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The French Opera-Ballet in the Early 18th Century: Problems of Definition and Classification

By JAMES R. ANTHONY

IN THE INTRODUCTION to his exhaustive study of the operas of Rameau, Paul-Marie Masson described the creation of the opera-ballet as the only significant achievement in French dramatic music in the period between the death of Lully (1687) and the first performance of Rameau's *Hippolyte* (1733).¹

A study of the writings of the aestheticians and encyclopedists, a perusal of the influential, although biased, *Mercure de France*, and a careful reading of the *livrets* attest that, in the opinion of the 18th century, André Campra and his librettist, Houdar de La Motte, had created a genre "tout neuf"² with their opera-ballet, *L'Europe galante* (1697). If it is true that the opera-ballet did manifest a "changement de goût" and a "nouvelle orientation des esprits,"³ and if Cahusac in 1754 could compare the creation of Campra and La Motte with "jolis Watteau,"⁴ it is curious that there has been no systematic study of the opera-ballet as a genre.⁵

There is little doubt of the popularity of the opera-ballet during the first quarter of the 18th century. In fact, *L'Europe galante* was performed, at least in part, as late as 1775, and Campra's *Les Fêtes vénitienes* (1710) was revived with success in the 1750's. Nicolas Boindin, in his *Lettres historiques sur tous les Spectacles de Paris* (1719), observed that an opera-ballet would have as much chance to fail as a tragedy to succeed.⁶ The numerous critics of the genre served only to emphasize its popularity—

¹ Paul-Marie Masson, *L'Opéra de Rameau* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1930), p. 38.

² Louis de Cahusac, "Ballet," *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean D'Alembert (Lausanne: Chez des Sociétés Typographiques, 1781), Vol. IV, p. 281.

³ Maurice Barthélemy, *André Campra* (Paris: Picard et Cie., 1957), p. 46.

⁴ Cahusac, *La Danse ancienne et moderne, ou Traité historique de la Danse* (The Hague: J. Neulme, 1754), Vol. III, p. 108.

⁵ To date, the most helpful modern sources for any serious study of the opera-ballet are the following: Lionel de La Laurencie, "André Campra, Musicien profane," *L'Année musicale* III (1913), pp. 153-205; de La Laurencie, "Notes sur la Jeunesse d'André Campra," *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* X (1908/09), pp. 159-258; Paul-Marie Masson, "Le Ballet héroïque," *La Revue musicale* IX, No. 8 (1928), pp. 132-154; Masson, "Les Fêtes vénitienes d'André Campra," *Revue de Musicologie* XIII (1932), pp. 127-146, 214-226; and Renée Viollier, "Un Opéra-ballet au XVIII^e Siècle," *Revue de Musicologie* XVI (1935), pp. 78-86. See also my dissertation, *The Opera-ballets of André Campra: A Study of the First Period French Opera-ballet* (University of Southern California Diss., 1964).

⁶ Quoted in Masson, *L'Opéra* . . . , p. 24.

thus, Voltaire's hyperbolic complaint that if his tragedy, *Cinna*, were performed one or two times, *Les Fêtes vénitienes* would play for three months.⁷

The confusing, vague, and contradictory attempts to define the opera-ballet in many 19th- and 20th-century sources make it necessary to attempt a clear and precise definition at this point. There seems to have been no confusion in the minds of most French 18th-century writers regarding the structure of the genre. Marmontel in the *Encyclopédie* wrote, "L'Opéra-ballet, c'est-à-dire, un spectacle composé d'actes détachés quant à l'action, mais réunis, sous une idée collective, comme les Sens, les Eléments."⁸ Rousseau described the opera-ballet as consisting of as many separate subjects as there are acts.⁹

Cahusac summed up the difference between the opera-ballet and the *tragédie lyrique* as follows:

L'Opéra imagina par Quinault est une grande action suivie pendant le cours de cinq actes. C'est un tableau d'une composition vaste, tels que ceux de Raphaël et de Michel-Ange. Le spectacle trouvé par La Motte est un composé de plusieurs actes différents, qui représentent chacun une action mêlée de divertissements de chant et de danse. Ce sont de jolis Vateau [*sic*] des miniatures piquantes, qui exigent toute la précision du dessin, les grâces du pinceau et tout le brillant du coloris.¹⁰

