

# French Music

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As early as the late 16th century, music came to hold an eminent position in French court life, whether for ceremonial purposes, as an accompaniment to ballets and dances or as the sonic representation of growing military power. French musical practice was in due course comprehensively institutionalised under Louis XIV. The fact that the Académie royale de musique – which was in charge of musical life at court, in the city of Paris and in France at large – was headed by Jean-Baptiste Lully, a composer whose work was henceforth considered to set a national standard, will be addressed in this article, as will the question to what extent it is possible to speak of a European reception of this French model.

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## Introduction

The great significance of music for French court culture was founded on its use for ceremonial purposes on the one hand and, on the other, on the behavioural ideal of the *honnête homme*, of which musical ability formed an integral part.<sup>1</sup> Like Louis XIII (1601–1643) (→ [Media Link #ab](#)), who had himself been active as a composer, before him, Louis XIV (1638–1715) (→ [Media Link #ac](#)) stood out by his remarkable musical education. The king, who could play several instruments, repeatedly involved himself in the hiring of vocalists, instrumentalists and composers.

▲ 1

Organisationally, music at the French court was divided into three branches. The *chapelle* consisted of the singers (including a boys' choir) and instrumentalists who provided church and table music, the instrumentalists of the *écurie* (mostly wind players) were in the employ of the royal stables and responsible for open-air performances, while the *chambre* comprised the king's celebrated string orchestra (*la grande bande des vingt-quatre violons*) and six further instrumentalists, a vocal ensemble and, from the mid-17th century, another, smaller orchestra (*la petite bande*).<sup>2</sup>

▲ 2

This article will begin by looking at the consolidation of a French ideal stipulated for music before going on to discuss that model's European reception. The principle focus here will be on the aesthetic assumptions of the second half of the 17th century when, under

Louis XIV, music came to be placed on an increasingly institutional and academic footing, a development with profound repercussions into the late 18th century. Less attention, however, will be paid to the rejection of these assumptions in favour of an artistic rediscovery of the "natural", first in the 1740s in the writings of Charles Batteux (1713–1780) (→ Media Link #ad) and, soon after, in the writings and compositions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) (→ Media Link #ae).<sup>3</sup> As important as these tendencies are for the musical aesthetics of the age of Enlightenment (→ Media Link #af), they cannot be understood functionally as constituting a decidedly "French" model. The debate over the "natural" was concerned chiefly with the question of a common human "nature" beyond any supposed standardisations and thus addressed national variants as an afterthought, if at all.

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It is possible to determine the precise moment at which Italian music was displaced from its previously dominant position in Paris and the standard passed to French music, which laid claim to universality. This was the death of Cardinal Jules Mazarin (1602–1661) (→ Media Link #ag), who had been prime minister under Louis XIV, on 9 March 1661. Mazarin had been a lifelong champion of Italian art and was responsible for bringing the sculptor and architect Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) (→ Media Link #ah) to Paris<sup>4</sup> as well as Francesco Cavalli (1602–1676) (→ Media Link #aj), with whose works Mazarin sought to establish Italian opera at the French court.<sup>5</sup> Immediately upon the death of the unpopular prime minister, who himself had been of Italian origin, his successor Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683) (→ Media Link #ak) pushed for a concentration on native artistic potential, which was to serve as an expression of French might and thereby to magnify Louis XIV and his realm. France was henceforth to be portrayed as fertile ground from which exceptional artistic achievements might spring. Besides painters and sculptors, musicians were the chief beneficiaries of this turn. Already in 1662 all Italians who had come to Paris for the performances of *Xerxes* and *Ercole amante* at the royal wedding, including Cavalli himself, were sent home, and in 1666 all Italian musicians were dismissed from the royal band.<sup>6</sup> They had already been forbidden to perform for the king in 1661,<sup>7</sup> despite the fact that as recently as 1660 Louis XIV had almost daily spent several hours listening to the singers invited by Mazarin.<sup>8</sup>

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Colbert's cultural policy was concerned not only with henceforth placing performance in French hands but above all with the emancipation of artistic standards from Italy. The shift by which the Italian tradition came to be placed far below the French coincided with the establishment of new French cultural institutions: the *Académie royale de danse* was founded in 1662, the *Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres* in 1663 and the *Académie de France à Rome*, a direct expression of artistic rivalry with Italy, in 1666.<sup>9</sup> Underpinning these parallel developments was a scheme of thought opposing a universally valid French style to a national and hence only locally relevant Italian one. Italian music thus came to be qualified as merely "exotic", of regional significance, and what is exotic can never claim general applicability.<sup>10</sup> France, on the other hand, claimed universal validity for its academic standards. Italian influence was rejected in favour of a demonstration of French autonomy, founded on timeless values. Yet, translated into practice, this turned out to mean artistic synthesis rather than the development of a genuinely French style.

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The foremost beneficiaries of vacuum left by the departure of Italian musicians from Paris and the resulting reorientation of French musical life were the singer and composer Michel Lambert (1610–1696) (→ Media Link #al) and above all his future son-in-law, Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) (→ Media Link #am). Already a decade before the patent letter giving him control of the *Académie royale de musique* in 1671 and thereby an unprecedented monopoly in musical life, Lully, who had been promoted to *Surintendant de la musique du Roi* in May 1661, only two months after Mazarin's death, adopted a musical language in keeping with the new cultural policy. Yet the man who became the dominant instance in French music after the symbolically charged dismissal of the Italian artists was himself born in Florence, an Italian who became a naturalised Frenchman virtually overnight.

