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A Hymn for the Citizens of Color. Parody-Song, the French Revolution, and the Abolition of Slavery

Un Himno para los ciudadanos de color. La parodia musical, la Revolución Francesa y la abolición de la esclavitud

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ABSTRACT
With the abolition of slavery in France and its colonies in 1794, ensuing from the abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue 1793, free people of color and enslaved Africans reached their goal in the struggle for emancipation. Throughout the early French Republic, people gathered to celebrate this milestone of revolutionaries' ideals: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. People of color took part in the festivities as well. One woman of color, Marie-Thérèse Lucidor Corbin, created a hymn for the people of color, to honor the struggle for emancipation, and to celebrate the abolition of slavery. This *hymne des citoyens de couleurs* was sung during the festivities to the melody of the well-known song "La Marseillaise", which today is France´s national anthem, making the hymn a musical parody of the original song. In this article, I combine findings from musicology and sound history with sources and research results from the Age of Revolutions as well as the History of free people of color and women of color in particular, while examining the practice of creating parody-songs during the French Revolution. I argue that Corbin´s parody of the Marseillaise is a way to link people of color's struggle with the ideals of the French Revolution and their fight for the human rights that the French Revolution in principle guaranteed them.

Keywords: Marie-Thérèse Lucidor Corbin; Musical Parody; Parody-song; French Revolution; Haitian Revolution; Abolition of Slavery.

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RESUMEN
Con la abolición de la esclavitud en Francia y sus colonias en 1794, como consecuencia de la abolición de la esclavitud en Saint-Domingue 1793, las personas de color libres y los africanos esclavizados alcanzaron su meta en la lucha por la emancipación. En toda la temprana República Francesa, la gente se reunió para celebrar este hito de los ideales de los revolucionarios, Libertad, Igualdad, Fraternidad, y también la gente de color participó en los festejos. Una mujer de color, Marie-Thérèse Lucidor Corbin, creó un himno para la gente de color, para honrar la lucha por la emancipación y celebrar la abolición de la esclavitud. Este

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hymne des citoyens de couleurs se cantaba durante las festividades con la melodía de la conocida canción "La Marsellesa", que hoy es el himno nacional de Francia, lo que convierte al himno en una parodia musical de la canción original. En este artículo combino hallazgos de la musicología y la historia del sonido con fuentes y resultados de investigaciones de la Era de las Revoluciones, así como de la Historia de la gente libre de color y de las mujeres de color en particular. Examino la práctica de crear canciones-parodia durante la Revolución Francesa. Argumento que la parodia de la Marsellesa de Corbin es una forma de vincular la lucha de la gente de color con los ideales de la Revolución Francesa y su lucha por los derechos humanos que la Revolución Francesa en principio les garantizó.

Palabras clave: Marie-Thérèse Lucidor Corbin; Parodia Musical; Canción-parodia; Revolución Francesa; Revolución Haitiana; abolición de la esclavitud.

INTRODUCCIÓN

In the ides of the French Revolution, from 1790 onwards, another revolution took place, in France´s wealthiest colony, Saint-Domingue, which resulted in the creation of Haiti in 1804, the first independent state in Latin America and the second independent state in the Americas. The French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man as well as the uprising of free people of color and the enslaved population of Saint-Domingue made the abolition of slavery in 1793 in Saint-Domingue and in the rest of France and its colonies in 1794 possible. Reaching their goal, the abolition of slavery, a French citizen of color (*citoyenne de couleur*) Marie-Thérèse Lucidor Corbin wrote an anthem for the people of color (*hymne des citoyens de couleurs*), sung to the melody of the well-known revolutionary military song, today known as La Marseillaise. By creating a parody-song, Lucidor Corbin compared the uprising of the people of color in Saint-Domingue and the abolition of slavery directly with the French Revolution and its struggle for equality, popularizing the uprising as well as the abolition of slavery as a just cause to the French population. In this article, I argue that the parody of well-known musical pieces was common to help illustrate and enforce one's political or social arguments. I therefore examine how the parody of both, the French Revolution´s anthem and other popular songs, was intended to "justify" people of color's struggle for the human rights that the French Revolution in principle guaranteed them. The article combines musicology and sound history findings with sources and research results from the Age of Revolutions, as well as the History of free people of color and women of color.

After briefly contextualizing the French and Haitian Revolutions as well as introducing Lucidor Corbin's hymn to the people of color and other parody songs, I will clarify the use of the term "musical parodies" and provide a short historical overview of parodies of well-known revolutionary songs, such as the Marseillaise. Songs of the French Revolution have been well studied (e.g. Hughes; Moureau; Mason; Mondelli) and especially the Marseillaise as the crucial song of the French Revolution and maybe one of the best-known revolutionary songs has received much attention by scholars (e.g. Pierre; Hudde). After giving a short introduction about Lucidor Corbin, I will shed light on Lucidor Corbin´s hymn, a musical parody of the Marseillaise, written in 1794 and sung at the Temple of Reason during the festivities around the abolition of slavery in the same year. Pierre Bardin's work is by now the most substantial on the family Lucidor. Although known to some scholars, Lucidor Corbin's hymn has not received much attention, nor has it been put in relation to the common practice of musical parody during the French Revolution.

The French and Haitian Revolutions and the Abolition of Slavery: Putting the White World Upside Down

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, a variety of thinkers challenged the old dogmas of the church and feudalism. This ideological movement throughout Western Europe, commonly known as the Enlightenment reached its biggest impact in France in the second half of the 18th century. Enlightenment thinkers were anything but united about the question of racial equality and the status of women (Popkin, *A New World* 48–53).[2] Combined with internal difficulties, like economic problems and a growing wish for the participation of the bourgeoisie, these ideas led to the erosion of the ancient régime. The economic situation of most of France's population was already tense before the Estates-General was convoked in 1789 to establish higher taxes. A grain shortage and the problem of maintaining enough supplies of food led to the uprising of the population in France and its colonies and the seizure of the Bastille in Paris on July 14th, 1789. The newly formed National Constituent Assembly abolished the feudal regime and declared the Rights of Man and the Citizen. Since there was no clarification concerning skin color, status, or to which parts of France the new rights were to apply, the Rights of Man could be indeed seen as applying to all free men of France and its colonies. (Popkin, *A New World* 131–139 and 154–169).

