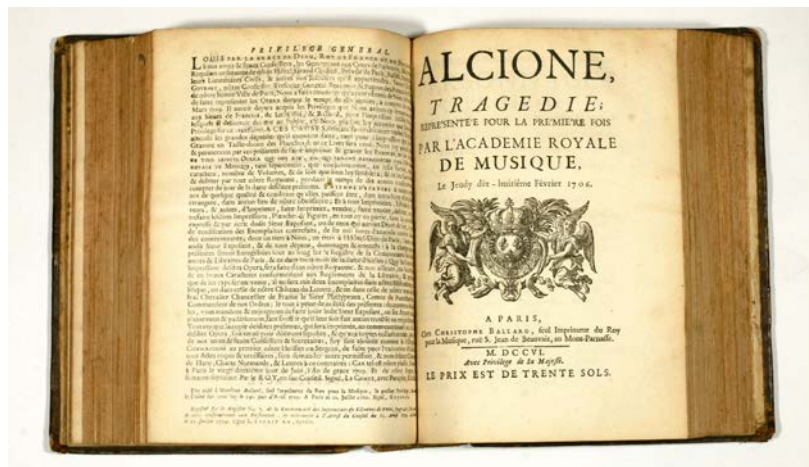


French opera between Lully and Rameau



[Sammelband]. 15 opera and ballet librettos. Paris: C. Ballard or Ribou, 1700-1714. Bound in one volume, quarto (7 ½" x 9 ½"), contemporary calf, rubbed. Spine gilt, leather label, faded & worn at ends. Very clean, well preserved librettos.

This sammelband consists of 15 libretto for opera and ballet, all original editions, performed at l'Academie Royal de Musique from 1700 to 1714. In the period between the death of Lully and the death of Louis XIV (1687-1715), there were staged at the Palais Royale a total 42 operas called lyric tragedies and 18 ballets called ballets or opera ballets. (Pitou p.17) . Although the number of works produced at the Academy increased after the late period of Lully, and the audience numbers remained stable, the era to use a metaphor, reflects mostly a “flat” in the inexorable flowing river of French opera.



The death of Jean-Baptiste Lully in 1687 begins a transition period for formal opera and ballet. Opera [lyric tragedie] itself declines in stature because the decades of musical taste formed by Lully could not be either continued or discarded. This transition period continues until the rise of Jean-Phillipe Rameau in the early 1720s. During the era, on the other hand, the French opera orchestra was reputed to be the finest in Europe (Giroud, p 26), and the operas often reflected high literary and musical worth, although the plots, instead of finding new stories, often fell back on ancient mythology.

From 1687 to 1715 several developments shaped the course of French opera. Importantly the enhanced use of scenic splendor through special effects and stage machinery, as well as, striking costumes, along with magic and stage illusion grew in importance in an attempt to compensate for the lack of new plots.

During this period, ballet [called opera ballet] came into its own. Contributing a great deal to the popularity of opera, ballet divertissements kept “the eyes and ears in a constant state of enchantment” (La Bruyere). The opera ballet played a huge role in the future as French ballet. Opera ballets were eventually to take its place fully on the opera stage as the coequal to the tragedie lyrique.

Librettos of this period greatly expanded their scope by listing the names of the actors and singers and dancers of the prologues and of the ballet divertissements. The names are helpful in distinguishing between a professional and an amateur actor. For the historian, this is relevant since professionals were not permitted on the Royal stage until late in the 17th century.

In librettos of this period, scenery and stage architecture are well described in the prologue and the beginning of each act and occasionally for a scene change in the middle of an act. These descriptions indicate that librettos were printed for an interested and literate public as well as for those who attended the performance. The quarto size of the libretto eases the reader’s progress, although the 12mo size was now available for the reprint and often revised editions of the *Recueil général des Paroles des Opera*.

In this sammelband, there are several librettos of high importance. **Callirhoé** (#6) has been called the “finest achievement of Destrouche’s maturity”; **Alcione** (#9) is reckoned by La Gorce to have “one of the most beautiful scores of the entire French operatic Repertory”; **Le Triomphe des arts** (#12) was a ballet so popular that its fourth entree now called *Pygmalion* is performed to this day; **Les Festes de Thalie**, (#15) is an opera ballet that was the first modernized work produced at the Royal Academie des Musique using contemporary idioms of speech and modern dress.