▲ 6

## The French *ballet de cour*

Dance and ballet had played so important a role in French courtly culture since the late 16th century that dance music seemed the

obvious area in which to demonstrate emancipation from Italian models. While Lambert's *airs* and *récits* were finally establishing themselves as the contemporary French ideal in vocal music, Lully took advantage of the circumstances by setting his *ballets de cour* – beginning with the *Ballet des saisons*, first performed in July 1661 – to music of a decidedly non-Italian character; the obvious combination of the uncontested vocal style with the instrumental style bore fruit, at the latest, in Lully's and Lambert's cooperation in the demonstratively French *Ballet des arts* (1662).<sup>11</sup> Although Lully's own fame had begun as a *baladin* (a dancer and composer of virtuoso or parodistic pieces), from 1661 he noticeably reduced the number of such pantomime *entrées* now considered "Italian", concentrating instead, in his ballet settings, on the stately style of dancing practiced by Louis XIV himself until 1669.<sup>12</sup>

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When, immediately after the suppression of the *Fronde* in 1653, the then fourteen-year-old Louis XIV made his first appearance in what was later called the *Ballet de la prospérité des armes de la France*, Cardinal Mazarin, in his capacity as prime minister, had still thought it advisable to make a public declaration that the king dancing was the direct consequence of his beneficent policy. Divine services, according to Mazarin, were not enough to celebrate the many political triumphs. Instead, earthly gratitude was to be expressed in a royal ballet that the cardinal wished to be understood as the full secular equivalent of the Church's liturgy.<sup>13</sup>

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This elevation of the *ballet de cour* to an almost religious dignity justified efforts that both were unprecedently costly and required cooperation between leading poets, dancing masters, composers and painters (→ Media Link #an). By the time of the king's later appearances on stage, the quasi-liturgical dimension of the occasion was so firmly established in audiences' minds that no further justification was required. In the 1660s the *ballet de cour* finally became the focal point of courtly ceremony. The king's sole power in a united France was asserted under the cloak of *divertissement*, while the courtiers were expected to behave in a "noble" manner that was minutely specified. This dual function was constitutive of both the balls and the ballets at court. Contemporary observers were well aware of this phenomenon, as can be seen from the treatises on dancing produced in the late 17th century by the influential Jesuit Claude-François Ménéstrier (1631–1705) (→ Media Link #ao).<sup>14</sup>

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Louis XIV's final appearance – in the *Ballet royal de Flore* on 13 February 1669 – marked the late pinnacle of the *ballet de cour* as a genre, which largely faded into insignificance following the king's retirement from the stage.<sup>15</sup> The occasion for this extremely expensive ballet was the signing of a treaty in Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen) on 2 May 1668 which put an end to the war with Spain and awarded the French crown considerable new territory.<sup>16</sup> Although Louis XIV had himself provoked the conflict following the death of his father-in-law Philip IV (1605–1665) (→ Media Link #ap), the *Ballet royal de Flore* feted him as a European prince of peace who had bravely stood up to southern aggression.<sup>17</sup> The libretto by Isaac de Benserades (1612–1691) (→ Media Link #aq) accordingly concentrates on Louis XIV's god-like virtue, raising him to virtually classical stature.<sup>18</sup>

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Although the *Ballet royal de Flore*, with its unusually large proportion of choruses and solo parts, seems to anticipate the subsequent development towards the *opéra-ballet*, there is no inner logic to the sequence of the fifteen *entrées*. Fable and courtly reality overlapped. This effect was due not only to the more or less blatant adulation of the monarch and the large proportion of nobles involved (twenty-five of 138 participants were members of the court) but also to Lully's incorporation of the fashionable French dances of the day, the Canary, *bouffée* and minuet.<sup>19</sup>

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The dance suite is likely to have influenced the majority of French suites composed for the harpsichord by Louis Couperin (ca. 1626–1661) (→ Media Link #ar). With a style moulded both by Italian virtuosity and French dance music, the organist of Saint-Gervais established the pre-eminence of the keyboard in French music from the mid-1600s. This was to reach a notable flowering in Louis Couperin's nephew, François Couperin (1668–1733) (→ Media Link #as), whose work also aimed at a synthesis of Italian playing technique with French principles of order. Programmatic statements of the younger Couperin's striving to achieve a mode of

composition both Italian and French in character include the collection *Les goûts-réunis* and – in homage to the originators of the Italian and French styles, respectively – *L'Apothéose de Corelli* and, published soon afterwards, *L'Apothéose de Lully* (→ Media Link #at).

▲ 12

## The *Académie royale de musique* and the pre-eminence of opera

In his famous treatise of 1682, *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre*, Claude François Ménéstrier unreservedly praised France's achievement in regulating all the arts.<sup>20</sup> Actual control was performed by a growing number of academies, which were granted their right to act as censors for all of France by royal patent letters. As recently as in the reign of Louis XIII, such a proliferation of academies could not have been enforced, for parliament was still influential and took exception to any potential curtailment of its powers. Even the patent letter for the *Académie française* of 29 January 1635 could be finally registered, on 10 July 1637, only after several interventions from Cardinal Armand-Jean du Plessis de Richelieu (1585–1642) (→ Media Link #au).<sup>21</sup>

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Since such a patent letter invariably entailed a monopoly in a given field, it provided the academics who received it with a highly lucrative source of income – all the more so given that this position of power was exploited and uniformity enforced without compromise. Lully, who due to an intrigue in 1672 successfully schemed to obtain the lucrative rights to the *Académie royale de musique* (known as the *Opéra*), took this business model to its extreme conclusion.<sup>22</sup> The foundation for his unprecedented career was laid by the patent letter bearing the seal of Louis XIV:

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To this end, well aware of the intelligence and great musical knowledge of Our dear and much-beloved Jean-Baptiste Lully [...], We [Louis XIV] hereby grant and permit the said Lully (with the present letter, signed by Our hand) to establish a Royal Academy of Music in Our city of Paris, to consist of the quality and quantity of persons which he shall retain most appropriate [...]. At the same time, all persons of whatsoever quality or condition (including Our own court officials) are expressly forbidden to enter the venues in question without having paid; likewise, no person whatever may organize the performance of any wholly musical drama (in French or any other language) without the written consent of M. Lully, upon pain of a fine often thousand livres and confiscation of theatres, scenes, machines, costumes and other things – a third for Our own direct benefit, a third for the *hôpital-general*, and a third for M. Lully [...].<sup>23</sup>

Unlike the *Académie royale de danse*, which derived its status from the value accorded to dance as the cradle of noble conduct, the privilege granted to Lully in 1672 reflects a function going far beyond a courtly and ceremonious context and instead recalling the idea of "bread and games". The *Académie royale de musique* was founded not least because the king had come to recognise the need for a public and widely accessible *divertissement*. It is said that, challenged by the influential Colbert, Louis XIV excused the patent letter granted to Lully with reference to the urgency of such events, arguing that he was unable to dispense with the composer's services and hence had to accede to his demands even *contre cœur*.<sup>24</sup> As usual for an academy, according to the patent letter the monopoly of the *Académie royale de musique* applied not so much to the court as to musical life in Paris and throughout France. This was a time when non-courtly audiences were gaining in importance, finally becoming crucial to Lully's success when – under the influence of his mistress, the Marquise de Maintenon (1635–1719) (→ Media Link #av), and following the queen's death in 1683 – Louis XIV turned increasingly towards the Church. One effect of this pious turn was noticeably to diminish the king's interest in the secular arts.<sup>25</sup>

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Sacred music, on the other hand, clearly benefited from Louis XIV's renewed interest in the Church, all the more so given that liturgical music had previously been peculiarly restrained. Of particular significance to the practice of church music in the second half of the 17th century was the king's fondness for motets, which he wished to hear in all forms of divine service. As many as three motets might be

heard in a solemn mass, while the priest was left to perform the liturgy in silence. Initially, the main composers of such works for the *Chapelle Royale*, which were not expected to relate to the liturgy in any meaningful way, were Nicolas Formé and Jean Veillot. As the form grew in scale and was scored for larger forces, however, evolving into the formal *grand motet*, its principal exponents became Henry Du Mont (1610–1684) (→ Media Link #aw) and Lully (→ Media Link #ax) himself.<sup>26</sup>

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As its byname *Opéra* suggests, that is what the *Académie royale de musique* de facto was: an opera company. Although only a few years earlier, Lully had shown no interest in adapting the genuinely Italian genre of the opera for France, the prospect of the profitable patent letter no doubt did much to change his mind. Yet it was not enough simply to adopt the Italian model. Instead, a specifically French form had to be developed, one that would suit both the specific characteristics of the French language, which was not considered melodious, and the socio-political conditions in Paris. Lully met these demands by developing the new genre of the *tragédie en musique* (also known as *tragédie lyrique*), which by its name and five-act structure referred to tragedy, traditionally the highest of theatrical genres.

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In practice, the prominent role accorded by Lully to the ballet within the *tragédie lyrique* – a peculiarity of French opera that was to remain a defining feature well into the nineteenth century – meant the continued application of principles established in the formerly definitive *ballet de cour*.<sup>27</sup> That the composer appears to have approached the opera from the ballet is evident not least from his brief period of cooperation with Jean-Baptiste Molière (1622–1673) (→ Media Link #ay). The resulting genre of the *comédie-ballet*, culminating in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670), had already combined ballet and comedy. Yet while the *comédie-ballet* maintained an approximate balance between musical and dramatic numbers, the *tragédie lyrique* foregrounded musical composition.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, in his many years of cooperation with the librettist Philippe Quinault (1635–1688) (→ Media Link #az), Lully sought to go beyond mere background music ("*tragédie avec musique*") to achieve the full interpenetration of drama and music in the "*tragédie en musique*".<sup>29</sup>

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While the first of the *tragédies lyriques* (*Cadmus et Hermione*, 1673) is palpably eclectic in its combination of Italian opera, *ballet de cour*, solo *airs*, choruses and various forms of instrumental music, in his fourth opera (*Atys*, 1676), Lully for the first time developed an autonomous large-form dramaturgy for the French *tragédie lyrique*. The development of the French opera in the 17th century is entirely congruent with Lully's work for the stage – he composed an opera nearly every year until his death in 1683. By securing his patent letter, Lully kept all competitors, notably Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643–1704) (→ Media Link #b0), at a distance for many years.<sup>30</sup> The model nature of Lully's oeuvre, made absolute by the *Académie royale de musique*, set the standard for French opera well into the 18th century and severely constrained his successors.<sup>31</sup>

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Of course, neither the monopoly on opera obtained by Lully in 1672 nor the lasting influence of his stage works was able to prevent the conception of a genuinely French *tragédie en musique* to be contested from the outset. The *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, launched in 1687 by Charles Perrault (1628–1703) (→ Media Link #b1) and the reading of his poem *Le Siècle de Louis le Grand* at the *Académie française*, had repercussions for the debate on French opera.<sup>32</sup> While the first *querelle* was sparked by question whether classical antiquity or modern France should be the primary point of artistic reference, the next debate concerned the relative merits of France and Italy, specifically French and Italian music. This controversy, which erupted in 1705 between François Ragueneau (ca. 1660–1722) (→ Media Link #b2) and Laurent Le Cerf de la Viéville (1674–1707) (→ Media Link #b3), reached far beyond Paris, even entering north German discourse through Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–1766) (→ Media Link #b4). Another operatic quarrel was fought between the followers of Lully and those of Pierre Rameau (1674–1748) (→ Media Link #b5) from 1733 to 1752. Later in the 18th century, the status of French *tragédie* relative to Italian opera, the pre-eminent genre throughout Europe, was the subject of the famous *Querelle des bouffons* (1752–1754) and, in the 1770s, of a hotly contested debate between the followers of Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787) (→ Media Link #b6) and those of Niccolò Piccini (1728–1800) (→ Media Link #b7).<sup>33</sup>

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## French music as a European model?