In Saint-Domingue, however, several groups had already formed before the Revolution. But with the outbreak of the French Revolution and the lack of political participation of the colonists, rumors began to circulate in the colony.[3] The white royalists clashed with the white patriots, who wanted to achieve greater autonomy from the mother country, especially economically. In addition, the main concern of the richest white plantation owners, the so-called *grands blancs*, was that the adoption of human and civil rights would abolish slavery. Rumors that all slaves were yet to be freed, fueled these fears since the outbreak of the revolution (Fick 118; Gliech 318). Meanwhile, the not-so-wealthy white population (*petit blancs*) sought primarily to improve their own position vis-à-vis the *grands blancs* and to secure their position. *The gens de couleur libre,*[4] also called *mulatres*, and the group of freed slaves (*affranchis*), some of whom had become very rich over time and often owned plantations and slaves themselves, strove for equality with the white population. Alarmed by the numbers of this group, and, above all, frightened by their sometimes economically prominent position with large landholdings and slaves, the white population [*grands* and *petits blancs*], had already increasingly restricted the rights of the freedmen and gens de couleur in the middle of the 18th century. Free people of color were not allowed by a law from 1773 to become surgeons, midwives, ride in coaches, or take any colonial political office (Daut 74; Fick 118; Klooster 87–90). According to the available sources, enslaved Africans, who constituted the largest group on the island, did not call for the abolition of slavery in the first instance but rather argued for an improvement of their situation. It is still interesting that both, white and *gens de couleur*/ *affranchis*, resorted to slaves to enforce their demands militarily (See: Brown, Morgan).

The hope of the *gens de couleurs libres* to reach their goal of full civil rights through negotiations with the white population of Saint-Domingue turned out negatively. When it came to equal rights for Saint-Domingue´s population of color, *grands* and *petits blancs* were united in their denial. Some of the *gens de couleur libres* led

[2] For further reading on French thinkers' position on equality and slavery, (see Gregory; Rohbeck).
[3] It has to be noted, that the exchange of information with the colonies went rather slow. Reports of the events in the metropole reached the Caribbean with a delay of up to three months (Jones 63).
[4] The term gens de couleur is especially by that time used to describe free people of mixed race but could be also scarcely used for free or freed black enslaved Africans or people of African descent. It is therefore unequal to the English term people of color, including all people of color (see e.g. Gauthier).

by Vincent Ogé, who returned from France to Saint-Domingue, started an armed rebellion in the northern province of Saint-Domingue by late 1790, striving for equality with the white population. But Ogé, Chavannes, and their followers were not able to resist the colonial army of nearly 1500 soldiers. During and after the capture of the two leaders and many of their followers, the colonial administration's reaction was brutal, resulting in the killing of most of the insurgents (Gliech 281–284). But the struggle for equality was not over. Supported by Abbé Grégoire and the *Société des Amis des Noirs* [Society of the Friends of Blacks], one of their leading figures, Julien Raymond, was actively lobbying for their cause. In May 1791, the national assembly decreed full citizenship for the population of the *gens de couleur libres* which was yet to be weakened by the same institution a few months later and was not established by the colonial assembly. It was not before March 28th, 1792, that the *gens de couleur libres* and the free black population were granted full citizenship. This also resulted in the creation of only two categories of people in the colonies, either free or enslaved (Koekkoek 75; Dubois 113). The enslaved population of Saint-Domingue also actively campaigned for an improvement of their position from 1791. The main issues here were the abolition of corporal punishment and three days off per week. The revolt, which started from the north, was waged with extreme harshness on the part of both the enslaved population and the whites. The slave army moved from plantation to plantation, looting, and pillaging, and did not even stop at cities. The white colonial army, however, did not have enough power to oppose the slave armies that often used guerrilla tactics (Girard 41-42).

Meanwhile in France, the constituent assembly overthrew the royal administration completely and gave the country a new order. Threatened by the ongoing revolution, King Louis XVI tried to flee France in 1791 but was arrested in Varennes. Not long after, the new constitution was accepted. But counterrevolutionary movements in Europe were on the go as well, so the 1st revolutionary war started in 1792 with France fighting against Austria and Prussia, and the latter trying to back King Louis and save the French monarchy for example with the Brunswick Manifesto, a direct intimidation to the revolutionaries, threatening them with consequences in case the royal family was harmed. However, these attempts to intimidate the revolutionaries only led to a radicalization of the revolutionary movement, occupying the *Tuileries* and proclaiming the end of the monarchy and the beginning of the 1st (Jacobin) republic (Jones 67–69). The following trial and execution of Louis XVI on January 21st, 1793, caused more European states to unite against the revolution. Although France had internal political problems, facing a radicalization of the movement and a fight between Jacobins and Girondins, which resulted in the so-called terror (*terreur*) and the death of thousands of people, it declared war on the Netherlands and England on February 1st, and shortly after to Spain. By this decision, war was also taken to the colonies (Popkin, *A New World* 312–320 and 357–361).

By the end of 1792, conditions in Saint-Domingue were chaotic. The fight between revolutionaries and royalists as well as the slave-uprising was still ongoing and the decree that granted full citizenship to *gens de couleurs libres* and *affranchis* was still not recognized by wide parts of the white population. Therefore, the gens de couleur libre kept fighting for their rights against the white population, often making common cause with the revolting slaves. Meanwhile, rebels on all sides joined foreign powers. Several whites in western Haiti reached out to British troops in the hope that they would restore the old order and take vigorous action against the rebellious slaves and welcomed their invasion of Saint-Domingue. Free blacks and revolting slaves were also found fighting on the side of Spanish and English troops against the French colonial army of Saint-Domingue.

Among the rebels fighting for the Spanish crown was one of the most famous revolutionaries to this day, Toussaint L'Ouverture (Girard 42–46).

To enforce the law of equality for *gens de couleur libres* and *affranchis*, and to restore public order, two new governors for Saint-Domingue, Polverel and Sonthonax, were sent from France. A power struggle then broke out between the military governor Galbaud and Sonthonax, which resulted in the attack of Galbaud's troops on Cap Francais and the destruction of the most valuable city of the colony. In the face of the numerous internal threats and the invading foreign armies, winning back the revolting slaves, *gens de couleur libres* and *affranchis*, was one of the main concerns to stabilize the colony. Troubled by all those threats, but first and foremost the revolts of the black population claiming their rights and striving for emancipation, as well as pressured by the *Société des Amis des Noirs* to abolish slavery, Sonthonax and Polverel ordered the liberation of all enslaved men fighting for the French troops on June 21st, 1793. While gradually larger and larger groups of enslaved people were freed in the following months, the final liberation by Sonthonax in the north did not occur until August 29th, 1793. From that point on, all enslaved people in the colony were guaranteed the same rights as white people. Polverel took the same measures in the west and south of the colony. Three deputies sent by Sonthonax and Polverel reached Paris in early February 1794 with the messages and decrees of the two governors, and on February 4th, 1794, the National Assembly abolished slavery in France and its colonies. With this happening, the black people in Saint-Domingue finally reached their goal after a long ongoing and not yet to be finished struggle in their full emancipation by law. Not only did they win civil rights for themselves, but also for all black people in France and its colonies (Popkin, "A Colonial Media Revolution" 18–20; Gliech 421–426, 446–449 and 468–473).

