

**John S. Powell. *Music and Theatre in France, 1600–1680*.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. xvi, 582 pp.**

Reviewed by John Hajdu Heyer

The seventeenth century in France, an era in which French dramatic arts reached a pinnacle of development, has inspired tomes of writing, both in French and in English, on the literature and theater of the period. But despite the importance of music and dance in this time, and particularly despite their prominence in the theater, there remain relatively few books available to the English reader on the subject. Major English monographs on the music are few and can be listed easily: James R. Anthony's comprehensive *French Baroque Music* (1978), Robert Isherwood's *Music in the Service of the King* (1973), Louis Auld's *The Lyric Art of Pierre Perrin* (1986), Norman Demuth's *French Opera* (1963), and Caroline Wood's *Music and Drama in the Tragédie en musique, 1673–1715* (1996). Scholars have recently contributed to several significant collections of essays, and a growing number of tools for research and critical editions have been published, but few book-length works serve the English reader. John S. Powell's *Music and Theatre in France, 1600–1680*, the most recent installment of Oxford's Monographs on Music, presents a significant new contribution to this small bibliography. Powell's impressive 582-page book, which addresses the musical practices of comedy, tragicomedy, tragedy, and mythological and non-mythological pastoral drama during the period, offers the first major work in English to thoroughly investigate these rich and momentous topics, all of which contributed significantly to the development of French opera.

The challenges confronting Powell in preparing this volume were substantial. While much has been written on the drama, the musical and dance practices of the era in question are not addressed in the standard reference works, such as Lancaster (1929–42) or Adam (1949). Recent scholarship has produced some articles and James R. Anthony (1978) contributes a meaningful survey, but Powell's comprehensive study brings together a critical examination of the dramatic literature together with a complete review of the surviving musical sources. This study is the first of its kind in any language.

Powell's study is in fact three studies. Part 1 addresses music and public theater in Paris; part 2 examines the place and function of music and dance in French plays; and part 3 is devoted to music and the theater of Molière. Thus the volume reads less as a chronological history than as a series of essays, several of which give linear histories on salient topics—for

example, the rise of the Théâtre du Marais (1629–1658), the fusion of comedy and ballet, and the musical practices in Molière's theater. Powell addresses these topics by offering detailed illustrations, musical and poetic, drawn from the works in question, along with perceptive and penetrating discourse.

The author defines the boundaries of his study (1600–1680) from the establishment of repertory theaters in Paris at the turn of the seventeenth century to the formation of the Comédie-Française in 1680. He places his primary focus on secular drama as it was performed in the public theater, but adds substantial examination of the court theater and ballet activity at court during that time. The study reaches beyond those time boundaries upon occasion, as, for example, in his discussion of Charpentier's revisions for the 1685–86 version of *Le malade imaginaire*.

Musical examples, which are generously provided in the volume, are happily of a legible size. Indeed, the book provides the equivalent of an anthology of music from the period under study. These examples will be of great interest to scholars to whom much of this music has not been readily available. Some highlights, for example, include the full *air de mouvement* "O Giornata," presumably by Cambert for Montfleury's *Le Mary sans femme* (1663), along with Lully's setting of Molière's *Le Sicilien* (1667), both which give early examples of the exotic pseudo-Turkish music that would become popular in later theater and opera. Also noteworthy is the full *Premier intermède* from Molière's *Psyché* (music by Lully) on page 216, and the excerpt from Act 1, scene 2 of Perrin's *Pomone* (music by Cambert) on page 299.

An excellent concise essay summarizing musical and theatrical aspects of the beginnings of French opera is found at the end of part 2 (293–320); it presents important reading for students of music history who can easily be distracted by the zesty politics of that historical episode. Another impressive feature of this book is the inclusion of the full text in French of important dramatic passages relevant to the points raised in the essays. These passages, signaled in the main text by an alphabetical superscript that differentiates them from footnotes, are supplied in an appendix. The thorough indexing of the volume offers another feature that will be most welcome to research scholars.

