



CONFERENCES

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OPERA AND POLITICS IN THE ANCIEN RÉGIME

WILLIAMS ANDREWS CLARK MEMORIAL LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, 27–28
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Since Robert Isherwood's *Music in the Service of the King* came out in 1973 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press) musicologists have benefited from a series of critiques by historians reevaluating not only the concept of absolutism but also the exercise of royal influence, the role of the monarch and royal patronage of the arts by recontextualizing them in the French political system as a whole. The influence of these ideas was clearly on display at this conference, demonstrating a flowering of research in this sphere among scholars of various backgrounds and approaches. The conference was hosted by the Clark Library and the UCLA Center for Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Studies and was organized by Olivia Bloechl (UCLA).

Sessions were organized according to topic – the politics of spectacle, of religion and of representation and reception – with an additional session focusing on the late reign of Louis XIV and the regency of Philippe II d'Orléans (1715–1722). In spite of the papers' diversity, there was considerable thematic overlap, making for fruitful discussion, particularly with the generous time allotments of forty minutes for papers and twenty minutes for discussion. Over the course of the conference it became clear that while research on the use of spectacle as a political tool by the monarch continues to be fertile ground, the reading of opera as a reflection of broader social currents – both within and outside the court – holds possibilities for many new insights. While a number of papers dealt with operatic topics as mirrors of social practices, political developments or contemporary ideas, others dealt with the influence of art on political life itself.

The first session focused on the period of Louis XIV's Dutch War (1672–1678). John S. Powell (University of Tulsa; 'The Metamorphosis of *Psyché* (1671)') presented a detailed picture of the role played by Lully's *Psyché* in machinations leading up to the war, particularly those directed against Louis's soon-to-be opponents. During the king's inspection of preparations at Dunkerque, he ordered a 'feste belliqueuse' that featured excerpts from *Psyché* praising the monarch as peacemaker. The production was a tactical if not artistic success, as it attracted attention from both the foreign press and the Dutch army, who could hear the *divertissements* of Mars accompanied by a salvo of eighty canon. Rose A. Pruiksma (Lewiston, Maine; 'Louis XIV's Wars, Propaganda, *Divertissement* and *tragédie en musique*') took a fresh approach to the topic of war in Lully's operas, focusing on *Thésée* (1675). Although most discussions of Lully's operas have concentrated on the role of the hero as a reflection of the *gloire* imputed to the king, Pruiksma pointed out that heroic roles also reflect the experience of the male aristocracy. Although often portrayed as hapless courtiers forced into taking the role of *galant* gentlemen, many court nobles depended on their skill as soldiers for their success with the sovereign. Thus *divertissements* during war served not only to project monarchical power, but also as models of a more general heroism and masculinity and, in the ballet *entrées*, as images of the organized action required for military order.

The Friday afternoon session, 'Politics of Religion at the Opéra', included three lectures. Charles Dill (University of Wisconsin-Madison; '*Unigenitus* at the Opéra') explored the parallels drawn between controversies over opera and the political divisions caused by *Unigenitus*, the Papal Bull of 1713 condemning Jansenism. The frequent usage of this parallel in opera reception not only indicates the seriousness with which the issue was taken but also sheds light on attempts to formulate a critical language for music. The central talk of the session was given by William Weber (California State University, Long Beach), whose work on the social history of eighteenth-century music, musical taste and reception has been a major source of inspiration for musicological inquiry. Although Weber's paper, 'Opera as National or Cosmopolitan in Comparative Perspective, 1750–89', did not address religion or even specifically opera, it provided a useful



overview of the way in which tensions between native and foreign music and musical styles played out across Europe in the later eighteenth century. Through an analysis of concert programmes and their political contexts, Weber detailed the diversity of issues behind increasingly cosmopolitan concert repertoires. Geoffrey Burgess (Eastman School of Music; 'Enlightening Harmonies: Rameau's *corps sonore* and the Voice of God') traced the influence of Enlightenment views on religion in Rameau's operas through the composer's reinscriptions of the Lullian tradition of the oracle. Oracular statements in Lully's operas were typically accompanied by a chordal halo of strings, also associated with the gods (and, politically, with the heritage of Louis XIV). While a number of *tragédies en musique* made use of this musical topic, Rameau began to use a new manifestation of the divine after 1745 that was associated with his concept of the *corps sonore*. As the concept became increasingly central in Rameau's theoretical work as an incarnation of divine order, Rameau invoked it in his operas for supernatural qualities as an arpeggiated harmonic series or a widely spaced major chord. In both guises it was associated with moments of divine enlightenment, creation or light.

The Saturday morning session, 'The Politics of Representation and Reception', consisted of three papers. Olivia Bloechl (UCLA; 'Choral Lament and the Politics of Collective Mourning') noted parallels between the on-stage behaviour in scenes of public mourning and social codes governing such expressions of grief. Choral laments reflect public grieving because the chorus typically acts as 'the public'. In these contexts, questions of propriety serve as dramatic markers: it is important not only who is permitted to speak, but how they speak. Not only do high-ranking characters typically lead mourning, but the quality of mourning often reflects the type of character: marginal types (exotic, foreign, female) often express the more extreme sentiments, while heroic types stay within rational bounds. Such choruses can also mimic public confessions or punishments. Raphaëlle Legrand (Université Paris Sorbonne-Paris IV; 'Political Subtext in Rameau's Operas') pointed out that there are various levels on which parallels between the plots of Rameau's operas and their political context can be read. Indeed, it is entirely possible that Rameau and/or his librettists deliberately created these different levels to stimulate public interest. One of the most complex problems was raised by the traditional association between the heroism attributed to the monarch and the heroes of operas. The tension between the carefully crafted image of Louis XIV as warrior-lover and the behaviour of Louis XV, who preferred private indoor activities, required careful negotiation on the part of Rameau's librettists, at times both provoking negative public reaction and necessitating changes to the *livrets*. Downing Thomas (University of Iowa; 'Taste and Politics in the *Querelle des Bouffons*') pointed out that the use of ideas in the famous *querelle* was not as straightforward as it is often presented. Although it was the *philosophes* whose new ideas formed the basis of the arguments by the pro-Italian 'Coin de la Reine', new ideas concerning music's effect on the body came to the fore in response to Rousseau's arguments concerning language. These ideas were not employed by the *philosophes* but by the pro-French members of the supposedly traditionalist 'Coin du Roy'.