However, it is a fallacy to assume that the abolition of slavery meant that the idea of equality took root primarily among the French population and elite. While the Haitian Revolution opened the doors for the abolishment of slavery in early republican France with its beginning in 1791, the door was yet to be shut again. Only a few years later, after the end of the French Revolution and Napoleon's rise to first consul in 1799, slavery was reintroduced with military help in 1802 and the following years. This made France the only country to have returned to slavery after its abolition. In the course of the battles of Napoleon's brother-in-law, General Leclerc, on Saint-Domingue, it became clear how much the white world with all their racial prejudices was put upside down through the uprising in the colony. Shortly before his death, Leclerc wrote in agony to his brother-in-law: "Unfortunately, the situation in the colonies is not well known in France, where people don't have accurate ideas about the blacks […]".[5]

Indeed, the ideas of Saint-Domingue's black inhabitants that prevailed in France proved to be false. Shortly after Leclerc's death in 1802 and Rochambeau's takeover, the French had to evacuate their troops from the island. The revolutionaries were triumphant and on January 1st, 1804, Jean Jaques Dessalines declared the independence and foundation of the state Hayti.

Musical Parody in the Age of the French Revolution

Unlike in general usage, musical parody does not refer to the humorous, i.e. funny, change of what has been said or created, but rather the adoption or change of what has been created musically. The term, which

[5] "Malheureusement la situation des colonies n'est pas connue en France, où on ne se fait pas d'idées exactes des noirs […]." Le Général en Chef au Premier Consul, le 4 Vendémiaire An XI (26 septembre 1802), in: Lettres du Général Leclerc, Paris 1937, p. 247.

comes from the Greek παρῳδία, means something like counter-song and has already appeared in antiquity. Here it is closely linked, above all, to literature. It was not until the 16th century that it was connected with music and used in the context relevant to this article (Falck 2-3). Usually, parody means the borrowing of musical elements like chords and their progressions, rhythms, and themes. Since borrowing in the Renaissance and Baroque was common, the main feature of musical parody was that whole substances of works were transferred into new pieces, where they could be merged with new parts or varied (Tilmouth). Closely related to the term parody in music is the concept contrafacture, which is, just like parody, a different form of musical or musical-textual arrangement. Nevertheless, for the time from the 1600s onwards, a differentiation between musical parody and contrafacture does not seem reasonable since the contemporaries themselves were applying the term parody to the technique of contrafacture (Von Dadelsen and SL, "Parodie und Kontrafaktur: A. Definitionen"). Therefore, in this article, the term parody song is used to describe the textual modification of songs whilst the music of the song itself stays unchanged.

Throughout Europe, musical parody was common, and works from foreign composers were often parodied by others for their own regional musical markets. In France, the term parody was known and related to music. In the second half of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century, there was a series of publications, for example of famous operas, that called themselves parodies (Falck 6-7). During this time, a whole series of parody collections appeared, such as the *Parodies bacchiques sur les airs et symphonies des opéras*. These French parodies or collections of parodies served as models for German and English parodies (Von Dadelsen and SL, "Parodie und Kontrafaktur: C. I. Liedparodie"). In all the different forms of French opera itself, parody was a common practice to give chansons, airs, and dance tunes a new text and adapt them to the current time and/or topic (Schick).

Not only in classical but also in popular music, parody was a common and widely used practice. It was not until the second half of the 19th century that the use of the practice of musical parody faced a decline (Schwindt-Gross 39). In popular music, new parody songs were created on a daily basis throughout the 18th century, especially for political reasons. In this context, the most common form of parody was the creation of a (new) text that was adapted to existing pieces of music, which could be popular songs or well-known arias from famous operas. One of the main reasons for the choice of the songs from operas was their general renownedness throughout the public as well as an easy access to score material (Schwindt-Gross 20-21). During the French Revolution, an immense number of parody songs were created for various reasons. They were meant to transport political messages, to create a sense of affiliation amongst groups, or for soldiers to sing and march to them and therefore strengthen the soldier's morale. These songs were sung in every possible situation, by theatre actors to adapt works more to the current times, by ballad singers on the street corners, or by soldiers when going to war. Songs were also composed/ written for special revolutionary festivities. Parodying popular and well-known songs made revolutionary thoughts and texts open to the public and even illiterate and musically untrained people were thereby able to internalize and easily memorize revolutionary paroles (Hughes 193–195; Popkin, *Revolutionary News* 20). That is why the sound of the song had to be in a popular style. The music itself was not an interpretation of the text or a reinforcement of its meaning, but a medium to transport and publicize the text (Lohmeier 44-45). With this in mind, it is not surprising that from over 3000 revolutionary songs listed for the last two decades of the 18th century, most are musical parodies and were sung or played in already existing tunes (Von Dadelsen and SL, "Parodie und Kontrafaktur: C. I. Liedparodie"). By relieving the ancient regime's censorship

and commercial practices during the revolution, the creation of new songs flourished, and they were distributed through newly founded newspapers, as well as a variety of pamphlets and other writings (Mason, *Singing* 61; Popkin, *Revolutionary News* 3). The distribution of these new songs by newspapers, through street performers, and in theaters helped establish a revolutionary, so to say republican singing culture, as the following example of the song *"*Ça ira" shows. In the early 1790s, it was fairly common that parody-songs were distributed by royalist newspapers as well, eventually becoming the main mouthpiece for royalist critique of the revolutionary political landscape (Mason, *Singing* 65). The function of songs to express political opposition was by no means new and was found frequently.

