7 Opera, Gender, and Voice

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The invention of opera not only introduced musical, dramatic, and aesthetic innovations, but it also prompted unexpected changes in gender roles and social relationships, in particular the appearance of the first women to sing on the operatic stage as professionals and the rise of the castrato. The stricter gender roles of early modern society meant that a professional female singer appearing in public was perceived to be committing a significant transgression. The public sphere was primarily a male space where men could act professionally and still maintain their honour and prestige, whereas the reputation of a woman who performed on stage was considerably more precarious: her career was likely to be viewed as indistinguishable from prostitution. The embodiment of an object of desire, the female singer was viewed as both threatening and appealing. Crossing the border between public and private spheres was therefore a bold move for a woman and exposed those who did it to all kinds of attacks. In everyday life, chastity, moderation, silence, and invisibility were the major virtues associated with an honest woman. Female opera singers became visible and professionally active by exhibiting themselves onstage; they also transgressed the border between silence and voice.[1]

Castrati were not subjected to the same social bans on their behaviours, though they were certainly ambivalent figures both in gender and sexual terms. Controversies about the morality of opera, bans on women's voices, and the paradoxical figure of the castrato were also influenced by medical discourses on the body, sexuality, and gender. As such, it is necessary first to assess how the body was understood in medical terms and to examine how it defined gender and sex distinctions in the seventeenth century.

Gender, Sex, Voice, and Morality

Until the end of the eighteenth century, natural philosophy and medicine were still largely based on Hippocratic and Galenic doctrines, themselves conceived in accordance with the theory of the humours.[2] Physical and psychological health depended on a balance of blood, phlegm, and yellow

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and black bile. The sexual difference between men and women was determined by 'vital heat', or innate heat: women (and children) had less vital heat than men, and were thus colder and weaker. It was believed that vital heat was produced by the heart: maintained by the *pneuma* (air in motion, breath, and, by extension, spirit or soul in early modern medicine), vital heat circulated throughout the body via the blood vessels. It was considered to be an intelligent organ that controlled and directed all the others, shaping the body and the humours. Sexual difference was not understood as qualitative but quantitative, in gradual and hierarchical terms. The male represented anatomical perfection, while the female was a lesser, imperfect version of man. Both were situated on a continuum, called the 'one-sex model' by historian Thomas Laqueur.[3] The castrato was positioned exactly in the middle: not as perfect as the uncastrated man, but less imperfect than the woman. Due to a lesser amount of vital heat and its ensuing retention within the body, female genitalia were considered identical to male ones, but turned inside instead of outside.[4] These anatomical considerations also determined divergent psychological attributes for both sexes: dry and hot were viewed as male qualities; wet and cold defined female ones. A man was naturally inclined to honour, bravery, and strength of spirit, whereas a woman was predisposed to instability, depravity, and an uncontrollable sensuality. In this one-sex model, male and female did not exist as binary or even distinct sexual entities: being a man or a woman was first and foremost a difference in gender and behaviour, not an ontological difference between the sexes. Moreover, the relative positioning and incremental continuity of the sexes across this one-sex continuum created a space for fluidity, though at the same time gendered and social constructions accentuated the difference between them.[5]

The emergence of the castrato was linked, first, to the ban on women's voices in the church and, second, to the rise of opera.[6] Roger Freitas defines the castrato as a 'temporally extended boy' who embodies a suspension between masculinity and femininity.[7] Physically and spiritually viewed as superior to women, boys represented the supreme ideal of love for men. In the early modern world, friendships, sometimes involving tutoring, between adults and young boys were common. Such relationships could remain chaste, be eroticised, or also take sexual expression, even though the Church had condemned sodomy as an act against nature since the late Middle Ages.[8] With their round baby faces devoid of facial hair, their soft skin and high voices, castrati embodied the ideal boy. Castration prevented the production of sex hormones that normally stopped bone growth, which explains why castrati were usually taller than average and

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had extraordinary lung capacity. Trained since childhood, their only viable career path was to become professional singers. That said, some did perform diplomatic missions, working as spies for their patrons, thus using their singing career as a ladder to achieve a better position in society.[9]

The castrato did not occupy the middle ground of the continuum alone; it was also populated by ambivalent creatures such as hermaphrodites, effeminate men, and virile women. Stories of spontaneous physiological sex changes abounded, underscoring how the passage from one end of the continuum to the other could easily be achieved.[10] It should come as no surprise that cross-dressing games and ambivalent figures such as the castrato and the female professional singer were key to the popularity of opera in the seventeenth century.

From Aristotle until the early eighteenth century, the voice was viewed merely as a wind instrument. It was only in 1741 that the French surgeon and anatomist Antoine Ferrein discovered the vocal cords – a term he also coined, describing his discovery in his treatise *De la formation de la voix de l'homme* (1741). Before the eighteenth century, it was widely believed that women and children had high voices because they were weak and could only move a small quantity of air, while men's low voices were attributable to their greater strength. Castrati, again, occupied a middle ground, demonstrating feminine vocal qualities, yet with more strength. According to Galenic medical theories, physical activities such as singing, exercising, playing, or acting onstage produced heat, which was conveyed through the body by the animal spirit. Made of blood and air, the animal spirit originated in the brain and circulated through the whole body by way of the arteries. Its role was to maintain the body's natural heat; it also conveyed the passions, impressing them in the mind and body.

Medically, singing was recommended in several situations, for instance as a form of physical exercise that stimulated the pulse and balanced the humours. It was also thought to be beneficial for digestion and relaxation before sleeping; and it was thought to facilitate childbirth as well.[11] By singing, imperfect creatures such as women or effeminate castrati could increase their bodily temperature, thus becoming similar to men. In so doing, they transgressed a border, stepping into the territory of masculine identity. Advocates of opera as well as its moral detractors considered this transgression either appealing or disgusting, either sensual or threatening: yet everyone agreed on the eroticism conveyed by women performing onstage. The marvellous and sensual effects of song were always described from a masculine point of view and thus always relied on the same trope: seeing and hearing a female singer moved an audience to rapture.