### Universal claims

One task of the cultural policy continued by Mazarin after Colbert's death was to establish a universal set of values in the arts and in so doing to portray France as the legitimate heir to Greek and especially Roman antiquity. The visual arts initially found it easier to follow these political requirements, at any rate on a theoretical level, because, for all the reimagining and reinterpretation that had taken place, there was at least a body of classical sculpture that had been preserved. In music, by contrast, any such reference could be achieved only by verbal indicators in the librettos and by the symbolic language of stage sets. A reconstruction of the long-lost music of Greece and Rome of the kind planned by the *Académie de Baïf* as early as the 16th century<sup>34</sup> would, since it would have resisted appropriation for courtly display, have been unsuitable for French self-representation.

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Unlike visual artists, musicians therefore found themselves unable to achieve the degree of synthesis required for the French striving to match up to the classical model.<sup>35</sup> While librettos could be situated in a line of descent (albeit fictional) from the Roman theatre, this was not the case for their musical setting. The texts of the *divertissements* conjured up a modernised world of gods, thereby creating the required classical reference, while composers and choreographers had to confront the aesthetic challenge in a more abstract manner. In a manner analogous to dance, where there was no serious interest in reconstructing ancient sequences of movement, music too had to establish absolute categories without being able to invoke ancient models. Whereas the writings on the aesthetics of dance by Ménéstrier and Michel de Pure (1620–1680) (→ Media Link #b8) or the patent letter for the *Académie royale de danse* made stereotypically took antiquity as their point of departure, no synthesis was attempted in practice between historical ideals and contemporary demands.<sup>36</sup> Rather, the task in hand was for modern French art to triumph effortlessly and forever over Italy and thereby to vindicate French claims to the classical inheritance.

▲ 22

Rameau, for instance, in his influential *Maître à danser* (*The Dancing Master*, 1725), praised Lully's achievement not for emulating classical ideals but for outdoing Italian composers in practical terms, in their own domain of musical theatre: "Lully, who from his youth was attached to the court of Louis the Great [Louis XIV], in a manner forgot his country, and by his performances made France triumph even over Italy by the charms of those very sights which Rome and Venice had invented."<sup>37</sup>

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French music, asserted Rameau, had triumphed once and for all over Italy. It owed this success to Lully, an Italian who became a naturalised French subject by royal decree only a few months after Mazarin's death. Lully had begun his career in Paris as a decidedly Italian composer before rising to become the arbiter of French music in the 1660s. Rameau credited this achievement above all to Lully's "dances in characters" on which he bestowed "all the lustre [of] music".<sup>38</sup> Since the ideal of courtly conduct had been taken to extremes of stylisation in dance (→ Media Link #bg), both dance and the music associated with it reflected a "modern" idea of humanity. This idea, while French in origin, was universal in its claims even without explicit reference to classical antiquity.

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### The *ballet de cour* in Europe

The reception of the French model is most palpable in the field of ballet and dance music. It was its ceremonial function in particular that made the *ballet de cour* attractive to foreign princes keen to use on-stage idealisation for their own political ends and to further their own power. Yet the necessary condition for a direct adaptation of the *ballet de cour* was that performances should be understood as the respective sovereign's own genuine achievement rather than as an artistic capitulation to France. That this danger was in fact negligible was due to a key feature of the French model, namely, its universal claim.

In order at least symbolically to realise its claim to being Europe's universal monarchy, France had to insist on the absolutely binding character of its principles. Yet this meant, in turn, that these supposedly universal artistic achievements lacked a strong association with France. The *Ballet des saisons* (1661) thus found enthusiastic audiences even in Italy in spite of its political dimension. Although from the French perspective, the turn to *entrées* that were dignified rather than comical in nature was intended as an expression of the dominant anti-Italianism, foreign audiences could find their own ideals reflected in it.

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Shorn of the context of their respective librettos, the instrumental dances no longer proclaimed the glory of the French king but rather, depending on where they were performed, that of the grand duke of Tuscany or even the Austrian emperor. In spite of the ancient enmity between Vienna and Paris, their courts functioned along such similar lines<sup>39</sup> that formal French dancing of the later 1600s was adopted at the Habsburg court, even though Austrian musical practice generally took its cues from Italy.

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The example of Viennese reception offers a vivid example of how similar the principles of noble Italian dance (but not the comic pantomime) and French dance were, so much so that it was even possible to perform Parisian compositions under an Italian label. For instance, the music composed by Lully in 1661 for the stately *entrées* in Cavalli's *Ercole amante*, first performed in Paris, reappear in a manuscript copy under the title *Balletti francesi à 4 del S. Ebner* and explicitly naming Wolfgang Ebner (1612–1665) (→ Media Link #ba), Leopold I's (1640–1705) (→ Media Link #bb) Italian-minded court composer, as their author.<sup>40</sup> While his post as *Surintendant de la musique du Roi* seems to have made Lully's name unpalatable in Vienna, his dance music was not.