The most famous revolutionary song at the time, but unknown to many today, was "Ça ira." Immediately after singing "Ça ira" at the July 1790´s *Fête de la Fédération*, celebrating the first year of the capture of the *Bastille*, the song gained immense popularity, being published shortly after its emergence in the *Journal de Paris* on March 25th, 1791. The song itself is a musical parody of a pre-revolutionary *contre-danse* by the composer *Bécourt* entitled *Le carillon national*. The creation of its text has been attributed to the popular songwriter Ladré from Paris, who was a busker, performing in various Parisian streets. Like many others, he fit (new) verses to a well-known melody, making it easy to circulate information and political statements, also amongst the illiterate population (Mondelli 145; Mason, "Popular Songs" 172). Singing the song frequently at nearly every revolutionary festivity, and therefore transmitting it by an oral culture, "Ça ira" is an early example of a revolutionary singing culture and the emergence of a political parody-song in the French Revolution. Today, at least 25 variations of the text are known, with which the song was adapted to the different messages of the various revolutionary groups that needed to be addressed and presented. As Mondelli states, the song had gotten its own identity as anti-royalist, so to say revolutionary. Hence, singing "Ça ira" became a revolutionary act and a practice of vocal expression through its singing during revolutionary festivities and its anti-clerical and anti-monarchic text (Mondelli 145–147; Mason, "Ça ira" 23). Pierre's explanations and collection of sources concerning the song, back this view. He furthermore gives probable cause that the *Carillon*, where "Ça ira"´s music stemmed from, was one of the preferred songs of France´s queen Marie-Antoinette. Taking the preferred song of the queen and assigning it a text that is directed against her, can also be seen as an anti-monarchic act (Pierre 315, 477–479).

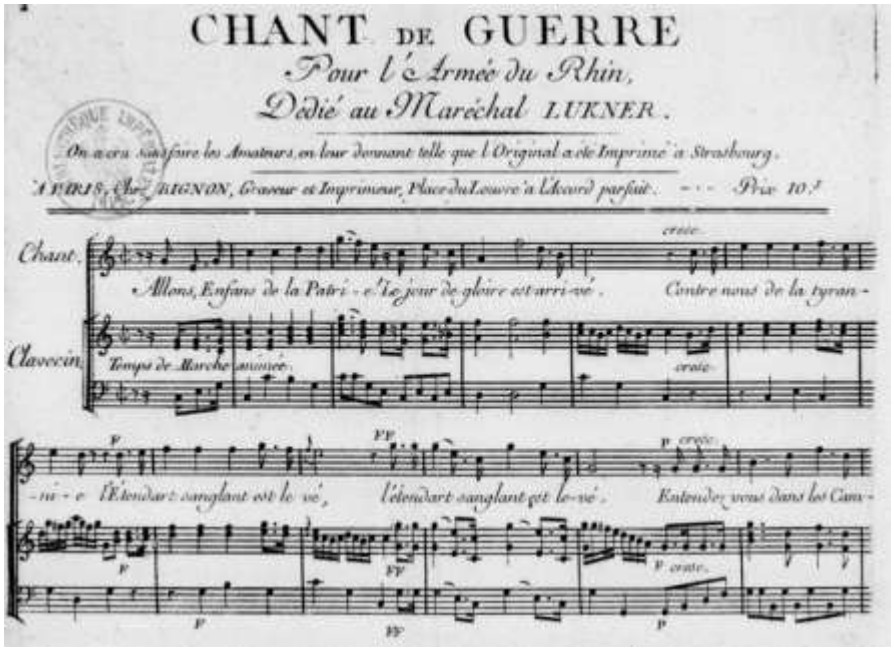
Overall, the French Revolutionaries were extremely convinced about their singing culture. The *Journal de Paris* cites *Sarrette*, one of the main organizers of revolutionary feasts, that there cannot be a national celebration without music and that France had indeed the best singing culture throughout Europe and therefore did not need to adapt anything from its neighbors (*Le Journal de Paris* 3-4).

The Marseillaise: Fighting for the Ideals of the Republic

Written as a war song during the French Revolution, the Marseillaise is generally known today as the French national anthem. Yet its bloodthirsty lyrics and its configuration as a march reflect its genesis in the revolutionary struggle in France in the 1790s. After France had been in battle since April 1792, first against Austria and Prussia, a new, more martial song was needed for the soldiers to go into battle with. In Strasbourg, according to the legend, the mayor indicated that a song to strengthen the morale of the soldiers of the volunteer army was missing. It is said that Rouget de L´Isle, a monarchist army officer and amateur musician, was present during

the assembly with the mayor and that he composed the song the following night (Vovelle 80–83). It is surprising to see that this song, written for a monarchy's army, became one of the key songs of the early republic. There are doubts, above all, that Rouget de L'Isle was the actual author of the Marseillaise. Some scholars assume that de L'Isle wrote neither the text nor the music and that it was only (perhaps intentionally) falsely attributed to him. Also because of Rouget de L'Isle's musical background, researchers have unsuccessfully tried several times to locate a source for the musical basis of the Marseillaise, sometimes assuming that the Marseillaise could be a parody-song itself, just like the popular *Ça ira* (e.g. Chailley; Le Roux). It remains a mystery how the song traveled south to Marseille. Mason suggests that it was brought there by merchants or through newspapers. At least, it is certain, that the song experienced a conversion. In southern France, it was known as the anthem of radical anti-royalists, the so-called *fédérés*, with whom it traveled to Paris around four months after its first appearance in July 1792. Soon the new revolutionary song was to be called "L´hymne des Marseillais" since it was brought to Paris by radical soldiers from Marseille, who fought in favor of the revolution and sang the song during the storming of the *Tuileries* (Mason, "Popular Songs" 175–177).

The popularity of the song in France was also reflected in 1795 when the Marseillaise was adopted as the national anthem by the National Convention. But the national anthem was as short-lived as the republic. Napoleon I revoked the Marseillaise and banned the song from the public sphere (Vovelle 77 and 82-83). It still must be noted that the Marseillaise was an overall popular revolutionary song through the 19th and 20th centuries, and that it had already spread throughout Europe by the end of the 18th century. Sung again in the French Revolutions of 1830, 1848, and 1870, it was also used in many revolutionary and other movements outside of France (Hudde, "Zur Wirkung der Marseillaise" 143–150). Due to its popularity, the Marseillaise was a common song to be parodied. No other revolutionary song has been processed and parodied more often than the Marseillaise. There exist at least 250 different parodies of the Marseillaise, made throughout the revolutionary years (Hudde, "Zur Wirkung der Marseillaise" 158). All in all, the Marseillaise had from its first emergence been the most important and longest-lasting revolutionary song.