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Medical considerations with misogynist undertones led to the construction of highly differentiated gendered roles in society. Social behaviour was subjected to moral scrutiny, especially for women, and even more so for women who acted as men, such as professional opera singers. Therefore, moral condemnations of theatre and opera were not rare; the most fervid attacks were directed at women performing onstage. In his pamphlet *Il puttanismo romano* (1668) depicting an imaginary conclave of prostitutes electing the pope, the Jesuit Gregorio Leti condemned the nepotism of the papal court and ferociously attacked women playing a public role. Among the latter were aristocrats such as Princess Olimpia Aldobrandini, Queen Christina of Sweden, Mazarin's niece Maria Mancini, and the singer Leonora Baroni:

> Ladies and Whores have almost always been one and the same, and one could not find anyone, apart from some poor peasant who did not understand that under the word Lady is the word Whore, and encompassed under the word Whore is the word Lady. And if you hadn't known it before, understand it now, so you do not make yourself appear to be simple: you will find no other difference but that the Lady is a private Whore and the Whore a public Lady.[12]

It is no coincidence that these noblewomen were also involved in opera patronage.[13] Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli, another Jesuit who authored a book on the danger of keeping company with women, 'especially singers', and no less than six volumes condemning theatre, affirms:

> Our modern comedians and mountebanks, who wish for the effective enticement of the crowd on stage and on the bench, should abandon the practice of presenting women speaking of lascivious love; because it is a means quite dangerous and pernicious to many. I mean that the comedian or mountebank, presenting a frivolous and lasciviously adorned woman for enticement commits a grave error because, even if he does not expect it nor perhaps think of it, nor want to think of it, nonetheless places with real effect a great diabolical and infernal trap before many souls and they are led to the penitential fire of eternal damnation.[14]

Crossing the line between private and public, between silence and singing, led many female singers to be equated, at best, with courtesans and, at worst, with prostitutes. In fact, some of them actually were courtesans, including, for instance, Barbara Strozzi[15] and the Neapolitan prima donna Giulia De Caro, detta La Ciulla (1646–1697). The latter, described as 'singing actress, harmonious whore and princess of the brothel' in a contemporary text, became famous by interpreting ribald songs with a company of mountebanks, abandoning her husband, and becoming a

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member of the Febiarmonici, the first opera company in Naples.[16] Between 1673 and 1675, De Caro had also been impresario of the Teatro S. Bartolomeo, Naples's first opera house. Her career, however, exemplifies the trend of professional singers needing to develop self-fashioning strategies to elevate their reputation – even when not engaged in prostitution.

Myth or reality, notorious rumours of affairs abounded between male and female singers, involving aristocrats or prelates.[17] Scandals did not spare the stages, as is shown by the famous controversy around the production of Domenico Mazzocchi's opera *La Catena d'Adone* (Rome, 1626; libretto by Ottavio Tronsarelli), commissioned by Prince Giovanni Giorgio Aldobrandini (1591–1637). A heated rivalry opposed two famous Roman singers regarded as courtesans, Margherita Costa and Cecca del Padule, about the respective importance of their roles as Venus and the enchantress Falsirena. The scandal grew even further in notoriety, passionately dividing the Roman nobility. Finally, it was resolved by the patron's mother, Olimpia Aldobrandini Borghese the elder, who dismissed both female singers and had them replaced by two castrati.[18]

Singers who were not engaged in prostitution were not spared accusations of debauchery, and had to preserve and defend their moral integrity. It is not surprising, then, that even artistic praise had to be expressed according to masculine standards. For instance, the singer, instrumentalist, and composer Adriana Basile (c. 1580–1583, d. after 1642) and even more so her daughter Leonora Baroni (1611–1670), who had moved to Rome in 1633, were praised by their admirers as 'virtuose',[19] a term that draws on the classic Roman ideal of manliness ('vir') and, later, the Renaissance ideal of masculine 'virtù'. Thus, women or castrati praised as 'virtuosi' involved a transgression, a shift from the feminine to the masculine as they exhibited themselves in the public or semi-public sphere, increasing their body temperature through the act of singing.

Staging the Passions in Italy: Female Singers and Castrati

The first professional women onstage were actresses, such as Isabella Andreini (1562–1604). Along with her husband, she directed a *commedia dell'arte* troupe called *La Compagnia dei Gelosi*, which performed the celebrated *intermedi* of *La Pellegrina* at the wedding of Christina of Lorraine and Gran Duke Ferdinando I de' Medici in Florence in 1589. Isabella was the star of the festivities with her stunning performance of the mad scene in *La pazzia di Isabella*, an improvised comedy in which she

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sang several pieces.[20] She also was the mother-in-law of Virginia Ramponi Andreini (1583–1629/30; known as 'la Florinda'), actress, singer, and poet, and the first wife of Giovanni Battista Andreini, with whom she founded the *Compagnia dei Fedeli*.[21] In Mantua in 1608, during the festivities for the wedding of Francesco Gonzaga and Margherita of Savoy, Ramponi sang the title role in the première of Monteverdi's opera *Arianna* and also played the part of an Ungrateful Lady in the first production of his *Ballo delle ingrate*.[22] Her performance of Arianna's lament was so moving that 'not one lady present failed to shed a tear'.[23]

Tears pouring from the singer onstage and from the female audience clearly allude to humoural humidity in women. As a topos in opera, tears signal the achievement of Aristotelian catharsis through drama.[24] They also represent the submission of women to the will of men and the ritual of lamenting at wedding ceremonies as a mark of women's sacrifice and subjugation to men.[25] Like Ramponi, Anna Renzi (c. 1620–after 1661) – the first prima donna in opera – was famous not only for her virtuoso singing technique but also for her acting skills.[26] She performed exceptionally in Francesco Sacrati's (1605–1650) *La finta pazza* (1641). *Il Cannocchiale per la finta pazza*, an elaborate account of the opera, its machinery, and the singers' performance, described her as follows: 'Signora Anna Renzi from Rome, a young woman as skillful in acting as she is excellent in music, as cheerful in feigning madness as she is wise in knowing how to imitate it, and modest in all her habits.'[27] In the preface to the libretto, Strozzi describes her as 'a most gentle siren, who sweetly steals the heart and charms the eyes and ears of the listeners'.[28] In the description of Sacrati's *Bellerofonte* (Vincenzo Nolfi, 1642), Giulio Del Colle characterises her as the 'true embodiment of music and the only marvel of the stage, who, during the course of the performance first gave vent to, then hid, then disguised, then revealed, and then lamented her amorous passions'.[29]

The fascination exerted by female high voices on audiences was constantly described in erotic terms. Interestingly, the same effect was achieved by castrati but not by lower male voices. The castrato Atto Melani (1626–1714) who had played the role of Achille in *La Finta pazza* along with Renzi, is described in such gendered terms: 'a young castrato from Rome of beautiful appearance, who resembles an Amazon in his mixture of warlike spirit and feminine delicacy'.[30] The following description from *Il Cannocchiale* demonstrates the effect his singing had on his listeners:

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> The youth, who was a most valorous little singer from Pistoia, began to sing so delicately that the souls of the listeners, as if exiting through the portals of the ears, raised themselves to heaven to assist in the enjoyment of such sweetness.[31]

