

Aino Ackté, Pierre-Bartholomé Gheusi and the Parisian opera machine – the forms and social conditions of their interaction

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One of the central contacts of the Finnish soprano star Aino Ackté (1876–1944) during her Parisian career was Pierre-Bartholomé Gheusi (1865–1943), in 1906–1907 co-director of the Opéra together with Pedro Gailhard and in 1913–1918 director of the Opéra-Comique. In my paper I will analyse the evolution of their careers over many decades in the networks that took shape around the institutions of this European cultural capital (Christoph Charle) – institutions that were interconnected through many administrative and personal ties. In the context of such a setting it is often difficult to distinguish between relationships involving professional benefits and true friendships .

It is often forgotten that Gheusi was a part of Ackté's work community in the Opéra through his activities as a prolific librettist at this notable institution. In this capacity he was able to profit from Ackté's artistic investment and her popularity among the Parisian audience. On the other hand, his responsibilities on the prominent newspapers and magazines *Le Gaulois*, *La Nouvelle Revue* and *Le Figaro* meant that he could put Ackté's name, artistry and political aspirations on display. Yet it remains a fact that while Ackté's career in Paris declined, that of Gheusi was in the ascent.

The artistic and social expectations regarding the opera machine of Paris and the personalities involved therein changed over the period of time under observation. I follow this evolution on the basis of Ackté's and Gheusi's letters, which are conserved in the National library of Finland, while also taking into account the public expectations to which Gheusi was subjected in France.

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