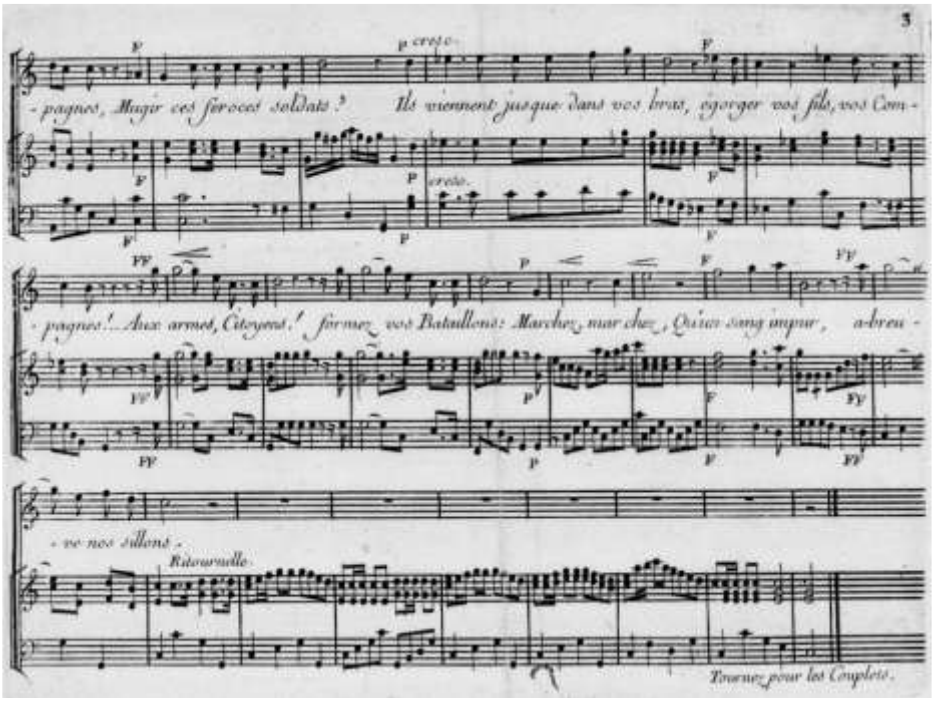


Fig. 1: Chant de guerre pour l'Armée du Rhin (Rouget de L´isle).

From Marseillaise to Hymne des Citoyens de Couleur

The creator of the *hymne des citoyens de couleurs* was Marie-Thérèse Lucidor Corbin, a person of color, that used to call herself *citoyenne de couleur* (citizen of color). Pierre Bardin has provided us with the most extensive work on her and her family's life. Unfortunately, there are still a lot of questions yet to be answered about Marie-Thérèse's life. From what we know Marie-Thérèse Lucidor was one of two daughters of the freed slave André Lucidor from Martinique, native to Azanda in Africa, who came to Paris, and in 1745 married Thérèse-Charlotte Richard, a white French woman. André appears in records as *maître d'armes*, meaning he was a fencing master or maybe an armorer (Bardin 5982; Archives Nationales de France [hereafter: AN] Z/1o/205). Marie-Thérèse was baptized in a Parisian church in 1749. Unfortunately, nothing is known about her education. However, the sources used in this article prompt that she was instructed in reading and writing so that she was literate. Between 1777 and 1789, both Lucidor sisters made themselves known in Paris by speaking up at the admiralty's regional court to comment on newly published laws concerning people of color. In 1786, Marie-Thérèse married Jean-François Corbin, a wine merchant, having two children with him, a son, of whom nothing is known, and a daughter, Constance Corbin. The latter became a singer in Paris but died, according to Bardin, as soon as 1808 (Bardin 5985).

Most of the records about Marie-Thérèse date to the 1790s, in which time she seemed to have been most active in Parisian political spheres. Due to a lack of money and, as it seems, deserted by their husbands, Marie-Thérèse and her sister tried to demand the *club massiac*, the French colonist's society, for monetary help, calling themselves creoles, the title for people that were born in the colonies. From what is known, both sisters were born in Paris. The self-definition as *creole* can therefore be seen as a strategic move to cash in on the huge interest in the colonies and the wave of refugees that were forced out of the islands because of the upheavals.

In 1792, Corbin played an important role in the theft of the crown jewels (*vol du garde-meuble*). She was arrested because of a believed involvement in the theft but was later released stating that she was working together with "police" forces to help arrest the thieves (Bardin 5983-5894; Perroud 18–24). One year later, in 1793, she claimed compensation for her help in arresting some of the thieves, because she was associated with the theft and therefore suffered economic damage (Bardin 5983).

In 1794, she participated in the festivities around the abolition of slavery, where she not only gave a speech but also performed her parody of the Marseillaise, the *hymne des citoyens de couleurs*. For this event, she is best known today. One year later, a text by her about the colony of Saint-Domingue was published. In it, she gives certain advice, how the youth should be taught, where schools and hospitals should be built, and which laws should be passed, to help the colony prosper. But the text raises questions about the authorship since Marie-Thérèse has never been to Saint-Domingue and the text provides deep knowledge about the island and the population. It seems, as if she had help, maybe from Julien Raymond, or Sonthonax, or someone unknown, who knew the island very well. During the following years, it seemed, as if she had tried at least once to make her way to Saint-Domingue, but was unsuccessful (Bardin 5983). From 1801 onwards, there are no records about Marie-Thérèse, and nothing about her life is known. Bardin states that she died in 1834, aged 84 (Bardin 5985).

It was by no means unusual that Marie-Thérèse Lucidor Corbin, as a woman, took part in the revolutionary celebrations and actively tried to shape and influence the politics of the new republic. Through the overall goal, the dismantling of the *ancien regime's* oppressions, and the abolition of censorship on all levels, women saw themselves inspired to try to expand their sphere of influence in society, which before was reduced to their homes, family, and their work, which most of the time condemned them to a rather passive part in society. Especially in revolutionary Paris, with a social class of well-educated and wealthy women, a broad front of women´s rights activists formed and made their demands known from 1789 on through meetings in clubs or the famous salons, but also protests on the streets.[6] However, their plea for full civil rights, which one of the most important women's rights activists of the time, Olympe de Gouges, proclaimed in the National Assembly in 1791, was suppressed. De Gouges, as well as many other women activists, were guillotined during the *terreur* period and the women clubs were dissolved. During the Restoration, the assertion of women's rights suffered a significant setback (Petersen 11-12; Didier 65–70).

