



adaptation and variety: for example, the myriad ways in which chromatic descents are infiltrated into Vivaldian textures and at different speeds. Among several striking observations about Vivaldi's treatment of the Corellian circle of fifths is his role in stretching the concept over a much longer time-frame, with each chord extending to four bars or more; another is his preference for a closed static unit, usually in minor, and remarkable for emancipated part-writing or chromatic variants. One might extrapolate that the circle of fifths is not the characteristic route for the return from submediant to tonic, as is generally supposed (perhaps by a mistaken projection from Mozartean practice).

The narrative is dense with examples, and it would take a lifetime to appreciate fully all the musical references listed, only a fraction of which can be illustrated in music examples – though in fairness the book does include a generous selection. Sometimes the search for modalism leads in what appear to be tenuous directions: are flat sevenths (such as A $\flat$  accidentals in a B flat major context) really evidence of a 'Mixolydian tendency' (86)? The modern listener instinctively hears a tonic chord variant forming a secondary dominant to IV. But perhaps this is indeed a question of my own hearing, which will now need to embrace both the raised and lowered versions of the seventh degree as part of an extended scale. If a book encourages even one reader to listen differently, then that is surely an impact – to use the current jargon – of which any musicologist should be proud.

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*Eighteenth-Century Music* © Cambridge University Press, 2010  
doi:10.1017/S1478570610000084

DAVID J. BUCH

*MAGIC FLUTES & ENCHANTED FORESTS: THE SUPERNATURAL IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MUSICAL THEATER*

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008

pp. xxvii + 450, ISBN 978 0 226 07809 0 (cloth), 978 0 226 07810 6 (paper)

*Magic Flutes & Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater* focuses on the eighteenth century's tradition of the 'marvellous' in music drama. The book offers an in-depth discussion of an operatic tradition that has received relatively little attention in current scholarship, thus filling a significant gap in the literature.

In tracing the history of the 'marvellous' as a subject in theatrical music, David Buch takes into account a large number of works from the late seventeenth century up to 1791, the year of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. The works discussed are not confined to opera, but include comedies, pantomimes, ballets and farces. Equally broad is the geographical scope of the study: in order to stress the cosmopolitan nature of the phenomenon and to trace the reciprocal influences of the many traditions involved, Buch discusses fantasy-related genres from France, Italy and German-speaking areas. The enormous range of sources and contexts involved would have intimidated many a scholar, yet Buch manages it well. The appendices provide long lists of works with some supernatural content, clearly showing the extensive evocation of magic and the supernatural in eighteenth-century theatre. In the Introduction Buch discusses a variety of literary sources that have influenced French, Italian and German forms of musical theatre. Tracing the literary origins of the 'marvellous' is certainly a challenging task, as is testified by the wide range of materials that inspired librettists: myths, religious sources, folkloric legends and fairy tales from all over the world.

After this brief overview, Buch provides a more detailed discussion of the subject, beginning with two chapters on French musical theatre ('L'Académie Royale de Musique' and 'Opéra-comique'). In France the



‘marvellous’ in ballets and serious opera was promoted by the royal court. Indeed, the aristocracy exploited its association with the magical and the divine in order to justify and reaffirm its own divine right to rule. On the other hand, the presence of magic in ‘lower’, comic genres was usually employed to subvert the established social order and to demonstrate the arbitrary nature of social classes: as Buch states, ‘magic powers allow commoners to assume princely roles and to further events in the plot that otherwise would be impossible owing to the period’s rigid class system’ (104).

In Italy the staging of works with supernatural content was less common and was mainly concentrated in genres such as the intermezzo, pastorale, ballet, *azione teatrale* and *festa teatrale*. Chapter 3, ‘Italian Serious Genres’, shows that *opere serie* with magic elements were more popular outside Italy – especially in Vienna, Hamburg and London. As for comic opera (discussed in the following chapter, ‘Italian Comic Genres’), magical plots and characters from the *commedia dell’arte* continued to be present on the stage, notwithstanding Goldoni’s condemnation of this tradition as ‘indecent, unrealistic, and lacking in proper moral instruction’ (209).

Chapter 5 deals with ‘German Musical Theatre’, the supernatural content of which relied heavily on Italian, French and English models for most of the eighteenth century. Collections of original German fairy tales were published in the 1780s and their musical versions appeared on stage towards the end of that decade. In 1789 the director of Vienna’s Theater auf der Wieden, Emanuel Schikaneder, started producing a series of successful singspiels and full-length operas based on these collected fairy tales (and culminating in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*); these constitute the core of a German repertory that would enjoy great success for at least thirty years, and be the first to be translated into other languages.

The final chapter of the book is dedicated to ‘The Supernatural in the Operas of Mozart’ and focuses primarily on *Don Giovanni* and *Die Zauberflöte*. In this chapter Buch broadens the context for Mozart’s operas and explains in some detail the literary and musical traditions in which they were created. His account demonstrates that many of the elements that characterize these works’ narratives and music were already present in previous supernatural operas, ballets, comedies and pantomimes. Placing Mozart’s works (especially *Die Zauberflöte*) in their theatrical and musical contexts provides an appropriate perspective for their interpretation. The book’s ‘Postscript’, ‘The Significance & Influence of Supernatural Topics’, briefly discusses the influence that magic musical topics from opera, comedy and ballet had on instrumental music. The new musical vocabulary developed for the depiction of ‘marvellous’ events was later exploited by composers such as Beethoven, Weber and Wagner.

Buch’s main claim is an interesting one. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries music was closely associated with magic. A character who expressed himself in song rather than speech was no ‘ordinary human’, but rather a superhuman being. In this context composers did not need to develop specific techniques to suggest ‘magic’ or ‘divinity’ to their audience. During the eighteenth century, however, this association faded and operatic composers had to devise specific musical means to depict the magical and the ‘marvellous’. Thus they expanded the vocabulary of musical topics and signals associated with the world of invocations, transformations, ghost scenes and oracles. The explanation is intriguing, though we should perhaps note that during the eighteenth century all operatic genres developed many kinds of musical devices, not only to depict magic scenes but also to sustain and enhance the dramatic effects of operatic plots more generally.

In Buch’s analysis of the scores the presence of a specific musical vocabulary of the ‘marvellous’ is much more in evidence towards the end of the eighteenth century. Before then the musical devices used to depict the magic appear indistinct and arguably rather commonplace. Buch often describes magic music as ‘elegant’, and although he himself admits that ‘elegance in music is a relative term’ (47), his extensive use of the term renders his descriptions of music often rather vague: the reader is left wondering just what ‘elegant’ means, and how this ‘elegant’ music may differ from music in non-magic operas or non-magic scenes. Similarly, in discussing Rameau’s contribution to the development of new expressive techniques in the 1730s and 1740s – his richer orchestration and ‘original approach to scoring’, his ‘novel use of key and harmony as expressive devices connected to a dramatic situation’ (60) – Buch argues that ‘many of these features occur



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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*Eighteenth-Century Music* © Cambridge University Press, 2010  
doi:10.1017/S1478570610000096

GEORGIA J. COWART

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

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008

pp. xxiii + 299, ISBN 978 0 226 11638 9

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*