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# English Dramatick Opera, 1661–1706



Andrew R. Walkling

# English Dramatick Opera, 1661–1706

*English Dramatick Opera, 1661–1706* is the first comprehensive examination of the distinctively English form known as “dramatick opera”, which appeared on the London stage in the mid-1670s and lasted until its displacement by Italian through-composed opera in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Andrew Walkling argues that, while the musical elements of this form are crucial to its definition and history, the origins of the genre lie principally in a tradition of spectacular stagecraft that first manifested itself in England in the mid-1660s as part of a hitherto unidentified dramatic sub-genre, to which Walkling gives the name “spectacle-tragedy”.

Armed with this new understanding, the book explores a number of historical and interpretive issues, including the physical and rhetorical configurations of performative spectacle, the administrative maneuverings of the two “patent” theatre companies, the construction and deployment of the technologically advanced Dorset Garden Theatre in 1670–71, the critical response to generic, technical, and ideological developments in Restoration drama, and the shifting balance between machine spectacle and song-and-dance entertainment throughout the later decades of the seventeenth century, including in the dramatick operas of Henry Purcell. This study combines the materials and methodologies of music history, theatre history, literary studies, and bibliography to fashion an entirely new approach to the history of spectacular and musical drama on the English Restoration stage.

This book serves as a companion to the Routledge publication *Masque and Opera in England, 1656–1688* (2017).

**Andrew R. Walkling** is Associate Professor of Art History, English, and Theatre at Binghamton University (State University of New York, USA). He received his PhD in British History from Cornell University, and has published widely on court culture and cultural production in Restoration England, and on the music of Henry Purcell.

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# English Dramatick Opera, 1661–1706

**Andrew R. Walkling**

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## For Lakshmi

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# Acknowledgments

In contrast to the lengthy gestation of my previous book *Masque and Opera in England, 1656–1688*, to which this volume serves as a companion, the present book was written over a remarkably short span of time. Originally conceived as a third part to the former two-part study, designed to extend briefly my examination of courtly musical drama of the Restoration into the sphere of the public theatres, it rapidly grew beyond its original bounds as my view of the genre's historical context and theoretical possibilities came into focus. I want to begin, then, with a particular expression of thanks to those at Ashgate who saw the potential for a second book and acted thereon, even in the midst of profound changes in their professional circumstances. Laura Macy, as one of her last acts before handing over the reins, shepherded a contract through the approval process so as to ensure that all would go smoothly following Ashgate's absorption into Routledge. I am exceedingly grateful to Laura, as also to Roberta Marvin, who enthusiastically approved the project for the *Ashgate Interdisciplinary Studies in Opera* series; to Emma Gallon, who stepped so fearlessly into Laura's capacious shoes; and to Heidi Bishop who, with the expert assistance of Annie Vaughan, has patiently seen the book through to publication.

The acknowledgments to *Masque and Opera* provide a comprehensive accounting of those who have so steadfastly supported my career since its earliest stages, and my abiding gratitude to them is in no way diminished with the setting out of this second milestone. If anything, it is an even more conclusive testament to the results of their generous assistance at every step of the way. With that said, a few acknowledgments pertaining to this book in particular are in order. First and foremost, I am exceptionally grateful to Ellen Harris, who reviewed the book anonymously for Routledge, providing numerous helpful comments, and who then augmented that role by generously offering further advice and support once her identity had been revealed. Special thanks are also due to Amanda Eubanks Winkler, who not only read and commented upon a draft of this book, but who also (I later learned) was the unidentified external reader of the previous volume. She is acknowledged there, but only within a longer list of esteemed colleagues (where, to my shame, I erroneously alphabetized her under "W" instead of "E"). I also owe a considerable debt to the indefatigable Olive Baldwin and