The same applies to free people of color or people of color in general. Even if their presence in Parisian streets in the 1790s was not the rule, they were not rare either. Since the late 17th century, it has been documented that people of color settled in the capital and the major port and trading cities of Bordeaux, La Rochelle, and Nantes. Although the rights of people of color were increasingly restricted by law during the 18th century, several examples demonstrate how these restrictions were sometimes not strictly enforced and how much people of color participated in social and political life (Duprat; Peabody 4–8 and 137–140). People of color also took part in the festivities for the abolition of slavery in various places throughout France. In Paris, at least five well-known people of color were present during the festivities, some of them from Saint-Domingue (Crouin 71).

[6] The strive for a better status of women and the claim for more or equal rights was indeed not new. Struggles of women for an improvement of their status in France can at least be traced back to the 14th century (Racz 151).

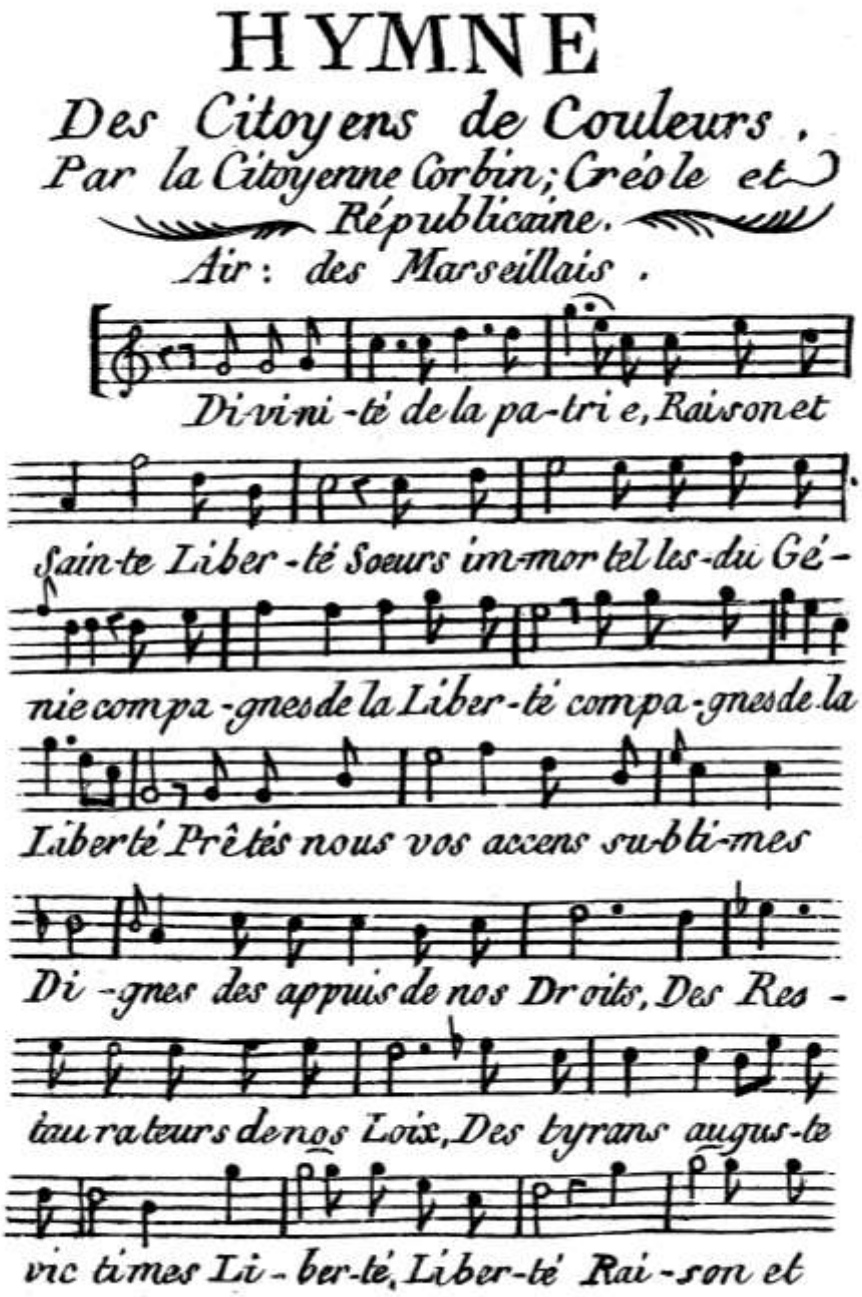
On February 4th, 1794 (16 pluviose, an II), the National Convention abolished slavery in France and all its colonies by decree. In Paris, a popular festival was organized for this purpose a few days after the abolition of slavery on February 18th, 1794 (30 pluviose, an II), which took place in the Temple of Reason, the profaned church of Notre Dame, and by then the revolutionary counter-religious center of the capital. Nonetheless, the abolition of slavery was also celebrated outside Paris. In total, at least 37 feasts in favor of the abolition of slavery throughout France took place at different dates between February and July. (Crouin 56; Dubois 162-163). The festivities were organized around a ritualized procedure but still had a moment of spontaneity. At first, one would march collectively to a place of symbolic importance, like the Temple of Reason. After the arrival, a people´s representative would give a speech. In Paris, famous politician Pierre-Gaspard Chaumette would rise to speak and refer to the Saint-Dominguian revolutionaries and one of its fighters, *gens de couleur libre* Vincent Ogé, just like Lucidor Corbin did, when speaking up after him (Crouin 59 and 61–63; Archives Parlementaires [hereafter: AP], "Discours prononcé par le citoyen Chaumette" 220–226). On some occasions, the session of the National Convention in which slavery was abolished was reenacted, and during or afterwards, people would cry out in joy, give short speeches, or sing (Crouin 67–73). In the course of these celebrations, a series of musical parodies were created that were sung collectively at the respective celebrations or performed by individual people, such as in the case of Marie-Thérèse´s hymn. Another example is the musical parody "Couplets pour l'abolition de l'esclavage des gens de couleur" which was composed by the French magistrate Eustache-Marie-Pierre-Marc-Antoine Courtin in 1794. At the abolition celebrations in Orbec, Normandy, at the Temple of Reason on March 30th, 1794 [10 germ. II], this new text was sung on the *Air*[7] *des Visitandines*, from French composer Francois Devienne´s 1792 opera *Visitandines* (AP, "Adresse du conseil général d'Orbec" 157-158; Grunebaum-Ballin 269; Pierre No. 1274*, 669 f.; AN F/17/1354, Doss. 1, No. 3145; Concerning Eustache Courtin: Saint-Edme 436–39). According to lists provided by Grunebaum Ballin (268-269) and Pierre (No. 1283, 1284, 1285, 671-672), there was also a whole series of other musical parodies related to the abolition of slavery. Interestingly, Corbins *hymne des citoyens de couleurs* is not part of those lists.