A contemporary of André Campra, the librettist and poet Pierre-Charles Roy, best summed up the wide gulf which separated the Lullian *tragédie-lyrique* and the opera-ballet: "Cette sorte de drame . . . qui présente des sujets traité chacun en un acte avec un divertissement, . . . plaît par la variété, et sympathise avec l'impatience française."¹¹

Most 18th-century definitions emphasized two structural features of the opera-ballet: (1) each act or *entrée* (the terms "acte" and "entrée" were used interchangeably when referring to the opera-ballet) has its own independent action; and (2) each act includes at least one *divertissement* of songs and dances. Therefore, the roots of the genre may be traced to both the opera and the 17th-century *ballet à entrées* in which each act developed its own intrigue.

The single source of confusion may be found in the use of the term

⁷ "Dissertation sur la Tragédie ancienne et moderne," *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, ed. Louis Moland (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1877-1885), Vol. IV, p. 493.

⁸ Jean François Marmontel, "Prologue," *Encyclopédie . . .*, XXVII, p. 535.

⁹ *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. IV: *La Nouvelle Heloïse* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1883), p. 198.

¹⁰ *La Danse . . .*, III, p. 108. Throughout the 18th century French *littérateurs* customarily referred to an opera by librettist rather than by composer. Thus one reads about the works of Quinault, La Motte, Fuzelier, etc. This indicates the importance the French placed on the *livret* as a literary genre. It was as literary works that the *livrets* of Quinault were judged during the 17th and 18th centuries. They were read as tragedies quite apart from their musical associations. See Etienne Gros, *Philippe Quinault* (Paris: Edouard Champion, 1926), p. 647.

¹¹ Quoted by Masson, *L'Opéra . . .*, p. 24.

“opera-ballet” itself. It appears to have been only rarely employed in the early 18th century and was not used consistently even after 1750. Because of the increased emphasis on the *divertissement*, and the basic relationship between the new genre and the *ballet à entrées*, it is not surprising to find many 18th-century writers using the generic term “ballet” to include the new form. The ambiguity was sensed by Cahusac, who reasoned that the irregularity of having each act a complete unit made it difficult to apply the term “poème dramatique” to the *livret*. He suggested the word “spectacle” as a more appropriate term.¹² However, neither “spectacle” nor “ballet-lyrique”¹³ was able to supplant the all-inclusive “ballet.”¹⁴

The term “opera-ballet” came into more general use in the 19th century, and the distinctions which characterize the genre, so carefully delineated by 18th-century writers, were quickly forgotten. Thus, in the 18th century, a general and ambiguous title was accorded a precise definition; in the 19th century, a title inherently precise was used by most writers in a general and ambiguous way. The basic structural distinction—an independent dramatic action for each *entrée*—was seldom recognized. This led to such ambiguities as the classification of Campra’s opera-ballet, *Les Ages*, in Félix Clément’s *Dictionnaire lyrique ou Histoire des Opéras*; Clément listed the work twice, and for each listing he gave a different description. On page 12 *Les Ages* appears as an “opéra-ballet en trois actes,” and on page 75 *Le Ballet des Ages* is defined as an “opéra en trois entrées.”¹⁵

Standard reference sources, such as the Riemann *Opern-Handbuch* and the Lajarte *Bibliothèque musicale du Théâtre de l’Opéra*, indiscrimi-

¹² “Opéra,” *Encyclopédie . . .*, XXIII, p. 715.

¹³ A term apparently invented by Bricaire de La Dixmerie in his *Les Deux Ages du Goût et du Génie française sous Louis XIV et sous Louis XV* (The Hague: Lacombe, 1769), p. 45.

¹⁴ As if to further plague the contemporary scholar, the term “ballet” was also used to describe works which resembled the opera-ballet in subject matter but which used one continuous dramatic action and therefore evolved from the 17th century *ballet mélodramatique*. During the period under discussion (1687–1733), seven continuous-action ballets were performed at the Académie Royale de Musique.

¹⁵ (Paris: Larousse, 1869). See also Arthur Pougin’s important study of the works of André Campra in which the continuous-action ballet, *Aréthuse*, was classified as a “ballet-opéra” (p. 345), and the opera-ballet, *Les Muses*, was classified both as an “opéra-ballet” (p. 345) and a “ballet-opéra” (p. 323). (“André Campra,” *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 1861.)