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The conditions under which this book was written are less complicated and less drawn out than those appertaining to *Masque and Opera*, but a few special acknowledgments are in order. Work on the introduction and on the last chapter was carried out during moments stolen from other projects while I was on fellowships at the Huntington Library, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and Houghton Library at Harvard University as part of my sabbatical in 2016–17. Prior to that time, I wrote the majority of the book during teaching semesters and summers at Binghamton University, relying on materials consulted over the years at a range of libraries and archives, including (but not limited to) the British Library, the Bodleian Library, The National Archives, the London Metropolitan Archives, Houghton Library (including the Harvard Theatre Collection) and the Loeb Music Library at Harvard University, the Library of Congress, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Huntington Library, and of course the Binghamton University Library, whose excellent holdings of scholarly books are supplemented both by a number of indispensable online databases and by the diligent efforts of the Interlibrary Loan Department. I am grateful to every one of the kind and helpful staff members I encountered at each of these institutions. I am very fortunate to have received a subvention from the Margarita M. Hanson Endowment of the American Musicological Society, funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, to cover the cost of obtaining and licensing the images reproduced in this book, and I offer my warm appreciation to AMS Executive Director Robert Judd for his advice and assistance. Special thanks are also due to others who have facilitated my efforts in a variety of ways: to Tom Blake, who patiently guided me in the wise husbandry of my computer technology; to Lisa Gould, who has repeatedly helped me with space management issues; to my many supportive colleagues at Binghamton, especially in my three “home” departments; and, as always, to Andrew and Estelle Wilson, whose loving and generous friendship will always be a source of joy and delight.

As so often seems the case in the world of scholarship, it is the support of my family that has really made all of this possible. My parents, Robert and Julia

Walkling, have continued to show a combination of unwavering support, friendship, and genuine interest in my work that would be the envy of anyone in my position. My son George has blossomed into precisely the kind of thoughtful interlocutor I always knew he would become. And Lakshmi, my inseparable companion and soulmate—and now a Doctor of Philosophy in her own right—saw me through it all, stubbornly refusing to allow me to surrender to indolence, and making the swift completion of this volume as much her business as mine. Her selflessness and dedication will continue to blaze brightly, and my deepest gratitude will inevitably follow. This one's for you, Sweetheart!

## Series editor's preface

*Ashgate Interdisciplinary Studies in Opera* provides a centralized and prominent forum for the presentation of cutting-edge scholarship that draws on numerous disciplinary approaches on a wide range of subjects associated with the creation, performance, dissemination, and reception of opera and related genres in various historical and social contexts. The series includes topics from the seventeenth century to the present and from all geographical locations, including non-Western traditions.

In recent years, the field of opera studies has not only come into its own but has developed significantly, going beyond traditional musicological approaches to reflect new perspectives from literary criticism and comparative literature, cultural history, philosophy, art history, theatre history, gender studies, film studies, political science, philology, psycho-analysis, and even medicine. The new brands of scholarship have allowed a more comprehensive and intensive interrogation of the complex nexus of means of artistic expression operative in opera, one that has meaningfully challenged prevalent historicist and formalist musical approaches. Today, interdisciplinary, or as some prefer cross-disciplinary, opera studies are receiving increasingly widespread attention, and the ways in which scholars, practitioners, and the public think about the artform known as opera continue to change and expand. *Ashgate Interdisciplinary Studies in Opera* seeks to move this important trend forward by including essay collections and monographs that reflect the ever-increasing interest in opera in non-musical contexts.

Roberta Montemorra Marvin  
Series Editor

## Notes to the reader

Readers of my earlier book *Masque and Opera in England, 1656–1688* may recall the series of explanatory notes with which I prefaced that volume, addressing certain technical matters that might be said to fall under the rubric of “housekeeping”. The principles and practices outlined there are equally applicable here, and in certain cases, in order to avoid tedious repetition, I refer the reader to that more detailed treatment. The topics covered include the problem of dating “Old Style” versus “New Style” documents and events when both the British Isles and Continental Europe are implicated; the reckoning of calendar years in English documents that use the “civil-year” system, in which the new year was understood to begin on 25 March; and my commitment to the citation of primary sources wherever possible and to their accurate diplomatic transcription, tempered by certain exceptions.<sup>1</sup> Owing to the different—*i.e.* principally public rather than courtly—character of the materials covered in this book, and hence the somewhat different types of documentary evidence, I have slightly modified my practices as they pertain to the first two issues enumerated above. With respect to dating, the vast majority of dates are given according to the “Old Style” (*i.e.* Julian Calendar) used in Britain at the time, unless they relate exclusively to a Continental event or document, in which case “New Style” is explicitly indicated in parentheses; however, when an event occurring in England is recorded by a foreign observer according to that observer’s use of the newer Gregorian Calendar, I supply a double date (*e.g.* “20/30 September”), leaving readers to distinguish the “actual” date of the event according to English reckoning (the first number) from the date given in the document itself (the second number). As regards calendar years, rather than silently modernizing the year when a document employs the civil-year system, I explicitly signal that fact by supplying the correct digit in square brackets (*e.g.* “169[2]”).

