



Aspasie [Opera poster]. Paris, 1789. Large poster (20" x 16"). Woodcut on paper, laid down on card. Stained, some loss to top right and left margin, with very slight loss at upper right corner of the woodcut.

This rare poster advertises the upcoming performances at L'Academie Royale de Musique for March 12-17, 1789. The performances mentioned include the very first performance of the opera **Aspasie**, a current hit by Sacchini *Arvire et Evelina* (premiered 1788); a popular opera by Rousseau, *Le Devin du Village* (premiered 1752); and a representation of Gluck's *Iphigenie en Tauride* (premiered 1779)*.

Aspasie is an opera in 3 acts, with music by Gretry, book by Morel de Chedeville, ballet choreographed by Pierre-Gabriel Gardel. Principal singers: Maillard, Gavaudan, M. Laine, and M. Cheron. Ballets: Guimard and M. Gardel. Twelve performances of **Aspasie** were held until June 21, 1789 when its scheduled performance was canceled because Necker closed all the theatres of Paris (Pitou, 55-6). Staged only once more on August 4, 1789, it was not revived due to both the troubled times and its outdated theme of young lovers in the lyceum of ancient Athens.

These large advertisement posters for theatre are extremely rare. They were almost always destroyed by removal or by covering since only 153 walls and doors throughout the city of Paris could bear advertisements for the royal theatres (Howarth, 460, note 2).

*Until 1789, theatre posters carried only the name of the company, the venue, the date, the attraction, occasionally the time, the ticket price, and the details of coming attractions. Gluck is the only composer mentioned in the poster, a fact that indicates his growing popularity (*Iphigenie en Tauride* had its premier ten years earlier).

Reference: Howarth, *French theatre in the neo-classical era 1550-1789* (1997); Lajarte I, 362-3 (CCCVIII); Pitou, *The Paris Opera II* (1985).

\$3, 500.00