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## The reception of French music

From the latter half of the 17th century, the reception of French models was concerned chiefly with instrumental music, only occasionally with ballet and seldom with opera.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, the *tragédie lyrique* was adopted elsewhere in Europe only in localised instances and with little lasting effect. Performances of French works are recorded not only at certain German courts – for instance in Brunswick or Hanover – but even at the Gänsemarkt opera house in Hamburg.<sup>42</sup> This patrician establishment, which had always shown a strong preference for the Italian repertoire, in 1692 staged Lully's last opera, *Achille et Polyxène*, completed by his pupil Pascal Collasse (1649–1709) (→ Media Link #bc).<sup>43</sup> "French" traces are also evident in the practice, popular in Hamburg after 1700, of interspersing German librettos not only with Italian arias but also with numbers sung in French.<sup>44</sup> Yet on the whole, the French model had little to oppose to the enormous significance of Italian opera to European musical theatre. As can also be seen from the example of early 18th-century London's flourishing opera sector, productions in the mould of the *tragédie lyrique* were fairly isolated occurrences.<sup>45</sup>

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The fact that French vocal genres were emulated abroad only for short periods and at most regionally can probably be attributed, aside from Italian dominance in the field of opera,<sup>46</sup> to the prosodic features of the French language. Even in France itself, it was often said that the French language lacked musicality. Against this backdrop, Lambert's approach to the *air*, in which declamation would sometimes come at the expense of the unity of metric rhythm, was considered the best possible solution for giving an adequate musical setting to an idiom that was considered insufficiently song-like. Even in the 18th century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau can be found making some highly critical remarks on French prosody in his musical writings: "It is true that, although we have had excellent poets and even some musicians who have not been without genius, I believe our language to be little suited to poetry, and not at all to music."<sup>47</sup>

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French music therefore spread not on account of the manner of its setting words to music but rather by virtue of instrumental models in general and the French overture and French dances in particular. Their characteristic dignified quality is likely to have been decisive in the spread of the instrumental type in particular, the genre-specific outlines of which had become increasingly settled since Lully's overture for the *Ballet de la Nuit* (1653).<sup>48</sup> By ensuring that advance publicity centred on the young king's performance, the ceremonial aspect of the occasion took on central importance. The ballet became a ceremony in dance, in which Louis XIV appeared as the sun in a manner visible to all and hence all the more "real" (→ Media Link #bd).<sup>49</sup> Lully's early form of the French overture was nothing less than the *introitus* to this performance which Mazarin had staged as an equivalent to divine service.<sup>50</sup>

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The generic type finally assumed its set form – clearly defined against its Italian counterpart, the *sinfonia*<sup>51</sup> – in the 1660s, beginning with Lully's overture to the Paris production of Cavalli's *Xerxes*. Characteristic features of the French overture are its two-part form (later usually including a *da capo*), the majestically connoted dotted notes in the slow, even-metered first section as well as the contrasting middle section in a fast tempo, with uneven metre and imitating voice parts. This form of the French overture established by Lully began to be adapted throughout Europe from the end of the 17th century onwards. French overtures can be found, for instance, in Henry Purcell's (1659–1695) (→ Media Link #be) opera *Dido and Aeneas* (→ Media Link #bf), plentifully in the work of Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767) (→ Media Link #bg), in Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) (→ Media Link #bh) (Overture in the French style, partita in B minor BWV 831 (→ Media Link #bi)) or in George Frideric Handel's (1685–1759) (→ Media Link #bj) *Water Music* (HWV 348) and his no less ceremonious *Music for the Royal Fireworks* (HWV 335).

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The French overture was also accorded an elevated place in German musical theory when Johann Mattheson (1681–1764) (→ Media Link #bk) – in his very first work of musical theory, the *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre* (1713) – described it as the most important instrumental form of all, a view that remained influential throughout the 18th century.<sup>52</sup> In *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739), considered his principal work, Mattheson definitively confirmed the overture's pre-eminence by asserting that "it must be noble-spirited in character" and that it "deserves more praise than there is room here for words".<sup>53</sup>

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Besides this positive appraisal of the French overture, whose emergence is inseparable from the sphere of courtly life, Mattheson's writings are striking for the dominant role they accord models from dance music. The twenty-two instrumental genres described in *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* include the overture and no fewer than 13 dances: minuet, gavotte, bourrée, rigaudon, entrée, gigue (including loure, canary, giga), polonaise, angloise (country dances, ballads, hornpipes), passepied, saraband, courante, allemande and chaconne (including passacaglia).<sup>54</sup>

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As part of suites, such dance movements figured prominently in early-18th-century chamber music, the chief distinction being that between French suites (those incorporating French dances) and Italian suites. Yet the fact that not only Mattheson but contemporary dance discourse in general should take for granted French dominance in the repertoire of dances, and that even German-speaking authors of the 18th century explicitly invoked the authority of the *Académie royal de danse*,<sup>55</sup> paradoxically casts even the Italian suites in a "French" light. This is also apparent in Mattheson's deliberations on the subject:

▲35

This much we must gladly grant: In instrumental but above all in choraic [linking singing and dancing] or dance music the French are masters and are everywhere imitated without being equalled. If therefore we were to call French and Italian music *alteram ab illâ*, it would be no great injustice, for they alone each appear to have something unique and original about them, while others are commonly pleased to refer to one or both by way of either imitation or mixture.<sup>56</sup>



Both the narrow focus of compositional possibilities on Italian and French music and the "mixture" of both models, which Mattheson described even in his earliest treatise,<sup>57</sup> were indeed to become defining features of reception. The French model, according to Mattheson's criteria, conformed to social demands for musical *Galanterien* in that its clear structure and ceremonial effects were in line with the "fashion or taste" of an audience of social rank.<sup>58</sup> By contrast, with their *caprice*, their ability to do more immediate justice to a text's affective contrasts, the Italians set the standard in the field of vocal music.<sup>59</sup> In the same breath in which Mattheson, in a footnote to *Das beschützte Orchestre* (1717), took a clear stance against French and in favour of Italian vocal music, he asserted the opposite for instrumental music, claiming that "French instrumental music is a stroke ahead of Italian".<sup>60</sup> The combination of "gallant" French with "capricious" Italian models was to define the further development of music both within and beyond the borders of France.