Pietro Della Valle affirms that castrati 'cloaking themselves in the affects, . . . enrapture the listener'.[32] All singers – and especially those with high voices such as female singers and castrati – were often admired for their virtuosity, but the rapture was caused by an association of both aural and visual effects. The affects expressed by the text were not only sung but also staged, appealing to the eyes and the ears of the spectators simultaneously. In his description of the female consorts employed at the courts of Mantua and Ferrara (the *concerto delle donne* developed in late Renaissance, originally at the court of Ferrara), Vincenzo Giustiniani gives us a valuable insight into how these singers had such a powerful effect on their audience:

> Furthermore, they moderated or increased their voices, loud or soft, heavy or light, according to the demands of the piece they were singing; now slow, breaking off with sometimes a gentle sigh, now singing long passages legato or detached, now groups, now leaps, now with long trills, now with short, and again with sweet running passages sung softly, to which sometimes one heard an echo answer unexpectedly. They accompanied the music and the conceit with appropriate facial expressions, glances and gestures, with no awkward movements of the mouth or hands or body, which might not express the conceit of the song.[33]

According to the Neoplatonic theory of love, sight was the sense that allowed the image of the beloved to penetrate the soul: entering through the eyes, it literally took possession of the lover's soul.[34] Female singers and castrati represented symbolic embodiments of the lover onstage: they had a similar effect on their audience. Thus, opera was considered the most appealing expression of the affects, while still considered a threat to the spectators' souls.

Empowering the Female Voice: Francesca Caccini and *La liberazione di Ruggiero* (1625)

Even when women were seen to be transgressing their gendered role by stepping onstage, their presence was certainly acknowledged, whether they were praised or despised. The growing popularity of public opera made them all the more visible, and heard. Composing, however, was an entirely different matter as it was almost exclusively a male domain and

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prerogative. One remarkable exception was Francesca Caccini (1587–1641), who worked at the Medici court in Florence and was the first woman to compose an opera, *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* (*The Liberation of Ruggiero from Alcina's Island*, 1625).[35] She was raised in a musical household; her father Giulio Caccini (1551–1618) was her teacher; her mother Lucia di Filippo Gagnolanti, her stepmother Margherita della Scala, and her sister Settimia (1591–c. 1660) were all gifted singers. Francesca served the Medici from 1607 until 1627 as a singer, instrumentalist, and music teacher; she was also the most prolific female composer of her era. The musician with the highest salary on the Medici payroll, she composed the music to at least thirteen court entertainments. Her unique role as a female composer is undoubtedly linked to the joint female regency (1621–1630) in Florence and to the destinies of two outstanding women, the Grand Duchess Christina of Lorraine, widow of Ferdinando I de' Medici, and her daughter-in-law, the Archduchess Maria Magdalena of Austria, widow of Cosimo II. The contrast between the two of them could not have been more marked. A delicate, elegant French aristocrat with a dominant and controlling attitude towards power, Christina had been the de facto sovereign of Tuscany since 1607 and during her son's reign. Maria Magdalena, on the other hand, was an unusually robust and manly woman – an accomplished dancer, horsewoman, and huntress. Both, however, were united in legitimising their unprecedented female regency, and one privileged means was patronage of the arts. Continuing a Medici tradition of myth-building and self-fashioning through pictorial, musical, and textual productions, the female regents adapted it to the purpose of gender politics by portraying positive models of female leaders; theatrical spectacles played a central role in this campaign. In 1607, Christina commissioned *La Stiava* (*The Female Slave*, libretto by Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger), Francesca's first opera and also her very first composition. Unfortunately the score is lost, but it was described as having 'marvelous music'.[36] The grand duchess was involved in the preparations and had the librettist rewrite the script to transform the female slave from an object of male desire to a sovereign kidnapped by pirates, and from a mute object to a singing subject. The political justification of the female voice was essential to Christina as a legitimisation of her regency: as Cusick puts it, the opera was 'a conquest of disorder by sonic order'.[37]

The Archduchess Maria Magdalena commissioned *La liberazione di Ruggiero dell'isola d'Alcina* in 1625 to celebrate the visit of her Polish nephew, Prince Władysław, hoping to arrange a marriage with her

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daughter Margherita – the plan was destined to fail. The opera was performed at the Villa Poggio Imperiale, the family's summer residence, which had just been redecorated at Maria Magdalena's request with female imagery of Amazon warriors, heroines of ancient history, and female saints. Maria Magdalena attended nearly every rehearsal to maintain control over the production. Drawing on both Ariosto and Tasso, the libretto by Ferdinando Saracinelli (d. 1640) is an allegory of female power, staged as a struggle between two sorceresses to win Ruggiero. The benevolent Melissa eventually succeeds in freeing him from the charms of the evil and sensual Alcina, who has kidnapped him. The character of Ruggiero is utterly passive, prey to the two women's contradictory desires. Allegorically, the opera stages a struggle between chaos and order, between Alcina's uncontrollable and threatening sexuality characterised by her immoderate behaviour, and Melissa's forceful call to duty and eventual restoration of Ruggiero at the head of the Christian armies. Musically, Caccini uses various styles and modes to depict gender. Alcina and her attendants sing in flat keys; Ruggiero and his male attendants sing in sharp keys; the bi-gendered Melissa – first appearing as Atlante, a male warrior, then shifting into the role of a female benevolent sorceress – sings mostly in C natural.[38]

Francesca chose specific musical genres: canzonettas for a trio of sopranos; an evocation of the *concerto delle donne*; elaborate strophic arias for the lovers' duet with ornamentation inspired by her father's collections of monodies, *Le Nuove musiche* (1602) and *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* (1614); musically dispassionate recitatives for the narration; and a five-part madrigal for the chorus of the enchanted plants. To restore masculinity to power, Melissa dissociates herself from her gender: she first appears onstage in male disguise as the non-Christian prince and warrior Atlante and musically appropriates male speech and reasoning.[39]

Published in 1625 and dedicated to Maria Magdalena, *La liberazione* is one of the few operas to have been published at that time, which attests to its political importance. It is also rare for its inclusion of five engravings of stage designs by Alfonso Parigi. One of the political purposes of *La liberazione* had much to do with the legitimisation of Maria Magdalena's regency: intended to contribute to her self-fashioning as a benevolent cross-gendered ruler, the work reinforced her image as the dynastic guardian of Medici sovereignty. Saracinelli's allusion to Maria Magdalena's manly manners must have been unequivocal to the audience. Her call to duty 'Atlante a te se'n vien' ('Atlante is coming to you') is set as a diatonic, slow recitative in a narrow range: it follows the words, emphasising the

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domination of the rational male sphere of the *logos* over the lascivious female sphere of the *melos*. Her speech condemns sensual love, glorifying war and manly duties. She shames Ruggiero for his effeminacy, and calls him to action once he has regained his virility. By adopting a male disguise and voice, Melissa convinces Ruggiero to abandon his lover. Alcina's long lament 'Ferma ferma crudele' ('Stop, stop cruel one') is on the contrary musically excessive and immoderate – two typical female vices. Switching rapidly from intense pain to joy and laughter, the libretto evokes extreme passions, enhanced by a musical setting based on melodic and harmonic extravagances.

