that ground much of the French Revolution's theatrical practices in Old-Regime models, I depart from this posture with care and precision when addressing the *experience* of military dramas in the 1790s.[25]

New plays, performance practices, and programming techniques added to the redeployment of existing theater. I detail more dramatic works, more characters, more themes, more genres, and more theatrical performances during the 1790s – a particularly bellicose decade when France raised one of the largest armies in history and declared war on most of its neighbors. I widen the eighteenth-century military–theatrical complex to show performances of soldiering before, during, after, and even in opposition to theatrical performances in French auditoriums. I describe the interconnectedness of different performances of military plays and reenactments as well as their role in state politics and in the strategic objectives of France's armed forces. This analysis shows the reach of military drama and influence into civil society by describing the participation of women and children in the complex. What is ultimately revealed is a *national–military phenomenon* – a totalizing experience of performances, plays, battles, and martial efforts that attempted to replace virtually all features of civilian life and Old-Regime customs and institutions. I am assisted here by performance theories of reenactment, repetition, and circularity,[26] as well as by recent

[25] The Revolution's debt to Old-Regime drama is described in Emmet Kennedy, Marie-Laurence Netter, James P. McGregor, and Mark V. Olsen, *Theatre, Opera, and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris: Analysis and Repertory* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996). See Chapter 4 for a more complete discussion of innovation and tradition in Revolutionary drama.

[26] Chapter 4's discussion of Revolutionary performances and reenactments follows several key works in Theatre and Performance Studies and in French Revolutionary Theater Studies, including Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2011); Yann Robert, *Dramatic Justice: Trial by Theater in the Age of the French Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Raphael Samuel,

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

scholarly debates over gender roles during the Revolution and, more specifically, in France's rapid mobilization for war.[27]

As in the case of most academic monographs, many readers will choose to tackle this book's five chapters in order. Chapter 1 starts in the 1760s, and the study concludes in the 1790s with performances of the French military's unraveling in Saint-Domingue, which became the independent nation of Haiti in 1804. I compare several themes across different contexts, and my arguments build in loosely chronological fashion from implicit military–theatrical overlaps at France's most storied theatrical venue of the Old Regime, the Comédie-Française, to totalizing performances of wartime concerns and military incursions both inside and outside the theaters of Revolutionary France.

Or, readers can choose different paths, depending on their goals and interests. For example, Chapters 1, 2, and 5 focus on plays, and include several close, even genetic readings of dramatic works. Students and scholars of literature might start there, while those interested in the material, political, and social features of military–theatrical performances could begin with Chapters 3 and 4. Readers interested in the Old Regime and its theatrical cultures might dwell on Chapters 1, 2, and 3, whereas those who are interested in Revolutionary studies should focus on Chapters 4 and 5. Specialists of gender history and of the performance of gender norms in drama should find compelling discussions of men and masculinity in

Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture (London: Verso, 1994); Matthew S. Buckley, *Tragedy Walks the Streets: The French Revolution in the Making of Modern Drama* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Susan Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts: Theater, Democracy, and the French Revolution* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Cecilia Feilla, *The Sentimental Theater of the French Revolution* (London: Ashgate, 2013); Mechele Leon, *Molière, the French Revolution, and the Theatrical Afterlife* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2010); and Thibault Julian, *L'Histoire de la France en jeu dans le théâtre des Lumières et de la Révolution (1765–1799)* (PhD Diss., Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2016) and *Un théâtre pour la nation: L'histoire en scène (1765–1806)* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2022).

[27] See Chapter 5 for a more complete critical survey. Major titles about war and gender in the 1790s (or with significant sections about the subject) that I follow include Karen Hagemann, Gisela Mettele, and Jane Rendall (eds.), *Gender, War and Politics: Transatlantic Perspectives, 1775–1830* (London: Routledge, 2010); Ramsey and Russell (eds.), *Tracing War in British Enlightenment and Romantic Culture*; Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and Their French Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann, and Jane Rendall (eds.), *Soldiers, Citizens and Civilians: Experiences and Perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790–1820* (London: Routledge, 2009); Thomas Cardoza, *Intrepid Women: Cantinières and Vivandières of the French Army* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010); Laura Fournier-Finocchiaro (ed.), *Les Mères de la Patrie: Représentations et constructions d'une figure nationale* (Caen: Cahiers de la MRSH, 2006); Annie K. Smart, *Citoyennes: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2011); and Jennifer N. Heuer, *Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789–1830* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2005).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Chapter 2 and of women, revolutionary domesticity, and militant feminine violence in Chapter 5. And those interested the field of Theatre and Performance Studies will find a lively discussion of reenactment and repetition in Chapter 4 and an examination of performance apparatus theory in Chapter 3.

The following chapter outline should help readers decide on a route. In Chapter 1, I describe theatrical responses to France's defeat in the Seven Years' War, often described by historians as the *first global war*. I provide a close reading of the dramatic text and performance history of de Belloy's *Le Siège de Calais*, pitched by its author as France's "first national tragedy" and used by government officials to rally French subjects around their country and their army. I argue that the play was vital in creating through theater a new relationship between French subjects and the nation's armed conflicts. De Belloy's success was predicated on his manipulation of new forms of "bourgeois" and "sentimental" drama, and the play went on to inspire more soldier plays and war dramas. The chapter concludes with an examination of the tragedy's reverberations throughout the French empire by way of parodies and public readings of *Le Siège de Calais* in fairground theaters and military garrisons.

