

AMELIE-JULIE CANDEILLE

Dr David C. F. Wright

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The date of birth of Amelie-Julie Candeille presents a problem. She was born at midnight and so the date is either 30 July or 31 July. The year is not in question. It was 1767.

She was born in Paris. Her father, Pierre-Joseph Candeille (1744-1827) was an actor, opera singer and composer. He was employed at the Paris Opera as a basse-taille at the time of Julie's birth but he had an altercation with the director and moved to Bourbonnais in search of work. Here he taught music and became the director of concerts at Moulins. Her mother kept house.

The young girl first performed in public when she was five years old as a singer with her father. A year later she began serious music studies with a local priest in Meaux and studied Gregorian chant. Her father taught her the harpsichord.

But there were problems. Her father was in debt and to avoid the expected problems they moved back to Paris under cover of darkness where he took up work as a singer in the Paris opera. The salary was not sufficient to support the family. Julie worked hard at her music and studied singing with Joseph Legros (1736-1793). She was simply brilliant and at the age of seven she played a concerto for Louis XVI. At the age of nine she played the arrangement of the Overture : Iphigena and Aulide by Gluck such arrangement being made by Johann Friedrich Edelmann (1749-1794) and this performance was given in the presence of the Queen, Charlotte-Jeanne Beraud de la Haie de Riou, Marquise de Montesson and wife of the Duc d'Orleans and Sophie Arnould a singer at the Paris Opera. Gluck was so delighted that he picked her up and raised her up above his head and then embraced her. This also led to her giving concerts at the residence of the Marquise Montesson.

By the age of twelve she had composed a quantity of music which was received favourably.

Around the same age and on 27 January 1779 she sang the role of Diane in *L'Amour Enchanté par Diane*. The composer was Chevalier Lenoir-Duplessis. It was described as a melodrama, a pantomime and as an heroic ballet in one act.

This confirmed to Julie's father that she should have a career in opera. He composed an opera *Themire* in 1781 for her to sing and tried to persuade the Marquis de Luvois to stage it but the Marquis fell in love with Julie although she was only 14. The father caught the Marquis trying to seduce her. Candeille found another patron, who was a minister to the king, one Louis-Auguste le Tonnelier and tried for the opera to be staged and for her to enter the opera and the Comedie Francaise. She joined the Paris Opera in 1781. She was understudy to Antoinette-Cecile Clavel St Huberty for the role of Thesee but St Huberty refused to fulfil her contract. However, it seems that another soprano took St Huberty's place, not Julie. Her debut was in the title role of *Iphigena* by Gluck on 27 December 1782 and then as *Sangarede* in *Atys*, Piccini's new opera. Her father received a pension after the introduction of this amazing talent and Julie's salary was 1800 livres by 1782 when she became a full member of the opera.

She was described as charming, tall with a pleasant voice, sweet and expressive but restricted, who should avoid unnecessary gestures, but having an intelligent acting ability. Others said that her performance in the Piccini lacked confidence.

This hit her hard. Her voice lacked strength and so she left the Paris opera and went to Francois-Rene Mole (1734-1802) suffering from timidity and fear of failure although her debut had been a success.

On 15 August 1783 she played a piano concerto by Clementi and on 8 December played a piano concerto by Johann Schobert (1735-1767). On 20 May 1784 she performed her own Piano Concerto dedicated to Mlle de Matignon and repeated it on 1 November 1785. On 2 February 1786 she played the piano part in her father's *Sinfonia Concertante* for piano, clarinet, bassoon, horn and orchestra and sang a song that her father had written for her entitled *Le bonheur du juste*. Her own piano concerto was played again on 8 December 1789 and the distinguished horn player, Jean Lebrun and the celebrated flautist Francois Devienne played in the orchestra.

She was applauded with great enthusiasm on all occasions and surrounded by compliments.