▲36

Ivana Rentsch (→ Media Link #bl)

## Appendix

### Sources

Articles de la paix entre les couronnes de France et d'Espagne, concluë le 2<sup>e</sup> may à Aix-la-Chapelle 1668, Paris 1668. URL: <https://friedensvertraege.ieg-mainz.de/friverplus/treaties/225> [2025-03-07]

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## Notes

- <sup>1.</sup> ^ See Fader, Honnête Homme 2003. On the *honnête homme* see the influential treatise by Faret, L'Honneste-homme 1630; for the French adaptation of Castiglione's concept of the *cortegiano* for the 17th century see Burke, Die Geschicke 1996.
- <sup>2.</sup> ^ La Gorce, Jean-Baptiste Lully 2002, pp. 85–90; Zaslaw, Lully's Orchestra 1990.
- <sup>3.</sup> ^ Batteux, Les Beaux Arts 1746; Rousseau, Œuvres complètes, vol. 5, 1995.
- <sup>4.</sup> ^ On Gemini's work for the French court see Erben, Paris und Rom 2004, pp. 51–135.
- <sup>5.</sup> ^ On Cavalli's reception in Paris see e.g. La Gorce, Jean-Baptiste Lully 2002, pp. 105–108.
- <sup>6.</sup> ^ See the letter from René Oувrand to Abbé Nicaise of 16 July 1666, BnF, Manuscrits, Mélange Colbert 264, f.°160–164, quoted in La Gorce, Jean-Baptiste Lully 2002, p. 130: "... vous savez par occasion que le Roi a congédié sa musique italienne depuis quinze jours et qu'ainsi ils s'en retourneront en leur pays, hors peut-être la Signora Anna. Le Roy y perd moins que nous, parce qu'il ne les entendait jamais et l'on s'était efforcé de les lui rendre inutiles. Nous en avons quelquefois le plaisir et je croyais qu'il était de la grandeur du Roi de les garder du moins comme l'on fait des lions, des tigres et des aigles dans les Tuileries pour les faire voir à ceux qui ne peuvent pas aller dans le pays où naissent ces animaux." – "... as you may know, two weeks ago the king dismissed his Italian musicians, who now will be returning to their own country, with the possible exception of Signora Anna. In so doing, the king loses less than we do, for he never listened to them and all efforts were made to make them seem superfluous to him. We sometimes had the pleasure and I thought it would be a show of the king's magnanimity at least to keep them in the Tuileries like the lions, tigers and eagle, so that they might be shown to those unable to visit these animals' native countries" (translated by J.P. Kroll).
- <sup>7.</sup> ^ See Duron, La Musique Italienne 1996.