Right before her hymn for the people of color was sung, Marie-Thérèse held a speech at the Temple of Reason, characterized by a strong emphasis on the three revolutionary values: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. After praising the relief of all people of color of slavery, she mentions Vincent Ogé, a person of the group of *gens de couleur libres* and one of the first people in Saint-Domingue to engage in armed struggle for equality (See: Corbin, "Discours" 170-171). With this reference to Ogé and the struggles of the Saint-Dominguian people of color, Corbin highlighted the importance of the revolutionary activity in Saint-Domingue for the ideals of the French Revolution and especially for the struggle against slavery, which, in many countries and colonies, was yet to begin.

Corbin gave her parody song the title "Hymn of the citizens of color. From the citizen Corbin, Creole and Republican." As already noted above, both sisters wrongfully called themselves creoles from 1790 onwards, after claiming money from the *Club Massiac*. Calling herself *citoyenne* is first of all a description of her origin which characterizes her as a free woman, native to France but not a legal title. Women were denied civil rights by the assembly, and the encyclopedias of that time, as Godineau states, did not have an entry for *citoyenne* but solely for male *citoyens*, making the lack of political participation obvious (92–95). In consequence, Lucidor Corbin's

[7] In this context the term Air is best translated with song or aria.

mention of the term *citoyenne* might also be a form of protest, claiming the same rights as well as a provocation, by already applying, in a way unlawfully, the legal title of citizen to herself. Another way she calls herself in the title of the song is *républicaine* (republican), showing her identification with the new republic and its ideals. On the document on which the sheet music and lyrics to Lucidor Corbin's hymn are printed, there is a reference directly under the title to the song to whose melody it is to be sung: the Marseillaise.



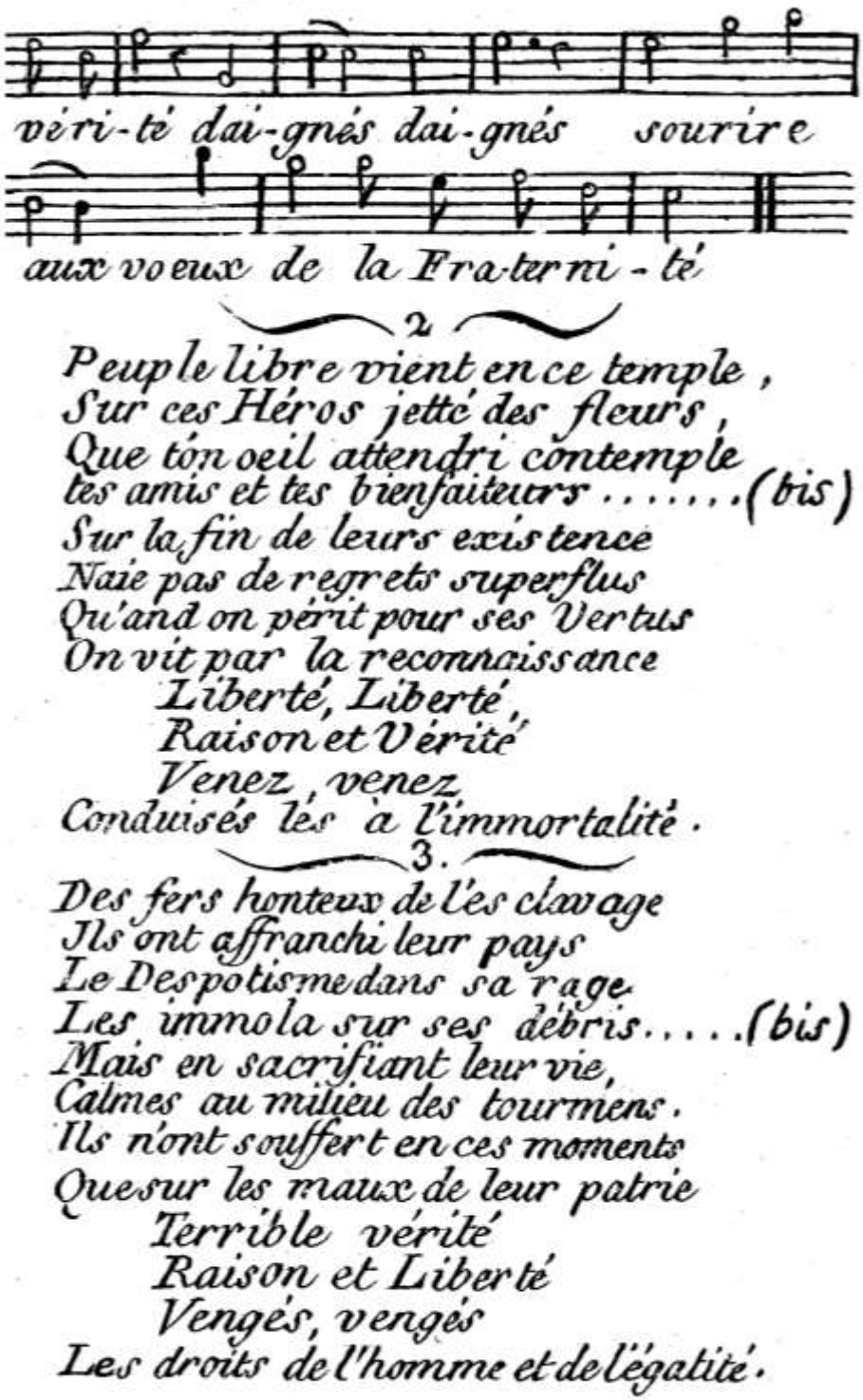


Fig. 2: Hymne des Citoyens de couleurs. (Corbin, Hymne 166-167)

Translation of the text:

1. Divinity of the homeland,
Reason and Holy Liberty,
Immortal sisters of Genius,
Companions of Liberty… (bis)
Lend us your sublime words,
Worthy of the support of our rights,
Of the restorers of our Laws,
The august victims of the tyrants.
Liberty, Liberty,
Reason and Truth,
Deign, deign,
To smile at the vows of Fraternity.