Her father was no longer employed by the opera from 1784 and his pension was inadequate. Julie found



employment as an actress. On Monday 19 September 1789 she played Hermione in 'Andromaque at the Comedie Francaise. Some critics raved although they were probably influenced by her beauty. She also appeared in tragic roles as Roxanne in Bajazet, Alzire, Ariane, Amenaide in Tancredi, Emilie in 'Cirra' and Galatee in 'Pigmalion'. Some said that her performances were uneven, others were enthusiastic. At one of her performances of Ariane, Louis XVI is reported to have said, "If the theatre won't have her, I will!"

She was admitted as a permanent member of the Comedie Francaise. But her rivals, envious of her, conspired to ensure that Julie only had secondary roles. And this developed into bitchiness so that Julie left this theatre in 1790.

Her father suggested a tour to the north which she undertook. She visited Arras, Donau and Lille. Her father had begun his studies in Lille and she had appeared on the stage of the local theatre in the autumn on 1787 in La Gageure Imprevue by Sedaine, La Misanthrope by Moliere, La Veuve du Malabar by Lemierre, La fainte par amour' "and Gaston et Bayard both by Pierre Louis de Belloy Hypernreste by Riupeiropus, Tancredi and Mahomet by Voltaire. But it was in De Belloy's Zelmire which won her most acclaim.

But now history intervened with the outbreak of the French revolution. Theatres were closed and reopened with a new set of rules and actors. People were employed or re-employed who were in sympathy with the new regime. The director Jacques-Marie Boutet de Monvel had seen Julie perform in 1787 and invited her to join his new company both as an actress and administrator at the Theatre Palais du Royale. This company was to rival the Comedie Francaise now renamed Theatre de la Nation in its support of the monarchy. Here Julie relished comedy roles usually as a coquette. She took part singing at the opening ceremony of the theatre. Her acting roles were as Amelie in Pessimiste by Charles-Francois Lebrun and then in Medecin malgre tout le monde by Jean-Andre Boullian, otherwise Dumaninant. She was a success and she went on to create other roles such as Mirza in L'esclavage des negres by Marie-Olympe de Gouges, Hortense in L'amour et la raison by Charles de l'Epinoi, otherwise Pigtail Lebrun. She was La Comtesses in Les Deux Figaro and in many other roles, some twenty roles in all.

In Mistress of the Inn' "by Carlo Goldoni there was a song, La jeune hotesse, which was admired and appeared in many journals. This three act comedy was premiered on 13 January 1792 and was a very dramatic work. Critics differed as to her performance. Her voice was loud and dry said one, others spoke of her gifts.

It would appear that Julie was on the side of the revolutionaries. Some of her friends and admirers formed a troupe and salon concerts were given in her house. On 16 October 1792 they gathered together to celebrate the victorious campaign in Belgium of General Charles-Francois Duperier Dumouriez (1739- 1823) when Jean-Paul Marat (1744- 1793) burst in and denounced Dumouriez accusing him of keeping company with counter-revolutionaries and prostitutes. He was verbally defeated by the eloquent defence of Francois-Joseph Talma and left with his tail between his legs. Nonetheless there was terror in the land. Some of the people Julie visited in prison were later executed.

The revolution had suppressed opera and other musical activities. It seems that at this time that Julie had another lover in Phillippe-Francois Nazaire Fabre d'Eglantine (1755- 1794) who dedicated his text Je t'aime tant to her and which was set to music by Marat.

By the end of 1792 Julie was back in Lille performing with Pierre-Jean Garat (1764- 1823). The programme of 22 November was as follows:

Symphony	Haydn (sources conflict as to which one it was)
Scene and aria from Didon	Piccini (sung by Julie)
Clarinet Concerto	Antoine-Nicholas Henry (1722- 1842)
Piano Concerto	Dussek (not certain which one ; played by Julie)
An Italian scene	Cherubini (unidentified) sung by Garat
An Italian overture	?
Duo from Armide	sung by Julie and Garat
Symphony	?
Piano Sonata	Amelie-Julie Candeille (played by Julie herself)
Rondeau (les Visitandines	Devienne, sung by Garat

Her other major project was writing a three act comedy in prose, Catherine ou la belle fermiere given its first performance on 17 November 1792. She also wrote the music. It was a great success and was staged about 150 times in Paris, Brussels and Lille over the next 35 years. At the height of the revolution it was performed 113 times in six Paris theatres. In 1793 it was voted as among the top ten plays. She took the title

role herself and sung many of her songs while playing the harp.