These librettos are rare! None are located within North American. In most cases, the Bibliotheque Nationale and the Bibliotheque Geneve are the only locations found

For the sammelband: \$6,500.00

1. **Hippodamie tragédie.** Représentée pour la première fois par l'Académie Royale de musique, le mardy [mardi] sixième jour de mars 1708. Paris: C. Ballard, 1708. Original edition. Text composed by Pierre-Charles Roy (1683-1764); music by André Campra (1660-1744). XVI, 42pp., 1p. Privilege.

Lyric tragedy in five acts based on Lucian *Dialogues* with borrowing from Hyginus and Pindar. M. Blondy (1677-1747) danced in the divertissements, as did Jean Balon (1676-1739). Blondy was the son of Beauchamp's ballet master for Louis XIV. Fourteen performances, never restaged.

Refs.: Lajarte, 110; Pitou 234-5.
OCLC: GBV, BDF.

With the Central Theme of Incest

2. **Diomède** tragédie représentée pour la première fois par l'Académie royale de musique, le vingt-huitième jour d'avril 1710. Paris: Ballard, 1710. Original edition. Text composed by Jean-Louis-Ignace de La Serre (1662-1756); music by Bertin de La Doué (1680-1743). VIII, 60pp., 1p. privilege, 1p. music and opera.

Lyric tragedy with prologue and divertissement in five acts. The theme that love is the only true source of happiness is complicated by Diomede's love for Iphise, his sister (the goddess Minerva sorts it out). Twenty-five performances, never revived.

Ref.: Pitou, 209.
OCLC: GBV, BDF.

3. **Idoménée:** tragédie représentée pour la première fois par l'Académie royale de musique, le mardy douzième jour de Janvier 1712. Paris: C. Ballard, 1712. Original edition. Text by Antoine Danchet (1671-1748); music by André Campra (1660-1744). XII, 60pp. Lyric tragedie in five acts. "The ending offers neither a grand conclusion nor a final disposition" (Pitou, 236-7). Twelve performances in 1712, then revived in 1731 in which the great ballerina Camargo danced.

Ref.: Pitou, 236-7.

4. **Créuse l'Athénienne tragédie** représentée pour la première fois par l'Académie Royale de musique le mardi cinquième jour d'avril 1712. Paris: C. Ballard, 1712. Original edition. Text by Pierre-Charles Roy (1683-1764); music by Louis de Lacoste (ca. 1675-ca. 1750). XVI, 47pp., with avertissement list of dancers, including Françoise Prévost (ca. 1680-1741) who was a pupil of Blondy and teacher of Marie Salle and Marie Camargo.

Lyric tragedie in five acts. Based on Euripides' *Ió* with modifications. Ultimately, Prévost was a precursor of Noverre, whose ballets d'actions had a mimetic function closer to drama than ballet. Twenty-two performances, never revived although it had an ingenious prologue in which La Fable and L'Histoire argue over which of them has produced the most admirable heroes.

Refs.: Lajarte I, 115; Pitou, 204.
OCLC: GBV, BDF.

5. **Télémaque**, tragédie, représentée pour la première fois . . . le jeudi 29 Novembre 1714. Paris: Ribou, 1714. Original edition. Text by Abbé Simon-Joseph Pellegrin (1663-1745); music by André Cardinal Destouches (1672-1749). XII, 72pp., followed by a 7pp. list of new books sold by Ribou.

Lyrique tragédie based on first book of Fenelon's *Telemaque*. The running titles are for **Calypso, Tragedie** and the approbation on p. 72 states that the title is **Calypso, Tragedie en Musique**, in which Calypso is the central figure in the drama as much as Télémaque. Apparently, the title was changed after the text was printed. The prologue is sung by Minerva. "The prologue of the tragedy is an uninhibited laudium of Louis XIV. . . to celebrate the peace that Louis has brought to Europe" (Pitou, 316).

Ten performances, restaged February 23, 1730 with only five performances. Sonneck 1057 (from score) with Nov. 16, 1714 given as dates of premiere; Pitou 316 indicates the premiere was November 29, 1714. A Parody was staged at the Foire Saint-Germaine (1715).

OCLC: GBV, FRBML, BDF.

6. **Arion**: tragedie représentée pour la première fois par l'Académie royale de musique, le mardi dixième avril 1714. Paris: Ribou, 1714. Original edition. Text by Louis Fuzelier (1672?-1752); music by Jean-Baptiste Matho (1663-1743). 10,-58, leaf of Ribou offerings.

Lyric tragedie based on a love triangle that is resolved when Arion attempts suicide, but Periandre consents to let his daughter Irene marry Arion instead of Eurilsas, the groom intended for her. Twenty-eight performances, never revived.