The other two categories addressed in the preliminary notes to *Masque and Opera*—covering the referencing of some administrative records and the citation of certain essential scholarly materials—merit more comprehensive treatment here. I have therefore copied the relevant passages, sometimes word-for-word, below, albeit with a few important modifications dictated (again) by the shift in focus between the previous book and this one.

<sup>1</sup> See *Masque and Opera*, xvii, for a discussion of the exceptions, which include certain typographical anomalies such as long “s”, ligatures, swash capitals, and spacing, as well as a special category carved out for the bibliographical citation of book titles.

## Referencing of court and theatrical administrative records

Some of this book's argument is dependent upon a thorough scrutiny of manuscript documents, and many of those documents constitute official records produced by the royal court, treating administrative and financial matters relating to (among other things) the patent theatre companies, whose members held official, if unsalaried, positions as sworn royal servants. The vast majority of these records are held by The National Archives at Kew, London (known until 2003 as the Public Record Office), where they are ordinarily classed according to the government department by which they were originally produced. In the present book, citations preceded by the following abbreviations should be understood as referring to manuscripts found at this repository:

ADM	Records of the Admiralty
C	Records of Chancery
E	Records of the Exchequer
LC	Records of the Lord Chamberlain's Department
PRO	Public Record Office: Gifts and Deposits <sup>2</sup>
RG	Registers
SP	Records of the State Paper Office
T	Records of the Treasury
WORK	Records of the Ministry ( <i>formerly</i> Office) of Works

Thanks to the work of a number of extremely diligent scholars, certain types of documents, from The National Archives and elsewhere, have been thoroughly calendared, allowing much of the data they contain to be accessed from any good research library. Despite my concern to examine and retranscribe original sources wherever possible, I have sought to promote both accessibility and accountability by consistently providing parenthetical cross-references to the following four comprehensive calendars, taking care to note cases where information has been mis-cited, or where a relevant document is missing from the appropriate calendar. Each calendar is cited according to the short references listed below:

Ashbee	Andrew Ashbee, ed., <i>Records of English Court Music</i> (9 vols.: vols. 1–4: Snodland, Kent: Andrew Ashbee, 1986–91; vols. 5–9: Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991–96) [ <i>N.B.</i> vol. 1: 1660–1685; vol. 2: 1685–1714; vol. 3: 1625–1649; vol. 4: 1603–1625; vol. 5: 1625–1714; vol. 6: 1558–1603; vol. 7: 1485–1558; vol. 8: 1485–1714; vol. 9: index].
<i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic</i>	Mary Anne Everett Green, F. H. Blackburne Daniell, and Francis Bickley, eds., <i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1660–1685</i> (28 vols.: London:

2 For a discussion of the nature of this class of documents and my handling of them, see *Masque and Opera*, xviii n. 6.

- Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts; Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green; Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer; Her/His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1860–1939); E. K. Timings, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Preserved in the Public Records Office*[.] *Domestic Series*, 1685–1689 (3 vols.: London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1960–72); William John Hardy and Edward Bateson, eds., *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series*, 1689–1702 (11 vols.: London: Her/His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1895–1937) [*N.B.* volumes cited by date of coverage].
- Calendar of Treasury Books* William A. Shaw, ed., *Calendar of Treasury Books* (8 vols. in 15: London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1904–23).
- Register* Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, comps. and eds., *A Register of English Theatrical Documents 1660–1737* (2 vols.: Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991) [*N.B.* items cited by catalogue number].

### Citation of sources

The select bibliography at the end of this volume lists printed primary and secondary sources deemed to be of central importance to the topic at hand and/or that occur multiple times in the footnotes. Within the footnotes themselves, full references are supplied only at a source's first appearance in the book; subsequently, abbreviated references (consisting of author's surname and, where necessary, an abbreviated title or title keyword) are given, but with cross-references provided where a substantial interval has elapsed since the initial full reference. The select bibliography generally does not include printed primary and secondary sources that appear only in a single footnote; nor does it list any manuscript sources.