8. ^ Prunières, *L'Opéra italien 1913*; La Gorce, Jean-Baptiste Lully 2002, p. 106.
9. ^ On the founding of the *Académie de France à Rome* see Erben, Paris und Rom 2004, pp. 137–218.
10. ^ See La Gorce, Jean-Baptiste Lully 2002, p. 130.
11. ^ On Lully's cooperation with Lambert see La Gorce, Jean-Baptiste Lully 2002, pp. 426–427.
12. ^ On Louis XIV and his last performance as a dancer see Braun / Gugerli, *Macht des Tanzes* 1993, p. 136.
13. ^ "Avertissement" by Cardinal Mazarin, quoted in Bonnet, *Histoire generale 1724*, pp. 72–73: "Après avoir reçu cette année tant de victoires du Ciel, ce n'est pas assez de l'avoir remercié dans les Temples, il faut encore que le resentment de nos cœurs éclate par des réjouissances publiques: C'est ainsi que l'on célèbre de grandes Fêtes; une partie du jour s'emploie à louer Dieu, & l'autre aux passe-tems honnêtes." – "Heaven having granted us so many victories this year, it is not enough to show our gratitude in the temples. The feelings in our hearts must be made to shine in public celebrations. It is thus that the great feasts are celebrated, with one half of the day given over to the praise of God, the other to honest pastimes" (translated by J.P. Kroll). See also Méneſtrier, *Des Ballets 1682*, pp. e iij–e iiij.
14. ^ Méneſtrier, *Des Ballets 1682*, pp. e iij–e iiij: "nous nous contentons d'en [de la danse] faire des divertissemens honnêtes pour former le corps des actions nobles, & de bienséance. Nous en faisons des réjouissances publiques, & souvent sous des allegories ingenieuses on represente les événemens qui font le bonheur de l'Etat, pour en faire goûter aux peuples toutes les douceurs, sous les appas du plaisir & du divertissement qui les leur rendent plus sensible." – "we will content ourselves with dance for the purpose of honest entertainment, to shape the body for noble actions and for seemliness. We use it for public festivities, and ingenious allegories are often used to represent those events which constitute the state's happiness, the better to make it known to the people in guise of that entertainment and pleasure which will best make them aware of it." (translated by J.P. Kroll). For a short biography of Claude-François Méneſtrier see Schroedter, *Vom "Affect" zur "Action"* 2004, pp. 43–45.
15. ^ Jullien, *Musique 1896*, p. 17; Christout, *Le Ballet 1967*, p. 267.
16. ^ See *Articles de la paix 1668*.
17. ^ See Albert Cohen, in: Lully, *Œuvres complètes 2001*, vol. 6, p. 161.
18. ^ Lully, *Œuvres complètes 2001*, vol. 6, p. 161, lines 325–334: "Pour le roi, Européen. L'Europe de tout temps a paru plus féconde | En illustre héros que le reste du monde. | La gloire, la grandeur, l'exacte fermeté, | Le courage, l'esprit, la sagesse profonde | En sujets différents ont chez elle habité, | Et César, et Caton les partageaint dans Rome; | Toutes ces qualités jointes en même lieu | Sur le trône français accompagnent un homme | Que dans l'Antiquité l'on eût pris pour un dieu, | Et qui se fait connaître assez sans qu'on le nomme." See auch [Benserade], *Ballet Royal de Flore [Libretto] 1669*, p. 5: "Ce Ballet, pris en son sens allegorique, marque la Paix que le Roy vient de donner à l'Europe, l'abondance & le bonheur dont il comble ses sujets, & le respect qu'ont pour sa Majesté tous les Peuples de la Terre" – "This ballet represents an allegory of the peace bestowed upon Europe by the King, the abundance and happiness with which he has filled his subjects and the respect which all the world's peoples accord His Majesty." (translated by J.P. Kroll)
19. ^ On the cast of the first performance of the *Ballet royal de Flore* see Albert Cohen, in: Lully, *Œuvres complètes 2001*, vol. 6, p. XVII.
20. ^ Méneſtrier, *Des Ballets 1682*, p. 5: "C'est la gloire de la France d'avoir achevé de régler tous les beaux Arts" – "It is the glory of France to have regulated all the fine arts." (translated by J.P. Kroll).
21. ^ Dépambour-Tarride, *La Création 1987*, p. 40; Yates, *The French Academies 1988*, pp. 292–297.
22. ^ See Dépambour-Tarride, *La Création 1987*, pp. 36–39.
23. ^ [Louis XIV.], *Permission pour tenir Academie royale de musique 1672*, p. 73: "... bien informez de l'intelligence & grande connoissance que s'est acquis nostre cher et bien-ami Jean Baptiste Lully au fait de la Musique ...; Nous [Ludwig XIV] avons audit Sieur Lully permis & accordé, permettons & accordons par ces presentes signées de nostre main, d'établir une Academie Royale de Musique dans nostre bonne Ville de Paris, qui sera composée de tel nombre & qualité de personnes qu'il avisera bon estre .... Faisant tres-expresses inhibitions & défenses à toutes personnes de quelque qualité & condition qu'elles soient ... d'y entrer sans payer. Comme aussi de faire chanter aucune Piece entiere en Musique, soit en Vers François, ou autres Langues, sans la permission par écrit dudit Sieur Lully, à peine de dix mil livres d'amende, & de confiscation des Theatres, Machines, Decorations, Habits, & autres choses, applicable un tiers à Nous, un tiers à l'Hospital General, & l'autre tiers audit Sieur Lully ..." English translation: Bianconi, *Music in the Seventeenth Century 1987*, pp. 241–242.
24. ^ Charles Perrault (*Mémoires de ma vie*, Paris 1842, p. 92), quoted in Dépambour-Tarride, *La Création 1987*, p. 36: "qu'il [le Roi] ne pouvait se passer de cet homme dans ses divertissements et qu'il fallait lui accorder ce qu'il demandait" – "that he [the

