



even without words, or to arrest its dissipation in time by making it into a work. Were literary and philosophical writers of the time so unaware of such explorations? Or if they were aware of them (as E. T. A. Hoffmann surely was), was their commitment to literary issues such that they could bar such explorations from their sight? As a study of a literary obsession, Hamilton's book will remain a key text for those interested in the genesis of the idea of ineffable music, but work remains to be done on the period's madness for music.

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VICTORIA JOHNSON

BACKSTAGE AT THE REVOLUTION: HOW THE ROYAL PARIS OPÉRA SURVIVED THE END OF THE OLD REGIME

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This study is a timely reassessment of an institution protected by the crown and its development over a long period, including its 'survival' of the turbulence of the Revolution. In a period when theatre was deregulated by the state and many crown institutions closed, the Paris Opéra not only remained open, but received special support from the government and municipality – a support that was increasingly at odds with public policy in other areas. Victoria Johnson, an organizational sociologist, has been able to bring to bear on this institution a methodology and series of insights that are unfamiliar to musicologists and historians of French theatre; conversely, sociologists will find in this book an institutional case study illustrative of general phenomena such as 'organizational imprinting', an area on which Johnson claims that empirical studies have been lacking to date. The choice of approaching the topic in this way, necessitating deep archival research on a quite specialized field, is a bold one: it is the kind of multidisciplinary endeavour from which scholarship on eighteenth-century opera has often benefited, and is particularly noteworthy because the sources are so rich and frequently untapped, and because some different moments of the Opéra's history under analysis here have rarely been explored.

The first chapter of Johnson's study, 'The Past in the Present', sets out a methodology owing much to Arthur Stinchcombe's so-called 'organizational imprinting hypothesis', first expounded in 1965, whereby the structures of organizations on their foundation 'may survive thanks to one of several organizational mechanisms, including (1) efficiency; (2) inertial forces such as tradition, vested interests, or ideology; and (3) a lack of competition' (16). Johnson explains that her project is a 'longitudinal case-study' (16); that is, it examines ways in which the form taken by the Paris Opéra in its founding phase at the end of the seventeenth century survives in remarkably similar form as late as 1789 and beyond; and that it is this formal organization, and the presuppositions surrounding it, that explain why the Revolutionaries favoured the institution in ways that were somewhat uncharacteristic of their actions elsewhere. In order to present this case, the book has the novel structure of beginning its story at the end-point, with two chapters focusing on the rupture of 1789 and tracing the special trajectory followed by the Opéra up to its handover to entrepreneurs Louis-Joseph Francœur and Jacques Cellerier in 1792 by a municipality intent on protecting the institution even as the state proclaimed the end of privilege. Based largely on archival and unpublished sources, this account – which is necessarily brief and selective – has the merit of opening up the paradox of the Opéra's place in Revolutionary culture for the first time. We then shift abruptly back to the founding of the institution in 1669 by Pierre Perrin, and follow a narrative in four chapters dealing with the foundation ('Orpheus on the Seine'), the form taken by the Opéra at that moment ('An



Academy for Opera'), the necessary luxury inherent in the institution ('Opera *de Luxe*') and the perpetuation of the institution's privileged status after founding ('The Phantom Founders'), ending full-circle with the crisis of 1789.

This was never intended as a full history, and many periods are barely discussed; the coverage of historical moments is notably uneven, because the purpose of the book is to demonstrate how the original conception of Perrin survives over a long duration. There were two things that needed to be demonstrated. One is that the institution was considered a special entity within the theatrical and musical world of Paris; the other, that it should be luxurious by definition, implying both costly subsidy and an unquestioned acceptance that the institution would be unviable without it. For the former claim, Johnson provides a lengthy discussion of the Opéra's privilege, its receipt of dues from other theatres to perform works with music, and its defence of its privilege against potential competitors, claiming that no other theatre had such special status (though this is barely consistent with her concession on page 149 that the Comédie-Française had a privilege over spoken theatre which it also enforced to the detriment of its competitors). For the latter, she makes a strong link between the Opéra's luxury and the *merveilleux*, which were seen as constitutive of the paradigmatic genre performed therein: the *tragédie en musique*. Evidence of both, and the root of them, may moreover be found in the particular form taken by the Opéra at its foundation: a hybrid of public theatre and royal academy. In the context of the specific argument that luxury is maintained as an essential component of the institution, it matters little that the old, luxurious formula was out of favour with the public and quite unpopular by mid-century; still, I would have welcomed some discussion of the extent to which the Opéra struggled to pull in audiences between 1753 and 1774 (audience disaffection is tucked away in a paragraph on page 196).