A few scholarly studies and editions of seventeenth-century texts are either so ubiquitous or so essential to the fabric of the present book that I have chosen to give their full citations here, rather than in the footnotes and bibliography. They are listed alphabetically according to the short reference used throughout:

- Evelyn, *Diary* E. S. de Beer, ed., *The Diary of John Evelyn* (6 vols.: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955).
- Holman, *Fiddlers* Peter Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court, 1540–1690* (Oxford Monographs on Music; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

- The London Stage* William Van Lennep, ed., *The London Stage, 1660–1800: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces Together with Casts, Box-Receipts and Contemporary Comment Compiled from the Playbills, Newspapers and Theatrical Diaries of the Period[:]* Part 1: 1660–1700 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965).
- Milhous and Hume, “Dating Play  
Premières” Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, “Dating Play  
Premières” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 22 (1974): 374–405.
- Pepys, *Diary* Robert Latham and William Matthews, eds., *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (11 vols.: London: Bell & Hyman; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970–83).
- Price, *Henry Purcell* Curtis Alexander Price, *Henry Purcell and the London Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- Stationers’ Register* G. E. Briscoe Eyre, Charles Robert Rivington, and H. R. Plomer, eds., *A Transcript of the Registers of the Worshipful Company of Stationers: From 1640–1708 A.D.* (3 vols.: London: [the Bible Office of His Majesty’s Printers for the Roxburghe Club], 1913–14; rpt. Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1950, 1967).
- Term Catalogues* Edward Arber, ed., *The Term Catalogues, 1668–1709 A.D.* (3 vols.: vol. 1: London: Aberdeen University Press for Professor Edward Arber, 1903; vols. 2–3: London: Guilford and Hart for Professor Edward Arber, 1905–6; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1965).
- Walkling, *Masque and Opera* Andrew R. Walkling, *Masque and Opera in England, 1656–1688* (Ashgate Interdisciplinary Studies in Opera; Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017).

A few words are in order regarding two of the sources listed above. Over the half-century since its publication, *The London Stage*—specifically, Part 1 of the series, which covers a period for which documentation is far more haphazard than it is for later years<sup>3</sup>—has steadily decreased in utility as its comprehensiveness is eroded and its conclusions challenged through the emergence of new documentation and analysis. While Part 1 of *The London Stage* remains the essential starting-point for research into Restoration theatre history, it is no longer considered wise to cite it as a source in its own right or to depend on

3 See Robert D. Hume, “Theatre Performance Records in London, 1660–1705”, *Review of English Studies* n. s., 67 (2016): 468–95.

its conclusions without thoroughly checking more recent scholarship first. A particular problem with *The London Stage* is its unsystematic approach to estimating the dates of theatrical premieres, an issue identified as early as 1974 in Milhous and Hume's "Dating Play Premieres". Too often, even in our own time, scholars confidently cite the premiere dates given in *The London Stage* without even consulting Milhous and Hume's article, whose methodical appraisal often uncovers serious errors in the earlier work. Barring the appearance of an updated, revised edition of *The London Stage*, Part 1,<sup>4</sup> I have chosen to avoid comprehensively citing it, even as I acknowledge my indebtedness to it as a reference work of first resort. That indebtedness can be seen in the fact that I do reference it a number of times, albeit only in specific kinds of instances: where a particular interpretive point is at issue, where subsequent scholarship indicates an error in *The London Stage* that warrants comment, where a conjectured premiere date is not challenged by Milhous and Hume, or where *The London Stage* calendars a series of performances whose documentation is unambiguous and does not require detailed citation in my own footnotes.

As in *Masque and Opera*, and pleading the same justifications laid out there (p. xxi), I have avoided the temptation to further distend my footnotes with references to the Wing and RISM catalogues or to deploy RISM library sigla. The footnotes, readers will undoubtedly agree, are sufficiently labyrinthine as they presently stand—although, once again, I sincerely hope that those who choose to tackle this book will find them, with the book as a whole, not a terrifying ordeal but rather a compelling and even joyful journey of discovery. I certainly have.

4 For Hume's completely revised (and fully indexed) edition of the early years of Part 2 of *The London Stage*, covering the seasons 1700–1 to 1710–11, see [www.personal.psu.edu/hb1/London%20Stage%202001/](http://www.personal.psu.edu/hb1/London%20Stage%202001/).