The work's success resulted in its publication and copies were available for purchase at her home.

All this tremendous success and she was only twenty five years old.

There are those who will say that the Terror ended with the death of Maximilien-Marie-Isidore Robespierre in on 28 July 1794. The previous year the patriotic work *Le General Dumouries*' "by Olympe de Gouges was performed by Candeille's company to booing and jeering". Gouges acknowledged writing the piece but told the disgruntled audience that they were booing because the performance was so awful. Julie fled from the hall.

She wrote a one act stage work *Bathilde, ou Le duo*, a comedy that only lasted for four performances but which had the redeeming feature of a piano duet which she composed for this prose work which she performed with Nicolas-Anselme Baptiste, the elder (1761-1835).

The time came for her to settle down and on 3 November 1794 she married Louis-Nicolas De la Roche who was a year her junior and a medical practitioner. She never used his name and the marriage was not successful. They divorced in December 1797.

Her next two works were indicative of her unconventional interests and personal morality. At the end of the Terror a jailor called Cange at St Lazare prison was a honourable man, which in the circumstances was unprecedented, who at the end of the hostilities gave half his salary to one of his prisoners, Durand by name, and the other half to his own family and, in each case, did not identify that he was the benefactor. Julie wrote a play based on this story which was premiered on 26 November 1794 and called it *Cange, ou le Commissionnaire de St Lazare*.

It may be her own lifestyle that inspired her next stage work, *La Bayadere*, about a virtuous Indian prostitute, which seems a contradiction in terms. Candeille was obviously aware of her physical beauty and seductive qualities and this prose work seems to be an attempt to justify her sexually liberated lifestyle as virtuous. Today pop stars live such lifestyles and give of their wealth to good causes thus excusing their permissiveness and earning them regal honours.

Julie was exceptionally vain and believed that any man was putty in her hands and that she could get away with anything because of her powers to manipulate men and situations. This new work had few performances and was savaged by the critics. Julie tried to defend herself and complained of being persecuted.

She went on tour to Belgium and Holland to recover from this latest failure. But she failed to appear at rehearsals even for her own plays and was an antecedent of Marilyn Monroe in her unreliability. She took to writing novels and poetry. She refused to honour her contract to appear in two plays and was fined 28,000 livres and forbidden to appear on any stage until 1 February 1801.

She returned to France and made friends with the painter Anne-Luis Girodet de Coussey (1767-1824) who painted her portrait. She also had a similar intimate relationship with the composer Etienne-Nicolas Mehul (1763- 1817) but they fell out when she refused to take sides in a dispute which involved one of her colleagues.

Candeille married for the second time to one Jean Simons, a carriage maker of Brussels, who had come to Paris since his son Michael was in love with an actress Anne Francois Elisabeth Lange (1772- 1825) who was a niece of Julie's. He sought her advice to prevent his son marrying her niece but to no avail and there were two weddings, the other being of Julie to the carriage maker. This marriage and the romance that preceded it was later the subject of the play *La Commedienne* by Francois- Guillaume-Jean-Stanislas Andrieux.

