

REVIEWS



BOOKS

Eighteenth-Century Music © Cambridge University Press, 2019
doi:10.1017/S1478570619000058

REBECCA HARRIS-WARRICK

DANCE AND DRAMA IN FRENCH BAROQUE OPERA: A HISTORY

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016

pp. xx + 484, ISBN 978 1 107 13789 9

It is no exaggeration to say that virtually the entire career to date of this author has gone into the making of this book. In various publications and conference presentations, many in collaboration with other dance scholars and practitioners, Rebecca Harris-Warrick has investigated a host of issues relating to the role of dance in French baroque opera, and the fruits of those labours are now integrated into a more systematic study of dance practices and aesthetic principles. Not boastfully, but in order to stress the complexity of her task, Harris-Warrick states ‘it is only after comparing every one of Lully’s *divertissements* to its fellows that I have come to identify his conventions’ (24), and a similar thoroughness is evident in her treatment of the post-Lully repertory. Her control of the sources is impressively multidimensional – as when, describing Polyphemus’s Cyclopes in the Act 1 *divertissement* of *Acis et Galatée* (196), she cites Ovid’s assertion that they ‘play little flutes or panpipes’ while tending their sheep, as well as Lecerf de la Viéville’s observation that the orchestral players actually used ‘boilermakers’ whistles (*sifflets de chaudronnier*).

Harris-Warrick opens her book by decrying attitudes toward French operatic dancing commonly encountered in writings by both musicologists, who deem it ‘merely decorative’, and dance historians, who ‘tell the story as a struggle for ballet to free itself from opera’s shackles’ (1). She cautions that ‘the tendencies that the *divertissements* of this era exhibit do not support a tidy teleology for either dance or music’ (4). In this volume Harris-Warrick takes the story up to 1735, revealing a rich but constantly evolving palette of dramaturgical possibilities, with both dancers and choristers participating in the social and political worlds of the protagonists. A future book will commence with the arrival on the scene of Rameau. Though her main focus is the Académie Royale de Musique, there are numerous side glances at dance in other Parisian theatres. The book’s first part, ‘Lully’, is relevant for readers of this journal inasmuch as the Quinault/Lully operatic model remained largely intact well into the eighteenth century, and Lully’s operas themselves were frequently revived, with adjustments to their *divertissements* that Harris-Warrick analyses along with those of newly created works. Each of the chapter titles of the second part, ‘The Rival Muses in the Age of Campora’, invokes one or another of the denizens of Parnassus; this is both an elegant structuring device and an appropriate one, as many operas of this period place the muses on stage, particularly in prologues, in order to justify the new approaches taken by their creators.

This is a book for serious students of French opera and dance, but, as the author states, it is not for those seeking information specifically about dance technique (3). It nevertheless includes several examples of notated operatic choreographies (particularly in chapter 13, ‘In the Traces of Terpsichore’). Harris-Warrick’s skilful descriptions of these solo and pair dances almost render their notation legible, even for the uninitiated, and she uses them to infer at least some information concerning group dances. The book includes a good many music examples, but readers are tacitly assumed to be capable of finding some of the original scores and librettos online. Original French texts are given only selectively, mainly for lyric texts, yet knowledge of French seems to be assumed, since some other terms and quotations are left untranslated.



Close analysis of the *divertissements* of selected operas is featured in three chapters in part 1: 1, ‘The Dramaturgy of Lully’s *Divertissements*’ (these often being celebratory or ritual, and diegetically framed); 5, ‘Prologues’ (which had conventions of their own, and frequently invoked operatic poetics); and 6, ‘The Lighter Side of Lully’ (covering comic operatic subgenres, and *tragédies* incorporating humour to some extent). Harris-Warrick marshals both contemporary and modern writings in explaining the workings of dance in *tragédie lyrique*, and she is an astute observer herself, as when noting that ‘some of what the protagonists do *not* do or say gets displaced onto the bodies of their followers’, including dancers (20). In chapter 2, ‘Constructing the *Divertissement*’, Harris-Warrick scrutinizes dramatic architecture and aesthetic principles, also alerting the reader to various pitfalls in the sources. Here, as elsewhere, she extrapolates usefully from her prior work (with Carol Marsh) on *Le Mariage de la grosse Cathos*, a *comédie-ballet* of 1688 by André Danican Philidor in which the dance is completely notated, to help determine Lully-era norms regarding the simultaneity (or not) of song and dance (*Musical Theatre at the Court of Louis XIV: Le Mariage de la Grosse Cathos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)). Primary among these was ‘the principle of not having dance compete with new text’ (55), even if it could accompany a repetition (especially in a chorus).

Two chapters at the centre of part 1 address practicalities of dance. Chapter 3, ‘Dance Foundations’, introduces readers to the movement vocabulary and dance types of the period, and explains their typical uses in French opera. The substantial overlap between stage and ballroom dance meant that ‘audience members at the Opéra brought muscle memory and a trained eye with them to the theater’ (84). Harris-Warrick reminds us that until 1681 the Opéra’s ballet troupe was all male, and for later periods, too, she makes useful observations on the gendering of dance. In chapter 4, ‘Dance Practices on Stage’, she employs librettos, scores and other types of sources so as to determine how the dancers were deployed in stage works. Another concern here is to weigh the sparse but suggestive evidence in contemporary sources on the relationship between dance and pantomime, and between narration and expression (including the question of masked versus unmasked faces). The chapter concludes with a discussion of Lully’s dance music, full of useful correctives to received ideas, and elegant observations on form, phrase structure and orchestration – the latter ‘an aural form of costuming’ (133).

