



during supernatural episodes'. Although this is true, these techniques informed Rameau's operatic language more generally, and were not confined to magic and supernatural contexts.

In magic operas, storms are often provoked by a superhuman character. Buch takes the descriptive music used to depict operatic storms as an example of magic music, but is the musical description of a magic storm any different from the depiction of a natural storm? If so, how? Perhaps the analysis of magic music would have benefited from a comparison with the music used to depict similar situations (a storm, or a battle, for example) in non-magic operas. Although the examples provided by Buch make it clear that we are confronted with powerful descriptive music, it is not always clear precisely what the music does that sets it apart from music in non-magical situations.

It seems to me that Buch's case for magic music is stronger towards the end of the eighteenth century: nearer the beginning of the century his findings seem too generic, and could apply to a great many operas of the period (whether magic or not). The most effective chapters of the book are certainly those on German musical theatre and specifically on Mozart's operas. The careful reconstruction of the theatrical, literary and musical contexts for *Die Zauberflöte*, for instance, enhances our understanding of the opera, revealing the importance of fairy tales and the 'marvellous' for both libretto and score. In dealing with the German theatrical tradition of the 'marvellous' Buch displays his deep knowledge of the subject, and these final chapters elaborate in greater detail certain theses that he has already presented in a number of previous publications.

Although not always convincing in its analysis of the music, Buch's monograph clearly shows the popularity and importance of magic theatre in the eighteenth century and calls for a reassessment of many works that have received little attention in modern scholarship.

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GEORGIA J. COWART

THE TRIUMPH OF PLEASURE: LOUIS XIV & THE POLITICS OF SPECTACLE

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For the would-be absolutist ruler, control of the propaganda machine is paramount. No one understood this better than Louis XIV. His absolute power may have been something of an illusion, as many historians now claim, but the image-makers could still project it as a reality. Thanks to such broad-ranging studies as Peter Burke's *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) and more specialized ones like Robert Isherwood's *Music in the Service of the King* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973) the process by which this was done is nowadays well understood.

In recent decades, however, a steady stream of writings has focused on the manner and extent to which political criticism could manifest itself in such circumstances, whether in clandestine pamphlet publications, chivalric novels or elsewhere. Georgia Cowart, addressing the politics of 'spectacle' (here limited mainly to the field of ballet), adds a major new dimension to this body of revisionist work, as one strand of her book seeks 'to observe the strategies of artists as they created and at times deliberately undermined a propaganda of kingship' (xv).

On the face of it, ballet would seem the least likely – indeed the least suited – medium in which to find evidence of such subversion. Yet French ballet of the period was not limited to music, dance and stage spectacle: the genres under consideration all included a literary component. The traditional *ballet de cour*



involved *récits* (vocal airs) and *vers pour les personnages* (stanzas distributed to the audience); the new *comédie-ballet* pioneered by Molière and Lully in the 1660s combined a spoken play with sung and danced *intermèdes*; and the *opéra-ballet*, emerging at the turn of the century towards the end of Louis's reign, was all-sung opera with special emphasis on dance. Nor does Cowart limit herself to ballet. In order to understand the place of *opéra-ballet* within this context, she includes some discussion of the *tragédie en musique* as developed by Quinault and Lully in the 1670s and 1680s. Moreover, the range of source materials explored here, by no means limited to those narrowly associated with music, dance or theatre, is extremely impressive.

Cowart's first two chapters take us from the 1650s, when the *ballet de cour* was largely unsullied by absolutist propaganda, into the 1660s, where the king and his advisers began to wrest the genre from his courtiers and to perceive it as an instrument of political control. A key work here is *Le ballet des Muses*, a pinnacle of the court ballet repertory. Cowart's analysis of this ballet becomes a point of reference for later chapters, and reveals the full extent to which it 'demonstrates Louis XIV's rule over the empire of the arts as a corollary to his rule over the political empire of Europe and the Indies' (76). The work aligns itself with the 'moderns' in asserting the supremacy of French culture, symbolized by the image of the Muses forsaking Mount Parnassus to dwell at Louis's court and submit to his control; it also showcased the skills of the major Parisian theatres, all now enjoying royal patronage as part of the growing politicization of the arts.

The landmark status of *Le ballet des Muses* emerges in the third chapter, which is mainly concerned with *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, the work that marked the culmination of the Molière–Lully collaboration. Unlike the court ballet, *comédies-ballets* such as this were written for a dual audience, court and town, and could thus be interpreted in different, sometimes diametrically opposed, ways. Cowart suggests that this duality may already be intended in *Le ballet des Muses* itself, in which elements of the embedded *comédies-ballets* could be read as challenging the encomiastic nature of the parent work. Stating that *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* may be regarded as 'turning the court ballet inside out' (95), she argues convincingly that this work includes a parodic or comic counterpart of almost every *entrée* of *Le ballet des Muses*, thus presenting an irreverent image of artistic patronage passing from the court to the bourgeoisie.