Julie was a fine administrator and kept her husband's accounts and was his secretary and clerk. During five years she concentrated on her husband's business and was a devoted wife. But the activities of Napoleon and the uncertainty that his politics engendered affected many businesses. The nobility were no longer ordering carriages and Simons suffered bankruptcy and a breakdown in 1802. Julie went back to work to support her husband. Her father had no pension either and she fought tirelessly to redress this and was supporting two men who had fallen on hard times. A revival of her theatrical and musical career was essential. She wrote a three- act opera *Ida, ou l'Orpheine de Berlin*' "which received a lukewarm reception. Perhaps this was partly due to the fact that the same subject had been the basis of a play by Jean-Baptiste Radet (1752- 1830) which had had successful performances.

Candeille's last performed work was *Louise, ou la reconciliation* which was also badly received. It was considered another work portraying Julie's vanity. She wrote other things which did not come into the public domain.

When Louis XVIII came to the throne in 1814, both Julie and her father had their pensions restored for their services to the theatre which had been denied them by Napoleon. When she was about to publish her

Vers sur la bonte, a poetry tribute to the king on his birthday, Napoleon returned with his prejudices and she fled to London. Here, over the next sixteen months or so, she gave concerts to earn her keep and performed in concerts with Giovanni Battista Viotti (1755- 1824), the pianist Johann Baptiste Cramer (1771- 1858) and the violinist Charles Phillipe Lafont (1781- 1839). In such august company she thrived financially.

Napoleon abdicated for the second time and Julie returned to Paris in July 1816 and both she and her father received increments in their respective pensions from the King. She took up teaching young people in various subjects. Her husband was now a wreck and died in 1821 and her father, suffering from gout, died in 1827. She supported his widow, his second wife, who was younger than Julie. She spent much of her time writing novels including *Lydie, ou les mariages manques* (1809), *Bathilde, reine des francs* (1814), *Souvenirs de Brighton, Londres et Paris* (1818), *Agnes de France ou le XIIIe siecle* (1821) and so on.

In April 1823 she married for the third time to a widower and painter, Antione-Hilaire-Henri Perie de Senovert (1780- 1833) who was employed in the theatres of Paris. Julie secured him a more superior position in 1826 as director of the school of design in Nimes. She, however, was not happy in this environment. The town was so pro-monarchy that it was both nauseating and sycophantic. There was a further revolution in 1830 and politics was destroying all that mattered to her. She feared the loss of her pension and that of her husband. By June 1831 she was ill with a type of paralysis. She held salon concerts and literary circle events but when her husband died in September 1833 she returned to Paris. She proudly referred to herself as Mme Perie and was clearly devoted to him and never recovered from his loss. She seemed to have made an improvement in her own health but suffered an unexpected relapse and died of apoplexy on 4 February 1834 in her fifty seventh year. She was buried in a grave in the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris where she had wished for a mausoleum for herself and her husbands' ashes which, sadly, never left Nimes.

The mystery is why someone as gifted as Candeille is almost unknown today. She was a child prodigy, a fine musician, an accomplished actress, a playwright, a novelist, a poet and, in her time, one of the most influential women in Europe. It may be true to say that she was the first, or one of the first most competent and gifted composers and musicians in Europe

Had she been a man it is almost certain that she would be better known today.

Her instrumental works are listed below:

Three Sonatas for clavecin with the accompaniment of violin. G, C, E flat

Concerto for piano and string orchestra in D

Duo for two pianos

Two Sonatas for piano, Op 4, (lost)

Grand Sonata for piano in E flat (under the name of Julie Simons)

Choix de morceau on a valse by Mozart

Two grand Sonatas for piano Op 8 D and G minor (under Julie Simons)

Seven variations on a nativity hymn from Portugal

Chant religieux with 8 variations for the piano

Fantasie for piano, didie a Mme Riviere

Nocturne for piano trio (Fantasie no 5, op. 11)

Fantasie sur une jolie Romance de Messrs Hoffman for piano

Grande fantasie, variations on the tune Trempe ton pain

She also wrote a few motets

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This article was first given as a talk recorded before an invited audience in 1994 and is dedicated to Anne-Louise de la Croix who researched in Paris and premiered the author's Viola Concerto.