Chapter 2 brings to light a dozen desertion-themed plays and operas that followed in the wake of *Le Siège de Calais*. I analyze these works, which were performed during the Old Regime's twilight, alongside recent scholarship on military and early modern masculinities to tease out the theatricalization of an emerging martial culture that drew on emotional brotherhood and feminine exclusion. I perform a comparative analysis on two versions of one play, *Le Déserteur*, the sentimental anti-war *drame* by Mercier, mentioned above, and the alternative version that was dramaturgically "militarized" by Joseph Patrat for soldiers and sailors at the navy's theater in Brest. A close reading of variants, edits, and both textual and cultural manipulation presents war drama as a site of conflict in a larger intellectual battle where different factions in French society argued about reform cultures inside military and theatrical circles.

Chapter 3 moves from an examination of plays depicting soldiering, civilian–military interactions, and desertion to a critical reconstitution of pre-revolutionary military performance contexts. First, I describe the development and operations of the Théâtre de la Marine in Brest, the only public theater that was built and financed by France's war administration and where Patrat's manipulated version of Mercier's *Le Déserteur* made its metropolitan French debut. The chapter's second part focuses on the Comédie in Cap-Français (now Cap-Haïtien), the largest and most

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press

frequented theater in the colonial Caribbean. In addition to describing the military, racial, and gendered features of theatrical life in Saint-Domingue, I connect Cap-Français' Comédie, which was built in 1764 and which catered in part to the city's large soldier population, to a network of military-infused theaters in French provincial cities such as Metz, Besançon, and Brest.

In Chapter 4, I combine my analysis of war dramas with military performance contexts to uncover strategies of totality, repetition, and reenactment in battle "event" plays from the French Revolution. The 1790s witnessed, according to some historians, the first "total war" and a deadly proliferation of both battles and casualties, especially after France raised a citizen army in 1793 of over 800,000 soldiers – one of the largest the world had ever seen. The Revolutionary (then Napoleonic) wars were not only massive in size but different in form and intensity. The Revolution was rife with military-themed drama, and this chapter highlights its war plays and performances, and their relations to the country's evolving military goals and tensions. A corpus of approximately 110 dramatic and musical plays reveals stark differences between the Revolution's war theater and its Old-Regime equivalent. I propose new ways to describe and critically evaluate war theater, which often depicted recent military endeavors with documentary-inspired precision and an anxious totality of emotionally engaging performance strategies.

Chapter 5 shifts from male soldiers and issues of masculinity to the role of women in military plays. I describe the multiple and overlapping roles of women in the military–theatrical endeavor, and I avoid traditional historiographic gestures such as contrasting active (male) citizenship with passive (female) domesticity. This chapter continues an examination of totalizing processes in Revolutionary-era theatricalized conflict by including French *citoyennes* in the military–theatrical endeavor. I interrogate here three main categories for women and war in 1790s drama: female soldier (*femmes-soldats*; *filles-soldats*) plays, works about *vivandières* and *cantinières* (women providing service roles to combat units), and plays about what I call the Revolution's "militarized domestic sphere," a wartime home front where armed conflict created specific forms of violent domesticity. With particular attention to military plays penned by women about their fellow *citoyennes*, as well as to recent feminist scholarship on French Revolutionary women and war, I explore a dramaturgical practice whereby women sought to reimagine citizenship after efforts to assert their rights in the Revolution's political sphere ran asunder.

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Finally, in the conclusion, I return to Saint-Domingue, which by the 1790s was rife with Jacobin sentiment, rebellions of enslaved black laborers and free people of color, and intra-military disaccord. I provide several short case studies of soldier violence and political action, and I introduce several limitations of, and conclusions about, the eighteenth-century military–theatrical complex. Unlike the expansive national–military theatrical phenomenon in metropolitan France, the continued commitment to inequality and segregation in Saint-Domingue led to the disintegration of its white-centric theatrical institutions and practices – an important step in what would become the Haitian Revolution.

In this book's epigraph, Jacques Rancière prescribes a type of performance event that abolishes "exteriority" and "difference." This study articulates how Rancière's goal for performance was shared by eighteenth-century subjects-then-citizens with a startling (and problematic) desire for war, violence, and geopolitical expansion. What follows is a selection of case studies, critical readings, and descriptions of performance contexts in which spectators engaged with the French military and its wars. The geographical diversity and the different themes explored in this study should not hide its central argument: French theater and military cultures shared discourses, processes, and procedures during a profound moment of change to both institutions. Military–theatrical experiences culminated in number and complexity during the 1790s, as evidenced by the totality of strategies connecting the military to theater and performance that were deployed by the Revolution's theater artists, military administrators, and political operatives. In the age of the French Revolution, France moved from a series of skirmishes involving theater, soldiers, civilians, and war to a totalizing experience of armed conflict, politics, and performance. The experience of military theater was attractive to many spectators and novel in its dramaturgical and performative features. From today's perspective, war theater is disconcerting evidence of the strategies and feelings that promoted nationalistic policies and practices. With war's grisly persistence and the return of violent nativism to the global stage, the following story of one country's quest to build community by celebrating conflict might not strike us as distant enough.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009431224.001 Published online by Cambridge University Press