Veiled discontent with Louis's militarism can also be discerned in the dedications and prologues of the Lully–Quinault operas of the 1670s, discussed in chapter 4. Cowart moves on to examine the extent to which a vein of libertinism at the Paris Opéra fuelled this discontent, especially after Lully's fall from royal favour in 1685; this, she concludes, provoked some thinly concealed gestures of defiance, especially in Lully's last operas and those of his sons. Thus may be seen the emergence of a subversive element at the Opéra shadowing the more open political criticisms currently voiced elsewhere.

In the final chapters we return to the ballet, more particularly the new genre of *opéra-ballet*. Here a new generation of librettists and composers, prominent among them La Motte, Danchet and Campra, had less obvious courtly connections. In this repertory, developed outside the confines of Louis's court, we find a utopian vision 'in which an enactment of public pleasure continues to supplant the old enactment of sovereign power' (177). This vision finds its most striking expression in Watteau's *Pilgrimage to Cythera*, which Cowart shows to have been strongly influenced by two of the ballets of this period.

Such a summary merely hints at the wealth of ideas explored in this fascinating and erudite study. Particularly impressive is the network of intertextual links that Cowart identifies, most of them entirely plausible, some (those separated by a half-century gap, for instance) perhaps more contentious. Indeed, in a broad study of this kind, with so much emphasis on personal interpretation, individual readers will inevitably find themselves quibbling with this or that conclusion. While it is easy, for example, to accept the presence of subversive elements in the later Lully operas as the response of a composer newly out of royal favour, it is less easy to read Orpheus's lament in his *Ballet des Muses* – a work written when Louis XIV was at the height of his powers and when Lully had so much to gain by keeping in favour – as in any way challenging the orthodox view. Nor does it seem likely that Pierre Perrin, having just been granted a potentially lucrative royal *privilege* to found the Académie Royale de Musique, would wish to rock the boat; thus his unconventional handling of the system of royal flattery may be attributed more to ineptitude than



to any other motive. Likewise, in a book that so adroitly exploits the concept of reversal for comic or satirical purposes, it is one step too far to interpret in this way the engraved frontispiece of Camppra's *Les fêtes vénitiennes*: if the Doge's Palace and Biblioteca Marciana appear the wrong way round, that is a consequence of the engraving process, in which such reversal was standard. Still, this is an occupational hazard for any writer who seeks to tease out encoded political significance from often intractable material, and for every quibble there are many more instances when one finds the head nodding in agreement.

The book includes a wealth of illustrations that bear helpfully on the discussion. Although typographical errors are rare, some of the music examples include inaccuracies. In the first (24–25), for instance, the key signature has acquired a second sharp (the source has two accidentals, but both F#); this produces augmented sixths and other oddities, unintended even in Lully's appropriation of an Italian burlesque style. Discussion of the music is often the least convincing aspect of the book: this same example, for instance, is said to include a shift into hemiola at a point where the driving ternary accentuation of 'ne spacco m'ammacco tabacco . . .' makes such a shift impossible.

Even so, this is not primarily a book about musical style. Far more valuable are the many insights, often as unexpected as they are profound, that Georgia Cowart brings to bear on the subject. As Davitt Moroney puts it in his appreciation on the book jacket: 'This fascinating and subtle study continues to resonate in the mind long after reading.'

GRAHAM SADLER



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DAVID HENNEBELLE

DE LULLY À MOZART: ARISTOCRATIE, MUSIQUE ET MUSICIENS (XVIIIE–XVIIIÈ SIÈCLES)

Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 2009

pp. 448, ISBN 978 2 87673 499 9

This interesting book begins with a good question – 'Wouldn't historians like music?' (9) – pointing out that historians have usually avoided mentioning this artform in their scholarly studies of the ancien régime. But instead of discussing the most significant and best-known composers of the period (such as Lully, Charpentier, Rameau and Mozart), David Hennebelle focuses on numerous musicians who spent their daily life serving the most prestigious aristocratic households (those of the Guise, the Orléans, the Bourbon-Condé, the Noailles, the Conti and so on) whose legacies have been somewhat submerged by historical accounts. This book is therefore cross-disciplinary, and proposes – by exploring what was ordinary (that is, what remained unnoticed) rather than what was exceptional in the Parisian musical milieu – an illuminating social and cultural approach to the musical patronage of a highly refined society, whose members (not always learned musicians themselves) invested large amounts of money to maintain a handful of musicians (performers and/or composers) and even private orchestras (such as those of Pierre Crozat, the prince of Conti, and Le Riche de La Pouplinière) in order to display their wealth. Through many precise examples the author explains how this patronage became a genuine strategic tool to allow patrons to ascend the social hierarchy yet keep themselves somewhat detached from royal norms (as discussed in Part 1, 'Le patronage musical de l'aristocratie: acteurs, formes et enjeux' (The Musical Patronage of the Aristocracy: Actors, Forms and Stakes)). This protection of music and musicians was inscribed in particular forms of sociability, outstanding ambitions and social successes (Part 3, 'Les musiciens au service de l'aristocratie' (Musicians at the Service of the Aristocracy)), as well as new compositional and performing rules and procedures (Part 2, 'L'aristocratie: moteur du progrès musical?' (The Aristocracy: Driving Force of Musical Progress?)).