More exact in their definitions were some of the French scholars who specialized in the *preromantic* period and to whom we owe the only modern edition of three of the most important opera-ballets, *i.e.*, *Chefs d’Oeuvres classiques de l’Opéra français*, ed. Theodore de Lajarte et al. (40 vols.; Paris: Theodore Michaëlis, ca. 1880). This collection includes voice and piano reductions of the following opera-ballets: André-Cardinal Destouches’ *Les Eléments*, ed. Vincent D’Indy; Campra’s *L’Europe galante*, ed. Lajarte; and his *Les Fêtes vénitienes*, ed. Alexandre Guilmant. Although lacking in precise information on the original orchestration, the editions by D’Indy and Guilmant conform to the original, printed editions. Lajarte’s edition, unfortunately, contains several lacunae and errors.

nately applied the term to works as disparate as Lully's ballet, *Le Temple de la Paix* (1685), and the opera *Zéphyr et Flore* (1688) by Lully's sons.

The 20th century inherited the careless application of the term that had plagued the preceding century. Perhaps the most important and successful contemporary attempt to classify the term "opera-ballet" (as well as related genre such as the "ballet-héroïque," "acte de ballet," and "fragments") is found in Masson's brilliant study of the *ballet-héroïque*. Quite correctly Masson demanded that the term "opera-ballet" be reserved for those works that do not have a continuous dramatic action but rather have "autant de sujets différents qu'il y a d'actes dans la pièce."¹⁶ But in spite of the pioneer work of Masson, few contemporary writers are careful to reserve the term for this characteristic genre. Lionel de La Laurencie, in the generally excellent summary of this period in his "La Musique française de Lully à Gluck,"¹⁷ followed his correct definition with incorrect applications. Mouret's *Le Temple de Gnide*, his *Les Amours de Ragonde*, and Campra's *Le Carnaval de Venise* all have continuous action. After citing Lully's *Cadmus* (a *tragédie-lyrique*) as an opera-ballet in such a recent work as the Fasquelle *Encyclopédie de la Musique*, the author employed the same term to define *L'Europe galante* and *Les Fêtes vénitiennes*.¹⁸

Among English language sources, Lang did not define the genre and labeled it "ballet-opera,"¹⁹ while *Grove* does not contain the term in either the article on opera or that on ballet. Bukofzer gave no definition,²⁰ and Alfred Oliver, in an otherwise excellent study, wrote that "it was not until 1697, with La Motte's and Campra's *L'Europe galante*, that the ballet made its reappearance on the French stage . . . This led directly to the opera-ballet of Rameau's invention, principal among which was *Platée* [*sic*]." ²¹

Although *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* has informative articles dealing with such opera-ballet composers as Campra, Destouches, and Mouret (all by French scholars), it has no listing under "Balletoper" or "opera-ballet." In the article on ballet there is no mention of the genre,

¹⁶ *Revue musicale* IX (1928), 133.

¹⁷ *Encyclopédie de la Musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatoire*, ed. A. Lavignac and La Laurencie (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1925), Vol. III, Part I, p. 1365. See also Charles-Theodore Malherbe, who correctly defined the opera-ballet and cited *L'Europe galante* as a "sorte de modèle," and then, by including Destouches' *Le Carnaval et la Folie* (a continuous-action ballet), contradicted his carefully worded definition: *Jean-Philippe Rameau, Oeuvres complètes*, ed. C. Malherbe (Paris: Durand et Cie., 1902), Vol. VII, p. xxxvii.

¹⁸ "Ballet," *Encyclopédie de la Musique . . .*, ed. François Michel (Paris: Fasquelle, 1958), Vol. I, p. 335.

¹⁹ *Music in Western Civilization* (New York, 1941), p. 538.

²⁰ *Music in the Baroque Era* (New York, 1947), p. 254.

²¹ *The Encyclopedists as Critics of Music* (New York, 1947), p. 74. *Platée* is a *comédie-ballet* and is one of the most important predecessors of the *opera buffa* in France.

but it is briefly described, without reference to composers or titles, in Wilhelm Pfannkuch's article on opera.²² Robert Haas's *Die Musik des Barocks* mentions *L'Europe galante* and *Les Fêtes vénitienes* only in the bibliography following the chapter on Lully. In Ernst Bücken's *Die Musik des Rokokos und der Klassik*, one paragraph treats the opera-ballet under the general title of "Pastoraloper." There is no mention of *L'Europe galante*, and a small pictorial reproduction of a scene from *Les Fêtes vénitienes* suffices to justify the inclusion of this work in the index.