Refs.: Pitou 162-3; Lajarte I, 120.
OCLC: BDF, GBV

Ballet Based on Lully's 1664 Version

7. **Les amours déguisez** Balet Représentée pour la première fois par l'Académie Royale de musique, le mardy vingt-deuxième août 1713. Paris: Pierre Ribou 1713. Text by Louis Fuzelier (1672-1752); music by Louis Thomas Bourgeois (1676-1750). 46pp., including leaf of avertissement explaining the plan of the ballet at aii; 4pp. Ribou catalogue following p. 46.

Lyric balet (en trois entrées) based on original version of one of the fourteen entries in the ballet that Lully produced on Feb. 13, 1664. In this ballet, love takes three forms as shown in each act: L'Amitie, L'Haine, L'Estime [sensitive friendship, cruel hatred, peaceful esteem]. The choral prologue assembles lovers of all nations.

Produced 24 times from Aug. 22-Oct. 15, 1713, with a further performance at Palais Royale Sept. 12, 1726 (see Pitou, 152-3 for full chronology).

Ref.: Lajarte 118-119.
OCLC: Rare! BDF only.

The Finest Achievement of Destouches' Maturity

8. **Callirhoé**: tragédie représentée pour la première fois par l'Académie Royale de musique le mardy vingt-septième décembre 1712. Paris: C. Ballard, 1712. Original edition. Text by Pierre-Charles Roy (1683-1764); music by André Cardinal Destouches (1672-1749). 63pp.

Lyrique tragedie en five actes, based on an episode of Pausanias' *Description of Greece* set in Calydon. The prologue "does return to the Lullist-Quinault tradition by offering a laudium of Louis XIV and a reference to the contemporary situation of Europe" (Pitou, 187). The story is of a love triangle involving a priest of Bacchus, whose jealousy triggers civil unrest but who kills himself rather than sacrifice his beloved as commanded by an oracle. No minor characters are used in **Callirhoé** because the authors determined that the dynamics of the theme would be diluted by their triviality.

Given 39 times between December 27, 1712 and March 9, 1713 (revised in 1743) (see Pitou, 187-8 for full chronology up to 1743).

Refs.: Giroud, 37-8; Lajarte I, 116; Pitou 187-8.

OCLC: GBV, BDF, LMI.

First Instance of Descriptive Music in French Opera

9. **Alçione** représentée pour la première fois par l'Académie Royale de Musique le Jeudi dix-huitième Février 1706. Paris: C. Ballard, 1706. Text by M. de (Antoine Houdar) La Motte (1672-1731); music by Marin Marais (1656-1728), who was conductor of Paris opera as of 1705. xii, 41pp. with leaf of privilege verso.

Lyric tragedie in five acts and prologue. Revised and restaged many times until 1771. Although the famous storm music in Act IV* always remained intact, the prologue was dropped and a divertissement, "Le Caprice d'Erato," was put in its place. Alcyone loves Ceyx, but their marriage is thwarted by the magician Phorbas. The lovers are driven to suicide in the last act, but Neptune metamorphoses them into halcyons, the legendary birds that could calm tempests. *The Act IV tempest is a theatrical feat and a musical tour de force, shown from the back of the stage through machinery.

Alçione was the greatest success of the composer's career. **Alçione** is called by La Gorce, "one of the most beautiful scores of the entire French operatic repertory" (p. 234 cited in Giroud, 33-4).

Ref.: Pitou 147.

OCLC: BDF only.

10. **Cassandre**, tragédie représentée pour la première fois par l'Académie royale de musique, le mardi vingt-deuxième jour de juin 1706. Paris: C. Ballard, 1706. Original edition. Text by François Joseph de La Grange-Chancel (1677-1758); music by Francis Bouvard (1670-1757) and Bertin de la Doué (1680-1745). XVI-47-[1]. Includes divertissement, prologue and privilege, June 11, 1703 (p. 48).

Lyric tragedy in five acts and a prologue. Set in the ruins of Troy, Apollo assumes the divinities that Paris is alive and would soon found a new city after him, a city that will be a glory to the arts. The tragedy failed despite of the wealth of actors and ballet dancers who participated. A dozen performances (at most) from June 22, 1706.

Ref.: Pitou 195-7.

OCLC: BDF, G4V.

11. **Polixène et Pirrhus**. tragédie; représentée pour la première fois par l'Académie royale de musique, le jeudi vingt-unième jour d'octobre 1706. Paris: Impr. de C. Ballard, 1706. Original edition. Text by Jean-Louis-Ignace de La Serre (1662-1756); music by Pascal Colasse (1649-1709). XIV-54, 1p. privilege, 1p. blank.