The post-Lully repertory covered in part 2 is less familiar to modern readers and listeners, but, as described by Harris-Warrick, it exudes vitality and innovation. In chapter 8 she provides a nuanced taxonomy of *opéra-ballet* and other emerging genres at the Académie Royale de Musique and, across part 2 generally, tracks the frequent incursions of comedy into that institution. The section ‘“Italy” Comes to the Opéra’ is a substantial set piece within chapter 8; the quotation marks denote the highly mediated notion of Italy propagated in works such as Campra’s *Le Carnaval de Venise* (1699) and *Les Fêtes Vénitienes* (1710), operas created, to a degree, in response to the 1697 banishment of the *comédiens italiens* by Louis XIV. In chapter 9, too, Harris-Warrick describes the appropriation of themes, strategies and even personnel from the ‘lesser’ Parisian theatres, which resulted in (among other things) at least some simultaneous singing and dancing at the Opéra, something Lullian conventions had discouraged.

Throughout this book, Harris-Warrick engages productively with the work of colleagues, so it is noteworthy when, in chapter 11, ‘Melpomène, Muse of Tragedy’, she refutes the shared assessment of James Anthony, Paul-Marie Masson and Caroline Wood that dance had come to overwhelm the drama in later *tragédies lyriques*, and finds Robert Fajon’s recent statistical approach in contesting that conclusion at best a ‘very crude tool’ (319). In an earlier chapter, Harris-Warrick also takes issue with the work of Georgia Cowart, in particular her claim that ‘Italianate works produced at the Opéra . . . participat[ed] in a cult of subversion aimed at monarchical authority’ (231, note 26). In both instances Harris-Warrick is convincing in countering these views because she provides the granular detail that specialists will expect as regards sources and interpretation, while writing with such clarity as to draw in other sorts of readers.

Following a perceptive survey of new trends (Italianate, pastoral, nautical) in *divertissements* in chapter 12, ‘Melpomène Adapts’, in chapter 13, ‘Terpsichore, Muse of the Dance’, Harris-Warrick focuses on the increased prominence of star soloists (especially female) at the Opéra during the 1710s and 1720s. Here she shines a spotlight on the *danseuse* Françoise Prévost, in a section entitled ‘*Les Caractères de la danse*



and Its Offspring'. Though not conceived for the Opéra, Jean-Féry Rebel's danced 'Fantaisie' of 1715, with its quicksilver changes of dance type and expression, came to be performed there (by Prévost and others), and engendered similar entertainments within operatic *divertissements* – important precedents for Rameau, notably in the 'Acte des Fleurs' from *Les Indes galantes*.

There is very little in this book with which one can find fault. It is beautifully produced, with copious and generously sized illustrations. Cautionary accidentals would have been helpful in some of the musical examples, and a few translations could be more idiomatic, as when Harris-Warrick has Ballard say that the printing of an *entrée* in *Les Amours des déesses* (Louis Fuzelier/Jean-Baptiste Maurice Quinault) was 'achieved' rather than 'completed' ('achevée') on 13 August 1729 (211); or less anachronistic, as when she makes Cahusac speak of 'the A section' and 'a B' in a dance of two strains (440). In a book so centrally concerned with performance, it would have been good to have a few video examples (signalled by stable URLs). Indeed, it is to be hoped that performers and directors, whether historically informed or otherwise, will be among this book's readers, since their interpretations could only benefit from exposure to the profound understanding of French baroque dance, and of the culture that produced it, on display within these pages. One eagerly awaits the sequel.

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Eighteenth-Century Music © Cambridge University Press, 2019
 doi:10.1017/S1478570619000162

DEIRDRE LOUGHRIDGE
HAYDN'S SUNRISE, BEETHOVEN'S SHADOW
 Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016
 pp. 328, ISBN 978 0 226 33709 8

Deirdre Loughridge's book is a fascinating audiovisual recuperation of optical technologies of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, revealing overlooked soundscapes, practices of listening and looking, and metaphorical resonances. Her materials alone will captivate those of an antiquarian inclination, but they are also used skilfully to intervene in several ongoing conversations within musicology and cultural history more generally. Central among these is the project of unpicking romanticism: Loughridge explicitly foregrounds the ways her visual technologies 'made sense of music's not making sense' (121). Thus to recent philosophical examinations of romantic and German idealist approaches to music, and to economic explanations of the value of romantic frameworks to professional musicians, Loughridge adds her own blend of material and media history, history of technology, close reading and sound studies – though the point is, pointedly, audiovisual studies. Her work is also refreshing in its free movement between areas of culture later to be categorized as high and low, allowing her to present a paradox: in the sorts of entertainments from which nineteenth-century writers would feel the need to distance 'serious' music culture came some of the frameworks that they would use to do so.

The Introduction historicizes theories of the audiovisual by showing that although aestheticians (Herder among them) increasingly understood the different senses and media as operating independently of each other – as per the standard account – their project also involved reconsidering how senses and media could be combined in the act of (multi-sensory) perception. Moreover, both Tieck and Wackenroder provided examples of how a single sensory input (music) could create visual impressions in the 'mind's eye', and thus audiovisual experience. Each of the following chapters centres on an optical technology that came to play a significant role in musical discourses or practices that promoted listening