It must be apparent, therefore, that no systematic study of the opera-ballet can take place without a carefully delineated, historically sound definition. To summarize: the opera-ballet, a mixed genre containing elements from both the opera and the court ballet, is characterized by the presence of an independent dramatic action for each act and by the inclusion of at least one *divertissement* of songs and dances in each act.

In applying this definition I have succeeded in identifying only eighteen opera-ballets performed at the Académie Royale de Musique between the years 1697 (*L'Europe galante*) and 1735 (*Les Indes galantes*). The table following lists these opera-ballets by chronology, title, composer, and librettist.²³

Although all the opera-ballets in this table conform to the above definition, it is possible to make a sub-classification on the basis of subject. The first nine opera-ballets (with the exception of *Le Triomphe des Arts*) substituted believable contemporary characters for the mythological deities and heroes of the *tragédie-lyrique*. A genuine comic intrigue as opposed to occasional comic scenes was introduced on the French lyric stage. The *petits-mâîtres*, the amorous ladies, and the watchful confidantes engaged in a lively intrigue that charmed the hedonistic audiences of the Regency,²⁴ and the changing situations with each new act "sympathise avec l'impatience française."²⁵

²² "Oper," MGG, Vol. X, col. 19.

²³ The *preramiste* period officially ends with Rameau's *Hippolyte* of 1733. However, Rameau's first opera-ballet was *Les Indes galantes* of 1735. The principal 18th-century sources used in compiling the table were as follows: the *Recueil général des Opéras*, ed. J. N. de Francini (Paris: J. B. C. Ballard, 1703-1745); Claude and François Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des Théâtres de Paris* (Paris: Lambert, 1756); La Vallière, *Ballets, Opéra, et autres Ouvrages lyriques par Ordre chronologique depuis leur Origine* (Paris: C. J. Baptiste Bauche, 1760); Durey de Noinville, *Histoire de l'Académie Royale de Musique en France* (Paris: C. A. Duschesne, 1757); and Antoine de Leris, *Dictionnaire portatif historique et littéraire des Théâtres* (Paris: C. A. Jombert, 1754).

²⁴ It is true, according to strict chronology, that the Regency did not begin until the death of Louis XIV in 1715; however, the so-called Regency style and mood prevailed during the final years of the old monarch's reign. The King rarely attended the theater or opera, and the court at Versailles under the puritanical aegis of Mme. de Maintenon took on the demeanor of a convent. Louis Réau pointed out that in the visual and plastic arts, as well, the "art du XVIII^e siècle s'annonce bien avant la mort de Louis XIV: prenons garde que la majeure partie de l'oeuvre de Watteau appartient à la fin du règne du Grand Roi." See *Histoire de la Peinture française au XVIII^e Siècle* (Paris: Librairie nationale d'Art et d'Histoire, 1925), Vol. I, p. xv.

²⁵ French "impatience" was such that new *entrées* were often substituted for

TABLE
 CHRONOLOGY, TITLE, COMPOSER, AND LIBRETTIST OF OPERA-BALLETS
 (1697-1735)

Title	First Performance	Composer	Librettist
1. <i>L'Europe galante</i>	10.24.1697	Campra	La Motte
2. <i>Le Triomphe des Arts</i>	5.16.1700	La Barre	La Motte
3. <i>Les Muses</i>	10.28.1703	Campra	Danchet
4. <i>Les Fêtes vénitienes</i>	6.17.1710	Campra	Danchet
5. <i>Les Amours déguisés</i>	8.22.1713	Bourgeois	Fuzelier
6. <i>Les Fêtes de Thalie</i>	8.19.1714	Mouret	La Font
7. <i>Les Fêtes de l'Eté</i>	6.12.1716	Montéclair	Pellegrin
8. <i>Les Ages</i>	10.9.1718	Campra	Fuzelier
9. <i>Les Plaisirs de la Compagne</i>	8.10.1719	Bertin	Pellegrin
10. <i>Les Fêtes grecques et romaines</i>	7.13.1723	de Blamont	Fuzelier
11. <i>Les Eléments</i>	5.29.1725	Destouches	Roy
12. <i>Les Stratagèmes de l'Amour</i>	3.28.1726	Destouches	Roy
13. <i>Les Amours des Dieux</i>	9.16.1727	Mouret	Fuzelier
14. <i>Les Amours des Déeses</i>	8.9.1729	Quinault	Fuzelier
15. <i>Le Triomphe des Sens</i>	6.5.1732	Mouret	Roy
16. <i>L'Empire de l'Amour</i>	4.14.1733	de Brassac	Moncrif
17. <i>Les Graces</i>	5.5.1735	Mouret	Roy
18. <i>Les Indes galantes</i>	8.23.1735	Rameau	Fuzelier