Confronting her unfaithful lover in a chromatic complaint, Alcina constantly switches from one affect to another. Florid passages alternate with bursts of anger, erratic melodic motions with grief-stricken lamentations. Extreme dissonances, chromatic passages, and abrupt modal changes characterise her long lament. Failing to regain Ruggiero's love by the beauty of her sensual song, she unleashes demons and fire against him, failing again to avenge herself. On the contrary, the moderate Melissa ultimately triumphs and restores the male power of Ruggiero.

In the hands of two powerful women who desire him, Ruggiero remains effeminate and passive. Overtly emotional and confused by passion, his song acquires a feminine quality in his love duet with Alcina, 'Quanto per dolce'. His vagaries are set to capricious music, featuring erratic changes in the melodic line and in the harmony (see Example 7.1). Melissa reproaches him for his immodesty, a typical feminine flaw: sensual excess has transformed him into a womanish figure.

The Situation in France: Hatred of Castrato Voices

The court of Louis XIV was by no means a gynocentric form of government, and it certainly did not favour female artists as the Florentine regents did. To escape the predatory misogyny of the court, the *précieuses* – women belonging to the French nobility and advocating a new, sophisticated literary style referred to as 'précieux' (precious) – created alternate spaces known as *ruelles* where the arts were cultivated. Their refined language and activities, including parlour games, exuded exquisite elegance and manners. A form of resistance against the coarseness of the Court, the *ruelles* allowed them to discuss controversial political topics, focusing on women's independence from social and sexual submission, and on improving their access to knowledge.[40] The *air de cour* was their favoured musical genre, much more than opera, which was strongly tied to the politics of absolutism.

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Example 7.1 Francesca Caccini, *La liberazione di Ruggiero dal'isola d'Alcina, baletto* (Florence, 1625), Ruggiero, 'Quanto per dolce' (Florence: Pietro Cecconcelli, 1625), mm. 138–62; 223–37

One exceptionally talented woman who performed regularly at Versailles – the first and only female composer to write a *tragédie en musique* – was Élisabeth-Claude Jacquet de La Guerre (1665–1729). A child prodigy born into a family of musicians, she performed on the

Example 7.1 (*cont.*)

harpsichord from the age of five and sang at the court of Louis XIV under the protection of his mistress, Madame de Montespan. In 1684, she married the organist Martin de La Guerre and left the court to give lessons and concerts in Paris. In 1691 she wrote a ballet for the King, *Les Jeux à l'honneur de la victoire* (music lost).[41] *Céphale et Procris*, her only *tragédie en musique*, was performed in 1694 in Paris at the Théâtre du Palais Royal, but it met with little success. Its failure can be attributed to several factors, the first of which was a confused plot with weaknesses in the libretto written by Joseph-François Duché de Vancy, a protégé of the king's morganatic wife, Madame de Maintenon, but not the best poet.[42] Second, in the 1690s, the king, influenced by the religious conservatism of Madame de Maintenon, had started to show less interest in opera. Third, the church

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intensified its attacks on the theatre and particularly opera in 1693, condemning it as inappropriate and excessively sensuous.[43]

Duché's libretto does not feature strong female characters, but rather a love triangle with traditional gender roles. Céphale and Procris' love is thwarted by the gods, who declare that Procris will marry Borée. Attempting to intervene in a fight between her two male rivals, Procris is inadvertently killed by Céphale. Musically, the overall structure of this opera follows the conventions of the *tragédie en musique* of Lully and Quinault. The modal organisation – its style and structure – adheres to and depicts the characters' passions but does not establish gender distinctions, as was the case in Caccini's opera. About to be married to Borée, Procris invokes death to escape her destiny in a lament, 'Funeste mort, donnez-moy du secours', set to the descending tetrachord in F with many dissonances illustrating her defeat.

Jacquet de La Guerre was the only woman to appear among the composers listed in Évrard Titon du Tillet's chronicle *Le Parnasse françois* (1732). However, Titon du Tillet mentions several other women with less important positions, mostly singers on the Parisian stage, where professional female singers did not have to share the limelight with castrati, as was the case in Italy. The French distaste for castrati was first and foremost moral and sexual; aesthetic considerations only came second. None of their detractors objected to the quality and virtuosity of their singing, but the mutilation they endured and the resulting gender ambiguity caused physical disgust among women and sexual anxieties among men.[44] Castrati's physical appearance and their manners were perceived as extravagant by the French, whose culture privileged language and declamation over sheer vocal beauty. Castrati seemed unconvincing from a dramaturgical point of view, especially in cross-dressed or heroic male roles. The poet and librettist Pierre Perrin (1620–1675) described them as 'the horror of women and the laughing stock of men' and advised banning castrati from opera, where they offended decorum and verisimilitude.[45] Moreover, contrary to Italian practice, the French did not privilege high-pitched voices, and the pure vocality embodied by the female singer was frowned upon: the female voice was perceived as a threat to *logos*, since it conveyed overwhelming passions that deformed the semantic content of the text.[46]

Anne Chabanceau de La Barre (1628–1688), daughter of the organist Pierre de La Barre, sang in the French production of Luigi Rossi's *Orfeo* in 1646 and Francesco Cavalli's *Ercole amante* in 1662 as La Bellezza (The Beauty).[47] She was praised for her excellence in both the French and Italian styles, as well as in court ballets and Italian operas. Queen Christina invited

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her to the court of Sweden in late 1652 or early 1653, where she remained until the queen's abdication in 1654; she then briefly performed at the court of Denmark.[48] In 1661 she was appointed *ordinaire de la musique du roi* – the first time such a title was granted to a female musician.[49] Her marriage in 1667 signalled the end of her career, as was the tradition for female singers once married.