The last session, 'Opera in the Late Reign and the Regency', dealt with different aspects of the reaction against the cultural politics of Louis XIV. My lecture (Don Fader, University of Alabama; '*Le Régent en Bacchus?* Philippe d'Orléans's Cultural Politics and *Penthée* (1703)') demonstrated the depth of libertine intellectual influence on the court of Philippe II d'Orléans (Regent under Louis XV) and his political use of the arts. *Penthée*, whose music was composed by Philippe himself and whose *livret* was written by the libertine poet Charles-Auguste, marquis de La Fare, presents the victory of Bacchanalian ecstasy over the Apollonian order of king and state evoked by many works under royal patronage. These aims are reflected not only in the opera's plot but also in Philippe's music, which indulges in distinctly non-Lullian dissonance and chromaticism, both for purely musical pleasure and for expressive effect. The concluding paper, 'Campra, Watteau, and the Ideology of Fête', given by Georgia J. Cowart (Case Western Reserve University), focused on Watteau's appropriation of anti-monarchical satire from various Parisian comic theatres and from the Opéra, where he worked early in his career. Pieces performed at these theatres (and particularly in the genre of *opéra-ballet* at the Opéra) took over many of the *commedia dell'arte* characters and themes from the *comédie italienne*, which had been closed on Louis XIV's orders in 1697. Cowart demonstrated a number of pictorial links between various paintings by Watteau and satirical scenes from *opéras-ballets* by André



Campra, in which ordinary people stand in for the king and comic characters replace the heroes or gods that had been associated with Louis XIV in Lully's ballets and operas. The increasing prominence of these characters reflects the artistic interests of a new public audience rather than the representation of monarchical power.

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JOHANN MATTHESON ALS VERMITTLER UND INITIATOR: WISSENSTRANSFER UND DIE ETABLIERUNG NEUER DISKURSE IN DER ERSTEN HÄLFTE DES 18. JAHRHUNDERTS

STAATS- UND UNIVERSITÄTSBIBLIOTHEK CARL VON OSSIETZKY, HAMBURG, 25–28 MARCH 2009

Johann Mattheson – Hamburg composer, singer, secretary to Sir John Wich, the English ambassador to Hamburg, and, first and foremost, writer on music – is considered to be one of the most significant, perhaps the most significant music theorist of the eighteenth century. Not least because of their quantity (almost sixty monographs and various other publications), his writings have served as vital sources for the understanding of baroque music in Protestant north Germany. Although scholars have sporadically aimed at extending the image of Mattheson, for instance by pointing to his role as a diplomat's secretary (see *New Mattheson Studies*, ed. George J. Buelow and Hans Joachim Marx (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)) or as the agent of sensualism in Germany (see Laurenz Lütteken, 'Matthesons Orchesterschriften und der englische Sensualismus', *Die Musikforschung* 60/3 (2007), 203–213), his intellectual activities outside the field of music have been thus far neglected. (Further evidence of these activities can be found in the long list 'Texte ohne musikalischen Bezug' (Texts without Musical Reference) that Klaus Pietschmann assembled for the 'Mattheson' entry in the new *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Personenteil, column 1338).)

The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft is financing a three-year project that began in 2007, 'Johann Mattheson als Vermittler und Initiator: Wissenstransfer und die Etablierung neuer Diskurse in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts' (Johann Mattheson as Mediator and Initiator: The Transfer of Knowledge and the Establishing of New Discourses in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century), directed by Wolfgang Hirschmann (Institut für Musikwissenschaft, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg) and Bernhard Jahn (Institut für Germanistik, Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg). As part of this, Mattheson's literary Nachlass, held in the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky, has been digitally indexed by Dominik Stoltz (student research assistant to the project). Then, in March 2009, Hirschmann and Jahn hosted a conference in tandem with Jürgen Neubacher (director of the music department of the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg). The conference, dedicated to the 'totality of Mattheson's oeuvre' and the 'manifold orders and practices of knowledge in which he participated and that became an essential basis of his new music-theoretical approach', invited presenters to reconsider the composer and writer on music in light of his achievements as a publicist, translator, diplomat and moralist. Thus the concept behind the conference drew on current research trends that, as Jahn pointed out in his introductory remarks, emphasize the relevance of the transfer of knowledge and the creative integration – rather than the exclusion – of foreign elements into a cultural region's identity. In this light, Hirschmann stated, Mattheson's style of eclectic thinking, which he had adopted from early Enlightenment thinkers such as Johann Christoph Sturm and Christian Thomasius – his openness towards different styles of music (French and Italian), critical examination of traditions and authorities, and synthesis of separate theories – can be considered to have been an effective catalyst for such transfer and transformation. Because of this