It was in 1754 that Cahusac stated categorically that “La Motte, en créant un genre tout neuf, aqut l’avantage de se faire copier à son tour *L’Europe galante* est le premier de nos ouvrages lyriques qui n’a point ressemblé aux opéras de Quinault.”²⁶ His well-chosen phrases, “completely new” and “no resemblance to the operas of Quinault” must have referred to more than just the formal structure of the opera-ballet. Did they not refer equally to Cahusac’s own happy image of “pretty Watteaus”? Watteau did not people his canvases with mythological and heroic figures, nor did Campra, Mouret, or Montéclair in their opera-ballets use the standard subjects previously employed on the French lyric stage.²⁷

In the preface to Campra’s *Les Ages* (1718), the librettist, Louis

existing ones, thereby dramatizing the flexibility inherent in the format of the opera-ballet. For example, to the original plan of the prologue and three *entrées* of Campra’s *Les Fêtes vénitienes*, five subsequently composed *entrées* were added making a total of nine. Commenting on the number of newly-composed *entrées*, Lajarte wrote, “Nous ne savons ce qu’il faut le plus admirer dans tout ceci: est-ce le courage de l’administration et des acteurs recommençant sans cesse ce travail de Pénélope, ou le public applaudissant, pendant quarante ans, cette espèce de kaléidoscope lyrique?” (*Bibliothèque musicale* . . . , p. 112.)

²⁶ *La Danse* . . . , III, pp. 108-110.

²⁷ However, the prologues even in most opera-ballets remained a refuge for the odd assortment of characters borrowed by French librettists from allegory and classical mythology. In spite of this, such opera-ballets as *L’Europe galante*, *Les Fêtes vénitienes*, and *Les Fêtes de Thalie*, all written before the death of Louis XIV, have, in their prologues, no long and fatuous paeans addressed to the king.

Fuzelier, gave what might be considered a *credo* for those of his contemporaries who would write opera-ballets.

On verra dans ce Ballet, que j'ai cru que Thalie avoit des droits sur la Musique, aussi-bien que Melpomène. Je ne ferai pas une longue Dissertation pour prouver que le genre comique n'est pas incompatible avec les beautés de l'Harmonie. Si le *Ballet des Ages* que je présente au Public le divertit, mon projet est justifié: si la Pièce n'a pas le bonheur de plaire, mon Apologie seroit pour moi un nouveau crime, & pour mes Lecteurs une surcharge d'ennui. Je n'ai prétendu donner qu'un tissu de Maximes enjouées, liées par une intrigue légère, qui put occasionner des Airs gracieux & des Danses variées. C'est ce me semble, ce qui doit constituer le fonds d'un Ballet. Ainsi, je demande seulement aux Critiques judicieux & non passionnez, la grâce de se souvenir de mon intention, en examinant mon Ouvrage & de ne pas me punir trop sévèrement d'avoir craint de les ennuyer.²⁸

A sample follows of Fuzelier's lively dialogue in the *entrée*, "La Jeunesse," of *Les Ages*. In the second scene between Florise and her confidante, Artemise, the younger woman enjoys exploiting the difference between their ages and experience in a manner not unlike that in the scene between Susanna and Marcellina in *The Marriage of Figaro*. "On doit tout sçavoir à votre âge," mocks Florise. "A mon âge? Est-ce a moy que l'on tient ce langage?" retorts Artemise who then adds, with self-righteous indignation:

Je suis encor dans ma belle saison
C'est ce qui fait le prix de mon indifférence
Sachez que ma prudence est un beau fruit de
ma raison
Et non de ma espérance.
.....
Les hommes sont méchant.