Marie Le Rochois (c. 1658–1728) sang at the Paris Opéra from 1678 until 1698, where she premièred all the major female roles in several of Lully's operas – *Proserpine* (1680), Mérope in *Persée* (1682), Arcabonne in *Amadis* (1684), Angélique in *Roland* (1685), *Armide* (1686), and Galatée in the *pastorale héroïque Acis et Galatée* (1686). Her portrayal of Armide made her famous and caused quite a stir. The French critic Jean Laurent Le Cerf de la Viéville (1674–1707) affirmed that 'he had never been moved so deeply' and that he still shivered when he remembered Le Rochois's marvellous voice and performance.[50] Titon du Tillet describes her as

> the most perfect model for declamation who had appeared on stage. . . . Even though she was fairly short, very dark, and looked very ordinary outside of the theatre, with eyes close together which were, however, large, full of fire, and capable of expressing all the passions, she effaced all the most beautiful and more attractive actresses when she was on stage.[51]

On the other hand, François Raguenet, an ardent defender of the Italian style, wrote in his *Parallèle des Italiens et des Français* (1702) that 'if a principal actress such as Le Rochois should step aside, not only Paris but all of France would not be able to find another one that could replace her'.[52] In the English translation of Raguenet's text (1709), the translator added that Le Rochois was 'a wretched Actress, and sang insufferably out of Tune'.[53] In Titon's description, however, Le Rochois fell in line with French expectations, advocating more realistic staging and less florid singing.

Marie-Louise Desmatins (fl. 1682–c. 1708) sang together with Le Rochois in several secondary roles from Lully's tragédies, alternating with her in the title role of Destouches's *Issé* (1697), a *pastorale héroïque*. She sang Médée in Lully's *Thésée* in the 1698 revival and the title-role in *Armide* in 1703. Although Desmatins is referenced in very few sources, she is prominently featured in *La musique du diable ou le Mercure Galant dévalisé* (Paris: Robert le Turc, 1711). Just as the Italian Jesuits had before, this cautionary pamphlet criticised opera and the decadence of theatre. *La musique du diable* was written as an attack on women performing onstage and offers a satirical depiction of an afterlife in hell in which Desmatins, together with Lully and the most famous musicians of the king, are

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transformed into porpoises.[54] Rumoured to have had her fat removed by a butcher, Desmatins then organises a dinner where she serves food prepared with her own fat and dies soon after. At the outset of Pluto's reign, she faces a host of serious charges. Accused of prostitution, transmitting venereal diseases, spoiling marriages, robbing respectable merchants, poisoning prelates and fellow actresses, neglecting confession for twenty years, and having had four abortions, she replies: 'I have done nothing that an opera girl as tolerably pretty as I should not have done.'[55] Pluto eventually welcomes her to hell with the highest honours.

Fanchon Moreau (1668–1743) made her début in the prologue of Lully's *Phaëton* in 1683. She premièred the roles of Oriane in Lully's *Amadis* (1684) and Créuse in Charpentier's *Médée* (1693); she also sang in Campra's *L'Europe galante* (1697), in Destouches's *Issé* (1697), and in several Lully revivals. Her elder sister Louison was also a singer, and both were mistresses of the dauphin, Louis de France.[56] But no singer's life was as tumultuous as that of Julie d'Aubigny, or La Maupin (c. 1673–1707). She started her career by giving fencing exhibitions and singing in roadside taverns in France, and made her operatic début in a revival of Lully's *Cadmus et Hermione* in 1690; she then sang in new productions by Henri Desmarets, Destouches, Campra, and La Barre. Her voice was a 'bas-dessus' (more akin to our modern mezzo-soprano). Claude and François Parfaict's *Dictionnaire des théâtres* described her voice as being of unequaled beauty.[57] Married and openly bisexual, she often cross-dressed and was an accomplished swordswoman. Her idiosyncrasies were such that already during her lifetime many unverified stories circulated about her. Her tumultuous love affair with Fanchon Moreau also inspired the imagination of her biographers – according to a rather dubious anecdote, La Maupin attempted suicide when Fanchon rejected her.

La Maupin's unusual vocal range, her acting skills, and her androgynous appearance made her a favourite of French audiences. Since a fundamental principle of the operatic genre in France was its adherence to the rules of classical theatre, the singer's principal task was not so much to sing well ('le beau chant') but to act well in order to represent the drama.[58] The sung voice, and especially the female one, expressed extreme passions that were conceived as a threat to eloquence and to the verisimilitude of the *tragédie en musique*. A shift in perspective during the eighteenth century eventually enabled the female singer to become a diva, as musical listening was increasingly understood as a form of sensory and emotional participation, creating a liberating space for female voices that had previously been restrained.[59] Through her daring personality and overtly sexualised image,

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La Maupin highlights some of the changes that took place during the seventeenth century with respect to female musicians.

The Exportation of the Italian Model to the Germanic Countries and England

While the French started their own national tradition with the *tragédie en musique* and their decisive rejection of castrati, the rest of Europe imported the Italian genre, along with its style and, most importantly, its performers. The diaspora of Italian singers spread in the early seventeenth century to the German-speaking countries.[60] Vienna and Innsbruck became outposts of Venice for operatic production. The *Compagnia dei Fedeli*, who had premièred Monteverdi's *Arianna* in Mantua in 1608, was at the service of the imperial court of Vienna from 1626–1628. Antonio Cesti (1623–1669) was chapel master and opera director in Innsbruck from 1652–1658 and 1661–1665, premièring among others his celebrated *Argia* in 1655 for the conversion to Roman Catholicism of Queen Christina of Sweden.

Women were always chaperoned and usually travelled around Europe with companies to perform operas. Typically, they were married to other singers. Some exceptionally gifted singers were appointed to northern courts. Invited by Maria de' Medici, Ramponi performed with the *Compagnia dei Fedeli* in France; they also toured in Prague and Vienna. Margherita Basile (d. after 1639), sister of Adriana Basile, started her career in Mantua from 1615–late 1620s and was appointed to the imperial court of Vienna in 1631. She also accompanied one of Emperor Ferdinand II's daughters to Poland in 1637. The prima donna Giulia Masotti abandoned her operatic career in Italy in 1673 to enter the service of Empress Claudia Felicitas as a chamber musician in Vienna. There, she encountered a very different setting than the spectacular one offered by the Italian stages to which she was accustomed. Also, she was an anomaly at the Habsburg court, where female singers had little public presence and did not usually appear on the operatic stage. Giulia performed in at least two operatic productions by Antonio Draghi, *Il ratto delle Sabine* and *Il fuoco eterno custodito dalle Vestali* (both 1674), with additional music by Emperor Leopold and Johann Heinrich Schmelzer. She stayed at the court after the death of the empress, but no records of her musical activity have survived.[61]

In England, the operatic tradition started later, and the celebrity culture surrounding operatic singers only developed at the turn of the eighteenth

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century in London. Cavalli's *Erismena* (Venice, 1655) may have been performed in an English version in London in 1674;[62] Lully's *Cadmus et Hermione* (Paris, 1673) was given there in 1686, probably in the public theatre of Dorset Garden by a French company.[63] Like the French, the English had an enduring tradition of plays and court masques combining music, dance, and scenic spectacles with spoken dialogue instead of recitative. By the end of the century, resistance to Italian opera was not only motivated by aesthetic and patriotic considerations but also by what the English saw as a lack of dramatic coherence, and by issues surrounding gender in tandem with recurring arguments against castrati and the poor moral reputation of female singers.[64]

The Italian soprano (Francesca) Margherita de L'Epine (c. 1680–1746), who had started her operatic career in Venice in the 1698–1700 seasons, arrived in London in 1702 as the mistress of the German composer Jakob Greber (d. 1731). She became the first leading female singer in London, just at the time when Italian opera was beginning to be produced on the English stage.[65] Immensely popular and courted by many English aristocrats, she had a brilliant career as a singer and dancer, and could sing in both Italian and English.