- king] could not do without this man in his pleasures and that he must be granted what he demanded" (translated by C. Falk). On Jean-Baptiste Lully's relevance to musical *divertissements* in the later 1600s see also Braun / Gugerli, *Macht des Tanzes* 1993, p. 131.
25. ^ On the consequences for Lully of Louis XIV's late turn towards religion see La Gorce, *Jean-Baptiste Lully* 2002, pp. 305–340, sowie La Gorce, *L'Opéra et son public* 1979.
  26. ^ Hochradner, *Das 18. Jahrhundert* 1998, pp. 205–215; La Gorce, *Jean-Baptiste Lully* 2002, pp. 109–114; see also generally: Launay / Delumeau, *La musique religieuse en France* 1993.
  27. ^ See also Rosow, *Power and Display* 2005.
  28. ^ A brief overview of the form of a *tragédie lyrique* can be found in Charlton, *Genre and Form* 2009.
  29. ^ Leopold, *Die Oper im 17. Jahrhundert* 2004, p. 182.
  30. ^ On Charpentier's operas see Leopold, *Die Oper im 17. Jahrhundert* 2004, pp. 197–201.
  31. ^ Schneider, ch. "Tragédie lyrique", in: Schneider / Wiesend, *Die Oper im 18. Jahrhundert* 2001, pp. 147–220; Wood, *Music and Drama* 1996. On the development of the *tragédie lyrique* in the 18th century see Calella, *Das Ensemble* 2000.
  32. ^ Perrault, *Le Siècle de Louis le Grand* 1687.
  33. ^ On the *Querelle des Bouffons* see e.g. Fabiano, *La Querelle* 2005; Reichenburg, *Contribution* 1937. On the controversy between the followers of Gluck and Piccini see Calella, *Ein musikalischer Streit?* 2000; Dotoli, *Piccini e la Francia* 2001.
  34. ^ On the *Académie de Baïf* see Yates, *The French Academies* 1988, pp. 36–76, 236–274. See also Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle* 1636, vol. 2, p. 161: "nul ne nous donne assez de lumiere pour restituer cét art" – "nothing gives sufficient illumination for us to recreate this [ancient] art" (translated by J.P. Kroll).
  35. ^ Quoted in Erben, *Paris und Rom* 2004, p. XVIII.
  36. ^ Ménestrier, *Des Représentations* 1681; Ménestrier, *Des Ballets* 1682; Pure, *Idée des spectacles* 1668.
  37. ^ Rameau, *Le Maître à danser* 1725, pp. xj–xij: "Lully, qui dès sa premiere jeunesse s'étoit attaché à la Cour de Louis le Grand, oublia en quelque façon sa Patrie, & fit si bien par ses travaux que la France triompha sans peine & pour toûjours de l'Italie, par le charme de ces même spectacles que Rome & Venise avoient inventez." Translation: Rameau, *The Dancing Master* 1728, p. xxii (spelling modernised).
  38. ^ Rameau, *Le Maître à danser* 1725, pp. xj–xij (Rameau, *The Dancing Master* 1728, p. xxii).
  39. ^ For a comparison of the courts of Vienna and Versailles from the 16th to the late 18th century see Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles* 2003; and Schumann, *Die andere Sonne* 2003.
  40. ^ Ebner, *Balletti francesi à 4*. On how Lully's dances entered Cavalli's *Ercole amante* see Little / Jenne, *Dance* 1991, p. 12.
  41. ^ An example of the reception of the *Ballet de cour* in the German-speaking countries is the *Ballet von Zusammenkunfft und Wirkung der sieben Planeten*, first performed in Dresden in 1678 (under Elector Johann Georg II. [1613–1680]). See Hoffmann, *Das Dresdner Planetenballett* 1999.
  42. ^ On north German operatic practice around 1700 see e.g. Seebald, *Libretti* 2009.
  43. ^ On the repertoire of Hamburg's Gänsemarkt opera see Wenzel, *Geschichte der Hamburger Oper* 1982; Wolff, *Die Barockoper in Hamburg* 1957; Marx / Schröder, *Die Hamburger Gänsemarkt-Oper* 1995.
  44. ^ Leopold, *Die Oper im 17. Jahrhundert* 2004, p. 279.
  45. ^ On the operatic repertoire in London see Woodfield, *Opera* 2001.
  46. ^ Yet French operas were repeatedly staged abroad, for instance Lully's *Acis et Galathée*, which had premiered only three years earlier, in Hamburg in 1689. See Schneider, *Die Opern Lullys* 1981.
  47. ^ Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages* 1998, p. 141 (spelling modernised).
  48. ^ On the development of the overture as modelled on Lully see La Gorce, *Jean-Baptiste Lully* 2002, pp. 395–397.
  49. ^ On the political significance of the *Ballet de la Nuit* (also known as *Ballet de la prospérité des armes de la France*) see e.g. Christout, *Le Ballet* 1967, pp. 68–74; Hilton, *Dance* 1981, p. 7; Braun / Gugerli, *Macht des Tanzes* 1993, p. 135; Bonnet, *Histoire generale* 1724, pp. 72–73.
  50. ^ "Avertissement" by Cardinal Mazarin, quoted in: Bonnet, *Histoire generale* 1724, pp. 72–73, and in Ménestrier, *Des Ballets* 1682, Préface.
  51. ^ On the development of the Italian *sinfonia* in the 17th century see Kunze, *Die Sinfonie im 18. Jahrhundert* 1993, pp. 28–44.
  52. ^ Mattheson, *Das Neu-Eröffnete Orchestre* 1713, p. 170: "Unter allen Pieçen, die instrumentaliter excecütiret werden / behält ja wol per majora die so genandte Overture das Prae." – "Among all pieces performed by instrumentalists, majority opinion would surely accord precedence to the overture" (translated by J.P. Kroll).

53. ^ Mattheson, Der vollkommene Capellmeister 1739, p. 234: "deren Character die Edelmuth seyn muß"; "mehr Lobes verdient, als Worte hieselbst Raum haben".
54. ^ Mattheson, Der vollkommene Capellmeister 1739, pp. 224–233.
55. ^ Borckmann, Vorrede, in: Pasch, Beschreibung wahrer Tanz-Kunst 1707, p. [XXII–XXXII]; Taubert, Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister 1717.
56. ^ Translated by J.P. Kroll. Mattheson, Das Neu-Eröffnete Orchestre 1713, p. 208: "So viel muß man gerne gestehen: In der Instrumental, insonderheit aber in der Choraischen oder Tantz-Music sind die Frantzosen Meister / und werden überall / ohne imitiret zu werden / imitiret. Wenn man dannenhero Musicam Gallicam, respectu Italicae, alteram ab illâ nennen wolte / würde es eben kein groß Unrecht seyn / weil doch diese beyde / die Italiänische und Frantzösische Music nemlich / alleine etwas eigenes und originelles an sich zu haben scheinen; dahingegen andere sich gemeiniglich gerne auf eine oder alle beyde beziehen / und entweder eine Nachahmung oder Vermischung machen."
57. ^ Mattheson, Das Neu-Eröffnete Orchestre 1713, p. 208.
58. ^ Mattheson, Das Neu-Eröffnete Orchestre 1713, p. 208.
59. ^ Lecerf de la Viéville, Comparaison 1725, p. 306.
60. ^ Mattheson, Das Beschützte Orchestre 1717, p. 237: "Überhaupt hat die Frantzösische Instrumental-Music vor der Italiänischen einen Streich voraus".

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Translated by: Joe P. Kroll

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#### Filed under:

Models and Stereotypes › Versailles Model › French Music

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## Indices

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- François Couperin: L'Apothéose de Lulli, Remercement de Lulli: à Apollon, 1724, performers: Jaffa Baroque Ensemble; audio source: [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) <http://www.ieg-ego.eu><https://archive.org/details/LapothoseDeLulli-RemercementDeLulli>)

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- Henry Purcell (1659–1695), Dido and Aeneas, overture, ca. 1688, conductor: Emmanuelle Haim, Le Concert d'Astrée: Purcell, Dido and Aeneas; source: YouTube [✉](http://www.ieg-ego.euhttps://youtu.be/hnPo7mtkh7M) (http://www.ieg-ego.euhttps://youtu.be/hnPo7mtkh7M)

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