Johnson demonstrates convincingly that the Opéra was a public theatre from its outset, run by a private individual at his own legal risk. She spends quite some time on Perrin's original idea, showing how he at first proposed a select gathering for discussion, analogous to the five royal academies of France (104–107), and explaining that the Italian *accademia* model was the final form adopted (114); she claims that the difference explains the combination of performance (unheard of in French royal academies, but part of the Italian academy) with the royal protection and prestige (reserved for the French royal academies and not part of the public theatres) that the Opéra received as early as its 'founding phase'. One quibble, though, concerns the material she presents on the Italian academies. It is stated that the form taken by the 1669 institution was far closer to that of a commercial public theatre in academic costume than were the Italian *accademie* in reality, since 'when Italian noble academicians performed, they nearly always did so in opera productions that were open only to members of the local court and to other invited guests – not to a paying audience' (116). It would have helped, however, if Johnson could have explained why the letters patent of 1669 described the *accademie* as also having public gate receipts routinely built in ('que ceux qui font les frais nécessaires pour lesdites Représentations, se remboursent de leurs avances sur ce qui se reprend du Public à la porte des lieux où elles se font'). Were Louis XIV and Jean-Baptiste Colbert misrepresenting these Italian institutions in order to bolster cultural precedent for their own foundation? Why would they bother? And if not, it remains unconvincing that the adoption of the term 'Académie' at the founding phase represents quite as 'unprecedented' a 'combination' (105) of two structures – the Academy and the public theatre – as is suggested. (In broader terms, if it is indeed the structure and presuppositions surrounding the Academy form that explain why the Opéra was protected by the Revolutionaries, how does one square that with the Convention's almost eager suppression of the five royal academies that also – precisely – remained close to their seventeenth-century form and purpose?)

One unfortunate effect of the structure is that because the organizational model is explained with such admirable clarity in the Introduction, the main body of the work can leave the model behind, and present a fairly 'straight' narrative of the institution insisting upon the two aspects to which I have alluded above: in order to do so, it often covers quite familiar ground, such that the historian of eighteenth-century theatre and opera may be forgiven for some impatience in reading it. For example, we reach a conclusion on page 147 that opera is all about luxury and that the institution had crushed all possible competition – a point that musicologists, amongst others, would readily have conceded much sooner. Indeed, I hope that Johnson will



forgive me if I say that some of the main body of the book, and Chapters 6 and 7 in particular, will probably be of more use to the sociologist than the musicologist. No historian of theatre or opera in eighteenth-century France needs such lengthy explanation of how the marvellous was constitutive of the *tragédie en musique*, as appears at various moments in the section spanning pages 151–175; regrettably, one might also say the same of the potted biography of Lully (starting on page 121) or the summary of the ‘Querelle des Bouffons’ (171–176), on which there have been many illuminating studies. Likewise, and as is perhaps difficult to avoid when covering such a large period, some generalities might cause readers to raise their eyebrows, especially when the tone is correspondingly glib, as occasionally happens. What is one to do with phrases such as the following: ‘More than a handful of those present at the Opéra’s opening night had already had the privilege of being bored to tears by the Italian operas staged now and again at court’ (86–87)? In support, it is claimed merely that these performances ‘could last up to six hours’ and were in a language ‘thoroughly incomprehensible’ when sung. But as Johnson concedes elsewhere, the Italian language was embedded in early modern French court culture – which is hardly surprising, given the generations of intermarriage between the Bourbons and the Medicis – and polite Parisian society was comfortable enough to leave the offerings of the Théâtre Italien in that language, at least until the expulsion of the Bouffons in 1697. (A *contrario* evidence for the same is given by the decision – much later in 1718 – to introduce greater amounts of French material at that theatre.)

While there are some minor errors of fact (Batteux’s *Beaux-arts réduits à un même principe* is misdated on page 158) and some missed sources (Laura Naudeix’s recent study of the dramaturgy of *tragédie en musique*, Fabiano’s study of Italian opera in France, Solveig Serre’s doctoral dissertation on the history of the Opéra from 1749 to 1790), this does little to detract from an engaging and attractive study, which will be interesting to students and scholars of the two fields it addresses. What the musicologist and theatre historian will gain, of course, is a sophisticated methodology for studying cultural institutions in the early modern period; and given the centrality of institutions to a certain segment of historical musicology and cultural history, this is no small claim. For me, what is particularly noteworthy about this study is the clarity with which – some understandable generalizations aside – it sketches a coherent and remarkably resilient explanation for the decidedly peculiar trajectory the institution follows at the end of the century. The Opéra was not the only royal theatre to survive the Revolution, for so did the Comédie-Française (albeit split into two troupes) and the Comédie-Italienne, and I would be fascinated to see what of this method and associated discussions of imprinting could be applied to admittedly different institutions – these theatres, for instance, or the other royal academies. To that extent, Johnson has offered a case study that deserves to be considered much more widely than in the discipline of musicology alone.

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BAROQUE PIETY: RELIGION, SOCIETY, AND MUSIC IN LEIPZIG, 1650–1750

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Until recently, research into the relationship between Johann Sebastian Bach and Lutheranism was dominated by theological interpretations of his music. Scholars including Eric Chafe, Robin Leaver and Renate Steiger have argued that Bach was no ‘mere musician’ but was also steeped in Lutheran theology. Accordingly, they have interpreted Bach’s vocal and instrumental output as being rich in symbols of Lutheran