L'Epine's first known London performance in an opera was Haym's adaptation of Bononcini's *Camilla* at Drury Lane in 1706. She then appeared in almost all operatic productions in London until 1714, often playing male parts because of her looks. Burney described her as 'so swarthy and ill-favored that her husband used to call her Hecate . . . But with such a total absence of personal charms, our galleries would have made her songs very short, had they not been executed in such a manner as to silence theatrical snakes, and command applause.'[66] The anti-theatrical newspaper *The Observator* wrote in 1706: 'Can we help laughing and weeping at the same time, to see a secretary retiring from the great affairs of state to an alcove with Donna Margaritta de la Pin [*sic*], alias Pegg Thorn, to hear her sing "Colly my cow" and "Uptails all"?'[67] As was the case in France and Italy, attacks against female singers were common and were directed at the sexual threat they represented.[68]

* * *

Opera, whether in its Italian homeland or as an exported genre, always raised aesthetic and moral concerns. Along with castrati, female performers embodied this peril, which explains the simultaneous singling out of female singers as the worst examples of debauchery while showering them with

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praise for their angelic voices. On stage, their acting bodies – projecting sound and conveying passions to an audience – were powerful tools for the sensuality of music, which could threaten reason and dramatic coherence. Librettists, composers, and critics alike tried in various ways to repress the voice, containing or sublimating its dangers, whether because of its unhinged nature and ensuing threat to *logos*, or because of the performers' excessive display of virtuosity.

In the wake of Catherine Clément's influential study, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (published originally in French in 1979), opera has long been considered a place of defeat for women. Yet, through its performative aspect, opera also became a space for the empowerment of the female voice. Conventional scenes in early opera often feature a female protagonist gripped by passions, a lament scene, a mad scene, or an incantation scene – from Monteverdi's lament of Arianna to Armide's scene 'Enfin, il est en ma puissance' in Lully's eponymous *tragédie en musique*. Through their colourful careers, opera performers were the embodiment of the characters they represented onstage. With its proliferation of crossed-dressed female warriors or lamenting heroines, effeminate or virile characters, seventeenth-century opera offers a most fertile ground for studying the performance of gender.

Notes

1 Wendy Heller's *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003), a study of operatic heroines, presents how women were depicted in the social and political context of Venetian opera.

2 Vivian Nutton, 'Humoralism', in William F. Bynum and Roy Porter (eds.), *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, 2 vols. (New York: Routledge, 1993), vol. 1, 281–91; Nancy Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).

3 Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). Michael Stolberg argues for the emergence of sexual dimorphism during the Renaissance: 'A Woman down to Her Bones: The Anatomy of Sexual Difference in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', *Isis* 94/2 (2003), 274–99. Lorraine Datson and Katharine Park criticise Laqueur's view as an oversimplification: 'The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature: Sexual Ambiguity in Early Modern France', in Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (eds.), *Premodern Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 117–36: 118–19. See also Helen King, *The One-Sex*

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Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). However, all agree on a dominant view of medicine still following Galen.

4 Galen formulated the identity of male and female genitalia, and his formulation remained a commonplace until the eighteenth century: see Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 4, 79–82.

5 Dorinda Outram, 'Gender', in Katherine Park and Lorraine Daston (eds.), *Cambridge History of Science: Volume 3, Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 797–817; Karen Harvey, 'The Substance of Sexual Difference: Change and Persistence in Representations of the Body in Eighteenth-Century England', *Gender & History* 14/2 (2002), 202–23.

6 Sergio Durante, 'The Opera Singer', in Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli (eds.), *Opera Production and Its Resources*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, *The History of Italian Opera,* vol. 4 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 354–417; Roger Freitas, 'The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato', *JM* 20/2 (2003), 196–249; Giuseppe Gerbino, 'The Quest for the Soprano Voice: Castrati in Renaissance Italy', *SM* 33/2 (2004), 303–56; John Rosselli, 'The Castrati as a Professional Group and a Social Phenomenon', *Acta Musicologica* 60/2 (1988), 143–79; Katherine Bergeron, 'The Castrato as History', *COJ* 8/2 (1996), 167–84.

7 Freitas, 'The Eroticism of Emasculation', 218, 223.

8 See notably John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, thirty-fifth anniversary edn. 2015); Stephen J. Milner, *At the Margins: Minority Groups in Premodern Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

9 Roger Freitas, *Portrait of a Castrato: Politics, Patronage, and Music in the Life of Atto Melani* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

10 Outram, 'Gender', 804ff; King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial*, 97–127.

11 Penelope Gouk, 'Music, Melancholy, and Medical Spirits', in Peregrine Horden (ed.), *Music as Medicine: The History of Music Therapy since Antiquity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 173–94.

12 Gregorio Leti, *Il puttanismo romano ovvero conclave generale delle puttane della corte; per l'elettione del nuovo Pontefice* (Cologne: [s.n.], 1668), 202–3. Translations are mine, unless otherwise stated.

13 Valeria De Lucca, 'Strategies of Women Patrons of Music and Theatre in Rome: Maria Mancini Colonna, Queen Christina of Sweden, and Women of Their Circles', *Renaissance Studies* 25/3 (2011), 374–92. Baroni spent her all career in Rome and is not known to have performed operas.

14 Giovanni Domenico Ottonelli, *Della christiania moderatione del theatro libro primo, detto la Qualità delle comedie per dichiarare quale sia la lecita a' buoni Christiani…*

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(Florence: Bonardi, 1655), first book, 102; *Della pericolosa conversatione con le donne, o poco modeste, o ritirate, o cantatrici, o accademiche* (Florence: Francheschini & Logi, 1646).