Lyric tragedy in five acts, with prologue, sometimes called **Polyxène**. Concerns the mythical founding of Athens. The tragedy based on a mutual love rendered impossible ends with the suicide of Polyxène, and Pyrrhus attempting to follow. Performed only 17 times during its first run from Oct. 21 to November 23, 1706 at the Palais-Royal.

Ref.: Pitou 293.

OCLC: BDF.

The Ballet Origin of Pygmalion

12. **Le triomphe des arts**. Ballet représenté par l'Academie Royale de Musique le 16. jour de May 1700. Paris: C. Ballard, 1700. Original edition. Text by Antoine Houdar de la Motte (1672-1731); music by Michel de la Barre (1675-1743). Pp. 3-4, Dedication to Monseigneur le duc de Bourgogne, signed by Houdar de la Motte; pp. 5-7, avertissement; 8pp., acteurs; 46pp., text; leaf of blank.

Opera ballet in five acts (entrées). Louis XIV, known for his passion for the dance, is paid homage in the first entrée; the other four entrées are named La Poesie, La Musique, La Peinture, and La Sculpture. Performers include Mlle Maupin in several dances accompanied by Hardouin as Amphion (III) and Thévenard as Pygmalion.

Serving as the climax of the ballet, La Sculpture later became known as *Pygmalion* in a series of musical stage works on the subject. The ballet dancer Marie Sallé's version in London 1743 famously animated her statue series of dances taught to her by a sculptor. She choreographed this ballet herself. The most notable version of the ballet was Rameau's version in 1748. Twenty-four performances from May 16 to July 19, 1700.

Ref.: Pitou, 326-7.

OCLC: DETUU, DESWL, BDHHG, Pul.

13. **Sémélé tragédie**; représentée pour la première fois par l'Académie Royale de Musique le mardy neuvième jour d'Avril milsept cens neuf. Paris: C. Ballard, 1709. Original edition. Text by Antoine Houdar de la Motte (1672-1732); music by Marin Marais (1656-1721). Xx, 43pp., 1p. privilege.

Lyric tragedy in five acts and prologue. In this opera, Sémélé, daughter of the king of Cadmus, is required, although she loves Idas, to marry Adraste, a Theban prince who has won a victory for Thebes. With intervening gods, the outcome is in doubt. Jupiter descends disguised as Idas, but he is refused because of her commitment to Adraste. Jupiter then comes between Sémélé and Adraste at the end. Sémélé is carried off to heaven. Performed April 9-May 21, 1709. Never revived.

Refs.: Lajarte I, 110; Pitou 310.

OCLC: UF#, GBV.

14. **Méléagre tragédie** représenté pour la première fois par l'Académie royale de musique, le vendredi vingt-quatrième jour de may 1709. Paris: Impr. de C. Ballard, 1709. Original edition. Text by François Antoine Jolly (1662-1753); music by Baptistin (pseud. of Jean-Baptiste Struck or Stuck [1680-1755]). 57pp., 1p. privilege.

Lyric tragedy in five acts with prologue. The important prologue debates the merits of Italy versus France. The two nations defend themselves with examples of their national music. In 1726, the prologue was staged again with the Stuck music as part of the *Le Ballet sans titre*. Premiere Jul. 16, 1709. Twenty-four performances.

Refs.: Lajarte I, 110; Pitou 269-270.

OCLC: BDF, GBV.

15. **Les Festes de Thalie** . . . Académie royale de musique, le dimanche 19e août 1714. Paris: P. Ribou, 1714. Original edition. Text by Joseph de La Font (1686-1725); music by Jean-Joseph Mouret (1682-1739). XVI-40pp. 7pp. catalogue of Ribou publications.

Opera Ballet with three entrées and with prologue. The entrées are La Fille, La Femme, and La Veuve. **Les Festes de Thalie, balet** is “a milestone in the history of the evolution of French opera. It was the first lyric comedy produced by the Royal Academy of Music; its characters employed current French in their speech and appeared on the stage in contemporary dress” (Pitou).

A very popular ballet with 48 original performances from August 19, 1714. A fourth entrée was added on Oct. 9, 1714; then, the ballet was revived and revised through 1745 in whole or in parts. Candeille did new music for it in 1778. Giroud notes the ballet has “High literary and musical worth” (29).

Ref.: Pitou, 222-3.

OCLC: BDF, GBV, FRCBF, HHG.

References:

Giroud, Vincent. *French Opera: A Short History* (2010);

Pitou, Spire. *The Paris Opéra: Genesis and Glory, 1671-1715* (1983).