



Opera

COLAS ET COLINETTE; OU, LE BAILLI DUPÉ

(**BIOGRAPHY**) JOSEPH QUESNEL (1749-1809), a French merchant, composer, playwright and poet, settled in Boucherville, Quebec in 1788. A year later he co-founded a performing ensemble in Montreal called the Théâtre de Société. (**BACKGROUND**) Quesnel's *Colas et Colinette* (ca.1789), a "comédie mêlée d'ariettes," is considered to be the first opera written in North America. It was performed twice in 1790 by the Théâtre and several more times in the early 1800s. (**PUBLICATIONS**) Scored for strings, the musical score was never published and only the vocal and second violin parts are extant. The **libretto** was published by Neilson in Montreal (1808). Piano-vocal score (reconstructed by Godfrey Ridout) Toronto: Gordon V. Thompson, 1974. **CMH 10**, 1-6. (**MUSIC**) Quesnel's libretto and music clearly show an indebtedness to **Rousseau's** influential "**intermède**" *Le Devin du Village* (1752) as well as to numerous imitations of Rousseau's work such as **Monsigny's** *Le Cadi dupé* (1761) and *Rose et Colas* (1764). The 14 musical numbers range from those in folk song style to elegant airs. The use of colloquial French in the published libretto (1808) is retained in the following excerpts. "Le tendre amour", in **ternary** form, is Colinette's confession of love to Colas. The following "En amour plein d'expérience" is a lengthy **ariette** in which the Bailiff boasts of his experience in the game of love; in contrast a faster paced section in **duple metre** emphasizes his eager pursuit of Colinette. (**RECORDINGS**) Pierrette Alarie, Claude Corbeil, CBC Orchestra, CBC, RCI-234 Select SSC 24160. (**FURTHER READING**) Dorith Cooper, "Opera in Montreal and Toronto: A Study of Performance Traditions and Repertoire, 1783-1980," Ph.D dissertation, University of Toronto, 1984.

Théâtre de Société.

Jeudi 14 du courant, il sera donné à la **SALLE** de
SPECTACLE, une Représentation du
MEDECIN MALGRE' LUI,
Comédie en 3 Actes & en Prose, par **MOLIERE;**
Suivie de
COLAS & COLINETTE,
OU
LE BAILLI DUPE',
Comédie en 3 Actes & en Prose, mêlée d'Ariettes, Pièce &
Musique nouvelle.
*La PORTE sera ouverte à CINQ HEURES, & la Toile sera
levée à Six Heures précises.*
Les **BILLETS** seront distribués chez Mr. HERSE, à la Baie-Ville,
Mercredi 13 du courant, depuis Huit Heures du matin jusqu'à Cinq Heures
du soir, où Messieurs les Souscriteurs sont priés de les envoyer chercher.

Newspaper announcement, *Gezette de Montréal*
7 Janauary 1790