15 On Strozzi, see Ellen Rosand, 'Barbara Strozzi, *virtuosissima cantatrice*: The Composer's Voice', *JAMS* 31/2 (1978), 241–81; David Rosand and Ellen Rosand, 'Barbara di Santa Sofia and Il Prete Genovese: On the Identity of a Portrait by Bernardo Strozzi', *Art Bulletin* 63/2 (1981), 249–58; and Beth L. Glixon, 'New Light on the Life and Career of Barbara Strozzi', *MQ* 81/2 (1997), 311–55.

16 Innocenzo Fuidoro, *Giornali di Napoli dal 1660 al 1680*, ed. Franco Schlizer, Antonio Padula, and Vittoria Omodeo, 4 vols. (Naples: Società napolitana di Storia Patria, 1934–1939), entry dated 08/11/1671, quoted in Benedetto Croce, *I teatri di Napoli: Dal Rinascimento alla fine del secolo decimottavo* (Milan: Adelphi, 1992), 168. Paologiovanni Maione, 'Giulia de Caro "seu ciulla": da commediante a cantarina: osservazioni sulla condizione degli "armonici" nella seconda metà del seicento', *RIM* 32/1 (1997), 61–80.

17 Cardinal Antonio Barberini was rumoured to have had affairs with both Leonora Baroni and the castrato Marcantonio Pasqualini; Duke Carlo II of Mantua with Atto Melani; Countess Elena Forni with Giovanni Francesco Grossi (detto Siface); Grand Prince Ferdinando de Medici with the castrato Francescode Castris (detto Cecchino); and Cardinal Camillo Pamphili with Leonora Baroni. See Freitas, 'The Eroticism of Emasculation', 216, and Amy Brosius, '"Il suon, lo sguardo, il canto": Virtuose of the Roman Conversazioni in the Mid-Seventeenth Century' (Ph.D. dissertation: University of New York, 2009), 335.

18 The anecdote is related in Gian Vittorio Rossi [Iani Nicii Erithraei], *Pinacotheca Imaginum Illustrium*, 3 vols. (Cologne: Kalcovium, 1648), vol. 3, 150–1, with his usual malicious misogyny.

19 *Applausi poetici alle glorie della signora Leonora Baroni* (Bracciano: Francesco Ronconi, 1639); Franca Trinchieri Camiz, '"La bella cantatrice": I ritratti di Leonora Barone e Barbara Strozzi a confronto', in Francesco Passadore and Franco Rossi (eds.), *Musica, Scienza e idee nella Serenissima durante il Seicento* (Venice: Edizioni Fondazione Levi, 1996), 285–94; Brosius, '"Il suon, lo sguardo, il canto"'; Christine Jeanneret, 'Gender Ambivalence and the Expression of Passions in the Performances of Early Roman Cantatas by Castrati and Female Singers', in Tom Cochrane, Bernardino Fantini, and Klaus R. Scherer (eds.), *The Emotional Power of Music. Multidsciplinary Perspectives on Musical Arousal, Expression, and Social Control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 85–101, appendix 359–69.

20 Anne MacNeil, *Music and Women of the Commedia dell'Arte in the Late Sixteenth Century* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), and MacNeil, 'The Divine Madness of Isabella Andreini', *JRMA* 120/2 (1995), 195–215.

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21 Emily Wilbourne, *Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sound of the Commedia dell'Arte* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 29.
22 Tim Carter, 'Lamenting Ariadne?' *EM* 27/3 (1999), 395–405 (the whole issue is dedicated to female laments).
23 Federico Follino, *Compendio delle sontuose feste fatte nell'anno 1608 nella città di Mantova* (Mantova: Osanna, 1608), 30.
24 MacNeil, *Music and Women*, 149.
25 Anne MacNeil, 'Weeping at the Water's Edge' *EM* 27/3 (1999), 406–17; Suzanne Cusick, '"There Was Not One Lady Who Failed to Shed a Tear": Arianna's Lament and the Construction of Modern Womanhood' *EM* 22/1 (1994), 21–43.
26 See Beth L. Glixon, 'Private Lives of Public Women: Prima Donnas in Mid-Seventeenth-Century Venice', *ML* 76/4 (1995), 509–31.
27 Maiolino Bisaccioni, *Il cannocchiale per La finta pazza drama dello Strozzi* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Surian, 1641), quoted in Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1991), 96.
28 Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 94.
29 Vincenzo Nolfi, *Bellerofonte: Descrittione degli apparati del Bellerofonte di Giulio del Colle* (Venice: [s.n.], 1642), quoted in Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 101.
30 Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 96.
31 Nolfi, *Bellerofonte*, 12, quoted in Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 415.
32 Pietro Della Valle, *Della musica dell'età nostra* (1640), partially trans. Margaret Murata in Oliver Strunk (ed.), *Source Readings in Music History,* rev. edn. by Leo Treitler (New York: Norton, 1998), 544–51.
33 Vincenzo Giustiniani, *Discorso sopra la musica de' suoi tempi* (1628), transl. Carol MacClintock (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1962), 69.
34 Ioan P. Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 21–30.
35 Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006); Suzanne Cusick, *Francesca Caccini at the Medici Court: Music and the Circulation of Power* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009). Although both Harness (152) and Cusick (192) insist that *La liberazione* is not an opera because it is entitled 'balletto a cavallo', it can definitely be placed in the tradition of Florentine theatrical spectacles. Those were only later labelled 'operas'. The first mention of an 'opera' as such dates from 1639 in the libretto of *Le Nozze di Teti e Peleo* (Orazio Persiani and Francesco Cavalli). Before, 'operas' were characterised as 'dramma per musica, favola in musica, favola pastorale, festa teatrale, tragedia, tragicommedia, or balletto in musica': see Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 35.

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36 Cusick, *Francesca Caccini*, 28–35.

37 Ibid., 136.

38 Ibid., ch. 10.

39 Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices*, 162–52.

40 Claude Dulong, 'From Conversation to Creation', in *A History of Women in the West. Vol. 3: Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, ed. Natalie Zamon Davis and Arlette Farge (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), 395–419; Catherine Gordon-Seifert, 'Precious Eroticism and Hidden Morality: Salon Culture and the Mid-Seventeenth-Century French Air', in Bonnie Blackburn and Laurie Stras (eds.), *Eroticism in Early Modern Music* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 227–60; and Patricia Howard, 'Quinault, Lully, and the Précieuses: Images of Women in Seventeenth-Century France', in Susan Cook and Judy S. Tsou, (eds.), *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 70–89.

41 Catherine Cessac, *Elisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre: Une femme compositeur sous le règne de Louis XIV* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1995); and Cessac, 'Les jeux à l'honneur de la victoire d'Elisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre: premier opéra-ballet?' *Revue de Musicologie* 81/2 (1995), 235–47.