Florise interrupts this discourse by commenting on the hatred and indifference for men expressed by her guardian. "C'est donc pour les gronder qu'on vous voit les chercher sans cesse."

It is my opinion that the opera-ballets written from 1697 to 1723 constitute a "first period" characterized by the use of flesh-and-blood personages in recognizable contemporary settings.²⁹ As such, they contributed as much as the early *opéra-comique* to the introduction of some

²⁸ *Recueil général* . . . , XII, 319. Fuzelier's cautious appeal to the critics was undoubtedly motivated by the controversial reception given to Muret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie* (*livret* by Joseph de La Font), first performed on August 19, 1714 at the Académie Royale de Musique. The Prologue of this opera-ballet takes place on stage at the Paris Opera and consists of a polemic between Melpomène (Muse of Tragedy) and Thalie (Muse of Comedy), which is unqualifiedly resolved in favor of Thalie. See Viollier, *Jean-Joseph Muret* (Paris: Librairie Floury, 1950), p. 46.

²⁹ For example, the *entrée*, "L'Opéra," from *Les Fêtes vénitienes* takes place in the theater of the Grimani Palace in Venice; *Entrée* III, "Les Ages rivaux," of *Les Ages* is set in Hamburg; the setting of the prologue of Muret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie* is the stage of the "Théâtre de l'Opéra" in Paris; and the first *entrée*, "La Fille," of the same opera-ballet takes place in Marseilles.

verisimilitude to the French lyric stage. Further, it is only by virtue of its subject matter that *L'Europe galante* may rightly be considered the first opera-ballet. Two years earlier, in October of 1695, Pascal Colasse's *Ballet des Saisons* (*livret* by the Abbé Jean Pic) was performed at the Académie Royale de Musique. This work, which held the stage until 1722, contains a separate intrigue for each act and was undoubtedly the immediate structural model for Campra's *L'Europe galante*.³⁰ But in subject matter it is restricted to the use of the mythological-allegorical personages so characteristic of the period.³¹

The true innovation of Campra and his librettists was to take the formal structure of the *Ballet des Saisons* and dethrone the deities and shopworn characters from mythology. In addition, the "first period" opera-ballet gave the composer and librettist more opportunity to experiment with new dramatic and musical forms.³² This opportunity was bounded by a few short years. On December 2, 1723, the Duke of Orleans died of apoplexy, and young Louis XV was, at age 13, officially King of France. On July 13, 1723, the first performance of Colin de Blamont's *ballet-héroïque, Les Fêtes grecques et romaines* (*livret* by Fuzelier), took place at the Académie Royale de Musique. The end of the "first period" opera-ballet and the end of the Regency followed closely one upon the other.

Fuzelier, in startling contrast to his preface to *Les Ages*, and ignoring completely the subject matter of the "first period" opera-ballet, wrote as follows in his preface to *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines*:

Les Fêtes grecques et romaines forment un Ballet d'une espèce toute nouvelle. . . . La France n'a encore soumis que la Fable à la Musique; l'Italie plus hazardeuse a placé dans les Opéra les evenemens de l'Histoire. Les Scarlattis & les Bonocini ont fait chanter des Heros que Corneille & Racine auroient fait parler. . . .

On a rassemblé dans ce Ballet, les Fêtes de l'Antiquité les plus connues & qui semble les plus favorables au Théâtre & à la Musique. . . .

On a négligé dans ce Ballet, le merveilleux des enchantemens & des descentes de Divinitez. On s'est écarté d'une route frayée depuis longtemps & quelque-fois mal-suivie; on n'apprendra que trop-tôt si on s'est égaré.³³

The divinities, Fuzelier to the contrary, returned in force to the opera and evicted the Don Pedros, the Léonores, the fickle Léandres from the banks of the Seine, the lively *petits-mâtres*, and the confidants of the "first period" opera-ballet who were forced to seek refuge in parodies,

³⁰ Campra acknowledged his debt to Colasse by telescoping the subject matter of two *entrées* from the *Ballet des Saisons* in the charming opera within an opera in *Les Fêtes vénitiennes*.

³¹ Unlike the prologue to *L'Europe galante*, the prologue to Colasse's work includes a 40-page panegyric expressed in the most routine platitudes of the *grand siècle* and addressed to "Louis le plus parfait des Rois."