The publication has been carefully prepared and thoroughly edited with virtually no errors. Exceptions include a reference to "plate 8" on page 64 that surely should be directing the reader to "plate 9," and a graph on page 376 that could have been scaled differently to give better representation of the data. Scholars will be pleased to find the footnotes throughout the volume are on the same page as the notes themselves and are judiciously chosen—though more than a few readers will find they need a

magnifying glass in order to read them. The generally excellent layout throughout the volume runs aground at the very end of the main text where the last chapter ends with a musical example, thus a few lines of the final paragraph of the main find themselves somewhat orphaned in the examples on page 433.

While Powell has done a masterful job of deciding which terms should be translated and which are better left in the original, terminology still presents the reader with significant challenges. For example, the term "pastorale héroïque," also appears hyphenated as "pastorale-héroïque" (cf. pp. 162 and 225), and is indexed in both forms, but if a distinction is intended, it is not explicitly stated. Indeed, the range of this book, with its attention to matters of music, theater, and dance, is such that many readers, including scholars not familiar with the French genres, would benefit from a glossary of the untranslatable French terms. While some of the more esoteric terminology can be understood from the context of the volume, certain terms (e.g., *divertissement*, *privilege*, or *comédie épisodique*) will require non-French-speaking readers to undertake some background study if they wish to understand the precise meaning of Powell's discourse. It would have been helpful to have non-translatable terms like *ballet de cour*, *comédie-ballet*, *tragédie en musique*, *masquerade*, and *air de cour* in a glossary to help the less initiated readers, since this book should attract students of dance history and theater history as well.

Since no glossary is provided in the volume, English readers will probably turn to the *New Grove*, only to become entangled in confusion at times. For example, *New Grove II* identifies the *pastorale-héroïque* as a "type of ballet-héroïque whose plot often turns on the loves of nobles or gods (or goddesses), usually in disguise, for shepherdesses (or shepherds) in Arcadian settings." When the reader turns to *ballet-héroïque* for clarification, we find it to be a "type of French opéra-ballet during the reign of Louis XV, distinguished by having as its principal characters heroic, noble figures, often from antiquity, classical gods and goddesses, or exotic personages, rather than the comic bourgeois and tender heroines of other opéras-ballets." And we find in the *Grove* article no reference to the genre before 1723. Powell explains on page 162 that the genre emerges in the mid-seventeenth century, and his discussion of the topic expands as he deals in some detail with *ballet-héroïque* in the context of the *pastorale* opera and the mythological machine play in later chapters. There are, in fact, more than a few articles in *New Grove II* that warrant revision in view of Powell's work.

Despite the few issues noted above, it must be emphasized that there is a large amount of new information that Powell has unearthed or brought to light through his research. For example, part 2 of the volume, titled

"The Place and Function of Music and Dance in French Plays," offers a wealth of information on a host of topics ranging from, for example, "the play-within-the-play," to "musical exoticism," to "madness and delusion." In the section on the latter, Powell offers a penetrating overview of the interaction of music and mental health ranging over, among other works, Corneille's *Le Berger extravagant* (1653), Rotrou's *L'Hypochondriaque, ou Le Mort amoureux* (1631), Beys's *L'Hospital des fous* (1636), Poisson's *Les Fous divertissants* (1680), and of course Molière's *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1669) and *Le Malade imaginaire* (1673). A thorough discussion reveals how the dramatic portrayal of madness can establish, as Powell explains, "a parallel reality that appears veridical to the afflicted, but chimerical to the other characters in the play." To give a sense of the ground covered in the book, other topics explored in this chapter alone include "the musical set-piece," "ballet as dramatic device," "the musical world of lovers," "enchantment and illusion," and "apparitions, dreams, and the supernatural."

The scope of this volume is not easily summarized. *Music and Theatre in France 1600–1680* presents us with a new major work. It lays out for the first time in any language the fullest discussion of the interactions of music and theater in seventeenth-century France and of the foundations of the French opera that developed in the second half of the century. It furthermore brings forward important issues in the English language for the first time. John S. Powell and Oxford Monographs in Music are to be commended for their excellent scholarship and publishing.

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