2. Free people come into this temple,
Throw flowers upon these Heroes.
Your tender eye shall gaze upon
Your friends and benefactors… (bis)
On the end of their existence,
Do not have any superfluous regrets.
When one perishes for one's Virtues,
One lives through gratitude.
Liberty, Liberty,
Reason and Truth,
Come, Come,
Lead them to immortality!

3. From the shameful chains of slavery,
They have freed their land.
Despotism, in its rage,
Massacred them on its remains… (bis)
But, in sacrificing their life,
Calm amidst the torments,
They suffered, in these moments,
Only from the ills of their homeland.
Terrible Truth,
Reason and Liberty,
Avenge, avenge,
The Rights of man and equality

Even an external examination of the source reveals that in this printed version of the parodied Marseillaise, not only the new text was printed as usual with the reference to which song it was to be sung. Rather, a musical notation adapted to the text was printed, which corresponds overall to the melody of the Marseillaise. The tonal material of the Marseillaise itself varied even in the first few years after its appearance (Pierre 254). However, in some places, an attempt was made to adapt the score more rhythmically to the text, leaving some questions unanswered. The biggest question, about which unfortunately no information exists, is undoubtedly whether the printed version was already available at the time of the celebrations at the Temple of Reason, or whether the printing took place only later in 1794 and, if there was a printing, whether this was then already provided with musical notation or only the text was printed. In any case, the printing took place in the year of the festivities, i.e. 1794, which suggests but does not prove that the printing in this form was already used for the festivities. In comparison to the version by Rouget de L'Isle printed above, it is noticeable that the key of C major is the same, and the opening note as well as the further tonal material is essentially the same. The time signature is not listed but is either 2/2 or, most likely, 4/4 as above.

However, on closer inspection, some irregularities and sloppy errors stand out. For one thing, the notation style is not clear, and it remains open as to why the head of eighth notes is sometimes painted out and sometimes left blank (quite clearly in the penultimate bar). The assumption that some heads have been left blank to save ink and therefore money does not seem plausible, since more than half of the notes are printed regularly. It could be just a printing error, caused by a falsely operated printing press or a bad printing quality overall. One possibility could be that these notes could be either sung or not sung or maybe sung differently during the three verses. This would give the possibility to have different options available to change the text, and would allow to add other text meters to the song. During the three verses the poetic meter changes. That can best be observed in the last lines of each verse. While *sourire aux voeux de la Fraternité* (1st verse) fits right on all notes, the last lines of the 2nd and 3rd verses are sung more easily with one note less. Altogether, the text did not seem to have been corresponded with the original song that easily, since there must have been a need to point out, how the text fits to the music by printing the notation. One irregularity is the number of notes in the bars. The attempt to assign note values to all syllables, e.g. in the first verse, breaks the time signature in several places. Thus, bar 10 has 6/4 instead of 4/4, bar 23 5/4, bars 27 and 28 also 6/4, and the last bar only 2/4, since here the upbeat was not considered as in the original version. Overall, the use of note values does not always seem to be clear for example in the last eight bars, especially concerning the singability of the text. Thus, the notated half notes and lack of quarter notes in the last 8 bars ensure that the song loses its march-like type and that the text would not be sung in a quasi-punctuated manner, but rather evenly. These errors and irregularities are a sign that the person writing the song down was an amateur musician, if at all. Therefore, it seems reasonable to believe that Lucidor Corbin wrote the song herself and sang it at the festivities.

Just like her speech, the text of her hymn reflects the three revolutionary values: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. Throughout the whole text, the use of imperatives stands out and brings the hymn´s text closer to the one of the Marseillaise, where the imperative is also used a lot. The notion of liberty and fraternity appears strongest in the first verse because it deals with the abolishment of slavery and the creation of lawful status for the people of color in France and its colonies. The second verse worships all the ones who fought for the abolition of slavery and therefore for the ideals of the republic. This worshipping continues in the third verse. Here, it is made completely clear that the ones who freed the country from slavery are the ones to worship. The text also mentions that people gave their lives fighting for the revolutionary cause and the Rights of man, as it is stated in the last line. Lucidor Corbin's text puts the abolition of slavery right in the center of revolutionary ideals, defending it against objections from royalists and a pro-slavery lobby. The use of the Marseillaise as the tune for her text underlines the history of the abolition of slavery. It was rather a battle for abolition than just a usual passing of a bill, as noted in the first part of this paper. Hence, Marie-Thérèse used a song that had been written to boost the morale of soldiers fighting for France to promote the fight for equal rights and the abolition of slavery.

Unfortunately, nothing is known about the reception of Lucidor Corbin's piece. Although her speech and her song have been printed and therefore made public, it is unknown whether the hymn has been sung or referred to later. One might assume that at least after Napoleon´s takeover in 1799 and the banning of the Marseillaise, Marie-Thérèse´s hymn would not be sung anymore and was soon to be forgotten. Most likely the song was forgotten quickly after it was performed in 1794, as was the case with most parody songs by that time.

Conclusion

The abolition of slavery and the assertion of equal rights marked one of the major goals of the population of color of Saint-Domingue and France. Marie-Thérèse Lucidor Corbin's *hymne des citoyens de couleurs* only marginally reflects the many struggles that were necessary to achieve this goal. Her life clearly shows how strongly people of color participated in political and social life in Paris and France in general, though. Still, it is unusual for a song by a person of color to be performed in such a highly visible context. Lucidor Corbin's hymn for the Parisian celebrations of the abolition of slavery in 1794 was written at a time when political songs were flourishing due to previously unknown freedoms, and new parody-songs were extremely popular. The parody song is a potent means of simply disseminating a text. This is because the selected pieces of music were very well known. The hymn presented here made direct reference to the revolutionary battles in Saint-Domingue, the liberation of people of color, and the abolition of slavery. It parodied the Marseillaise, probably the most famous song, which was already charged with the battles for the Republic in 1794. By parodying this song, Marie-Thérèse succeeded in spreading her lyrics and thus her political agenda. The struggles of the entire Republic, which were linked to the Marseillaise, were thereby linked to the struggles for the abolition of slavery and to the Haitian Revolution, leaving the general notion of the song as a war song unchanged. Furthermore, the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of people of color were directly connected to the original ideas of the young Republic, the human rights, and the three pillars: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. Through her song, Lucidor Corbin advocated for an understanding of the liberation struggles of people of color and the abolition of slavery as a just cause in the spirit of the revolution.

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