³² A subsequent article will consider the musico-dramatic innovations found in the opera-ballets of André Campra.

³³ *Recueil général* . . . , XIII, pp. 265-270.

vaudevilles, and the *opéra-comique*. Indeed, in Fuzelier's second *ballet-héroïque*, *Les Amours des Dieux* (music by Mouret) of 1727, all pretense of avoiding the return to mythological subject matter is cast aside. Somewhat apologetically, as though to convince himself, Fuzelier wrote in the *Avertissement* to this opera-ballet that, in spite of the use of mythological characters, "l'ouvrage . . . est absolument dans le genre héroïque."³⁴

The structure of the *ballet-héroïque* is the same as that of the opera-ballet; therefore it may legitimately be considered as a type of opera-ballet.³⁵ Of nine opera-ballets between 1723 and 1735, all but one were clearly in the format of the *ballet-héroïque*³⁶ and might be considered as representing a "second" and final period of the opera-ballet.³⁷

There is no question that the "first period" opera-ballet, at its best, far exceeds the "second" in dramatic originality and freshness of musical idiom. Of the nine examples, the four by André Campra, Mouret's *Les Fêtes de Thalie*, and Montéclair's *Les Fêtes de l'Été* contain much that is worth reviving. One may only speculate on the reasons for the sudden demise of the "first period" opera-ballet. Was it because of the opposition of many aestheticians to comedy on the French lyric stage, or was the return of a king to the French throne sufficient justification for the creation of the *ballet-héroïque* with all the trappings of a monarchical opera? The repeated revivals of the more popular "first period" opera-ballets would indicate that the public itself continued to enjoy them.³⁸

André Campra, who created and virtually exhausted the genre, remained faithful to the mood and tenor of his creation. It will be noted that his last opera-ballet, *Les Ages*, was written in 1718, and, although he lived until 1744, he never again attempted to repeat the great success of *L'Europe galante* or *Les Fêtes vénitiennes*. The reason for this may be that in spite of the popularity of the opera-ballet the prestige of composer and librettist continued to be measured by their *tragédies-lyriques*,³⁹ and

³⁴ *Ibid.*, XIV, p. 125.

³⁵ Masson suggested the term "opera-ballet héroïque" in order to distinguish those *ballets-héroïques* which exhibited the opera-ballet's structure from the few examples which, although labeled "ballet-héroïque," have a continuous dramatic action. See *Revue musicale* IX (1928), p. 133.

³⁶ As regards Destouches' *Les Stratagèmes de l'Amour* (livret by Pierre-Charles Roy), first performed on March 28, 1726, Roy succeeded in introducing comic intrigue into his *livret*. However, he found it necessary to justify this in his *Avertissement*. "Le Public," he wrote, "a décidé que si ce Théâtre admet du Comique, ce ne peut être qu'on Comique noble, & tel que celui qui porte le caractère d'Antiquité." See *Recueil général . . .*, XIV, p. 5.

³⁷ The six opera-ballets of Rameau all may be considered as *ballets-héroïques* whether or not they are so labeled. After the death of Rameau the *ballet-héroïque* gave way to the *ballet en action* and the lyric drama of Gluck. The last example seems to be *L'Union de l'Amour et des Arts* (1773) by Temonnier and Floquet.

³⁸ As late as 1750 the *Mercure de France* was forced to admit that, in spite of a change of taste on the part of the audience, *Les Fêtes vénitiennes* "a toujours eu un grand succès." (*Mercure de France*, July, 1750, p. 177.)

³⁹ Articles XVI and XVII from an ordinance signed by the King at Versailles

repeated failures in this genre might have had a dilatory effect upon Campra after 1718.⁴⁰ Yet, in inventing the opera-ballet he gave to the Regency a medium through which it could observe, in ideal reflection, its own hedonistic pursuits.

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on November 19, 1713, reveal that authors of the text and music of tragedies in five acts would be paid 100 *livres* each for the first ten performances, but that, for ballets, they would receive only sixty *livres* for each of the first ten performances. See Durey de Noinville, *Histoire du Théâtre de l'Opéra en France* (Paris: J. Barbou, 1753), Vol. I, pp. 131–132.

⁴⁰ Only two additional works for the stage were written after this date. They are the *Nouveaux Fragments* (1729) and the *tragédie-lyrique, Achille et Deidamie* (1735). Neither one was a success.