42 Wanda R. Griffiths, 'Jacquet de la Guerre's *Céphale et Procris*: Style and Drama', in Malcolm Cole and John Koegel (eds.), *Music in Performance and Society: Essays in Honor of Roland Jackson* (Warren: Harmonie Park Press, 1997), 251–68.

43 Robert M. Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King: France in the Seventeenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 320–32; and Georgia Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV and the Politics of Spectacle* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

44 Julia Prest, *Theatre under Louis XIV: Cross-Casting and the Performance of Gender in Drama, Ballet and Opera* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 141–8.

45 Pierre Perrin, 'Lettre à l'Archevesque de Turin' in *Œuvres de poésie* (Paris: Estienne Loyson, 1661), 287. Quoted in Henry Prunières, *L'Opéra italien en France avant Lulli* (Paris: Librairie ancienne Honoré Champion, 1913), 267.

46 Sarah Nancy, *La voix féminine et le plaisir de l'écoute en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012), 97–143.

47 Julie Anne Sadie, '*Musiciennes* of the Ancien Régime', in Jane M. Bowers and Judith Tick (eds.), *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition 1150–1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 191–223; Lisandro Abadie, 'Anne de La Barre (1628–1688): Biographie d'une chanteuse de cour', *Revue de Musicologie* 94/1 (2008), 5–44; and Catherine Massip, *La vie des musiciens de Paris au temps de Mazarin (1643–1661): Essai d'étude sociale* (Paris: Picard 1976).

48 Abadie, 'Anne de La Barre', 21–4.

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49 See Thomas Leconte, 'La Musique de la Chambre du roi au temps de Marin Marais', in Benoît Dratwicki (ed.), *Marin Marais: violiste à l'Opéra* (Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles: Établissement public du musée et du domaine national de Versailles, 2006), 73–84: 81.

50 Jean-Laurent Le Cerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise* (Brussels: François Foppens, 1704–1706; rpt. Geneva: Minkoff, 1972), part 1, 11–12.

51 '. . . le plus parfait modéle pour la déclamation, qui ait apparu sur le Théâtre; . . . Quoiqu'elle fut d'une taille médiocre, fort brune, & d'une figure très-commune hors du Théâtre, aux yeux près, qu'elle avoit grands; pleins de feu & capables d'exprimer toutes les passions, elle effaçoit toutes les plus belles Actrices & les mieux faites quand elle étoit au Théâtre. . .' Évrard Titon du Tillet, *Suite du Parnasse françois, jusqu'en 1743. Et de quelques autres Piéces qui ont rapport à ce Monument* (Paris: J. B. Coignard fils, 1743), 790–1.

52 François Raguenet, *Paralele des Italiens et des François, en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéra* (Paris: Jean Moreau, 1702; rpt. Geneva, Minkoff), 97.

53 François Raguenet, *A Comparison between the French and Italian Musick and Operas. Translated from the French; With some Remarks; To which is added A Critical Discourse upon Opera's in England, and a Means proposed for their Improvement* (London: William Lewis, 1709), 45–6.

54 *La musique du diable ou le Mercure Galant dévalisé* (Paris: Robert le Turc, 1711). See Ilias Chrissochoidis, 'La Musique du Diable (1711): An Obscure Specimen of Fantastic Literature Throws Light on the Elusive Opera Diva Marie-Louise Desmatins (fl. 1682–1708)', *Society for Eighteenth-Century Music Newsletter* 11 (2007), 7–9.

55 Quoted and translated in Chrissochoidis, 'La Musique du Diable', 8.

56 François Couperin explicitly refers to Fanchon Moreau in the rondeau 'La tendre Fanchon' from the Cinquième Ordre of the *Pièces de clavecin*, and 'La femme entre deux draps' (the woman between two sheets; canon for three voices).

57 François and Claude Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris, contenant toutes les piéces qui ont été représentées jusqu'à présent sur les différens Théâtres François, & sur celui de l'Académie Royale de musique*, 7 vols. (Paris: Lambert, 1756; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1967), vol. 3, 351.

58 Catherine Kintzler, *Poétique de l'opéra français de Corneille à Rousseau*, 2nd edn. (Paris: Minerve, 2005).

59 Nancy, *La voix féminine*, 217–60.

60 Reinhard Strohm, 'Italian Operisti North of the Alps' in *The Eighteenth-Century Diaspora of Italian Musicians*, ed. Reinhard Strohm (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 1–59.

61 Janet K. Page, 'Sirens on the Danube: Giulia Masotti and Women Singers at the Imperial Court', *JSCM* 17/1 (2011), http://sscm-jscm.org/jscm-issues/

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volume-17-no-1/sirens-on-the-danube-giulia-masotti-and-women-singers-at-the-imperial-court/.

62 The Bodleian Library in Oxford houses the only known copy of Cavalli's *Erismena*. On this acquisition made in 2008, see David Stuart and Greg Skidmore, 'Cavalli's *Erismena*', *EM* 38/3 (2010), 482–3. Michael Burden edited the score and libretto of the English version in the critical edition of the work, *L'Erismena: dramma per musica (Venice, 1655/56): With Scores of the Original Italian Version and a Contemporary English Version*, ed. Beth L. Glixon, Nicola Badolato, Jonathan E. Glixon, and Michael Burden (Kassel: Bärenreiter, [2018]).

63 See William John Lawrence, 'The French Opera in London: A Riddle of 1686', *The Times Literary Supplement* 1782 (28 March 1936), 268, and Andrew R. Walkling, *Masque and Opera in England, 1656–1688* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 303–4.

64 Lowell Lingren, 'Critiques of Opera in London, 1705–1719', in *Il melodramma italiano in Italia e in Germania nell'età barocca*, ed. Alberto Colzani (Como: AMIS, 1993), 145–65.

65 Suzanne Aspden, 'L'Epine, Francesca Margherita de (d. 1746), Singer' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8828.

66 Charles Burney, *A General History of Music: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*, ed. Frank Mercer, 2 vols. (London: G. T. Foulis, 1935), vol. 2, 670–1.

67 She was referred to as 'Greber's pegg.' Her name L'Epine means *thorn* in French.

68 In 1704, L'Epine's rivalry with the first English prima donna, the soprano Catherine Tofts, reached its peak when a servant of the latter threw oranges at L'Epine during a performance. The underpinnings of this rivalry were politically motivated: in 1703–1704, subscription concerts organised by Tory grandees featured Margherite de L'Epine, while the Whigs had their own 'Subscription Musick' featuring Tofts. See Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson, 'The Subscription Musick of 1703–04', *MT* 153/1921 (2012), 29–44.

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