# Introduction

## Arriving at dramattick opera

At the outset of my 2017 study *Masque and Opera in England, 1656–1688*, I invoked the name of the pioneering early-twentieth-century scholar of English opera, Edward J. Dent.<sup>1</sup> It was Dent, I observed, who originally conceived and articulated the notion of an “operatic principle” upon which the study of seventeenth-century musical drama could be founded. According to Dent, this principle “is neither the normal musical principle nor the normal dramatic principle”, but rather acknowledges that “[e]ssential musical principles may sometimes be modified under the influence of the stage, and the normal dramatic values are often entirely altered by the concomitance of music”.<sup>2</sup> Such a state of affairs, Dent averred, left the historian of opera and related forms in a bind: given that our modern understanding of opera is predicated on an accretion of historical precedents, many of them determined not by rigorous artistic logic but rather by commercial expediency, how do we describe, categorize, and evaluate the operatic endeavors of the past, particularly during an era when the form was still in its infancy? The aim of my first book was to go some way towards understanding how musical drama took root in England during the years leading up to and during the reigns of Charles II (1660–85) and his brother James II (1685–88). In the process, I sought to sketch out a means of sorting through the generic jumble that constituted what contemporaries regarded as “operatic”, focusing attention on two distinct phenomena: the revival of musical-theatrical “recreational” entertainments, most of which featured youthful courtly performers, and the development of interest in through-composed opera, which revolved principally around the recruitment and deployment of foreign-born “occupational” musicians and dancers. Both of these strands were centered predominantly on the activities of the royal court, which served as their primary sponsor and ideological inspiration. Such a task, while complicated in its own right, allowed me to skirt some of the most thorny conceptual challenges associated with the history of musical drama in England during the latter half of the seventeenth century. The two generic categories treated in

1 Walkling, *Masque and Opera*, 1.

2 Edward J. Dent, *Foundations of English Opera: A Study of Musical Drama in England During the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928; rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1965), vii.

## 2 Introduction

*Masque and Opera* can each be justified on readily discernible logical grounds: the story of the introduction of through-composed opera, however fragmentary its documentation and however desultory its results, traces the fortunes of a recognizable dramatic genre, already formulated elsewhere and hence available for adoption in England, while my account of court balls and masques, by contrast, functions as a kind of categorical portmanteau—encompassing a range of entertainments that included instances of pure dancing, straight plays, spoken-and-sung masques, and through-sung operatic-style works, some mostly private, some quite flagrantly public, all having as their common denominator the notion of lavish courtly display—that can be expanded to accommodate whatever relevant data one is able to unearth.

Neither of these easy classifications, however, is applicable to the subject of the present study. The form that I call “dramatick opera” continues to perplex historians of music and drama with its inherent lack of definitional precision. Contemporaries (that is, English contemporaries) frequently resorted to calling it simply “opera”, even as other, quite different types of musical drama—through-composed pieces derived from Continental sources or practice that were appearing simultaneously on London’s stages—utilized precisely the same generic label. Yet while it is important to acknowledge and indeed to reflect upon the implications of contemporary terminology, modern scholarship also has a responsibility to try and make sense of past practice in the light of hindsight. That hindsight must consider the ephemerality of a form that, having blazed into prominence like some sort of theatrical supernova in the middle of the 1670s, had exhausted itself within thirty years, and thereafter effectively ceased to exist as a creative force in English drama. Although there is much that could be said about the supplanting of dramatick opera by the cosmopolitan operatic form in the first decade of the eighteenth century, my primary purpose in the present book is not to account for dramatick opera’s decline, but rather to understand its origins in the early years of the Restoration, its emergence at a crucial moment in the history of the theatres, and its distinctive qualities during its brief efflorescence.

Before we can turn to questions regarding the genre’s derivation, history, characteristics, and place in the broader category of musical drama, it is first necessary to attempt a basic description of the form and to address some problems attending upon its definition. The phenomenon of dramatick opera, with its intermingling of spoken and sung passages, looks upon first inspection like nothing more than a play with added—that is to say, interpolated—musical episodes. These episodes are generally static in nature, consisting of shows, ceremonies, pronouncements, and apparitions, and thus would seem to accomplish little in the way of advancing the plot of the drama into which they are inserted. Rather, they could be said to function as a means of elaboration, designed to enhance the ceremonial, exotic, and supernatural aspects of the play (usually a pastoral-heroic tragicomedy) by harnessing the lyricism and the potential for reflective contemplation that musical text-setting facilitates. Such a description is accurate up to a point, and can offer a general idea of dramatick opera’s superficial features, but it hardly begins to explain how the genre emerged, or to identify those more fundamental qualities

that distinguish it from other works produced in an age when the introduction—on a limited scale—of musical entertainments into plays of all kinds was common practice. In the absence of a clear distinction between plays-with-musical-elements and dramattick opera, scholars from Edward Dent onwards, in attempting to characterize the form, have often fallen back on a strategy of enumerating an inventory of works rather than sketching a coherent developmental narrative. A good example of this can be found in Robert D. Hume’s magisterial survey *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century*, which, under the heading “*The Musical Spectacular: ‘English’ Opera*”, seeks to make sense of what the author calls “an untidy sub-genre” and “a miscellany form”.<sup>3</sup> Hume’s brief account embraces a wide variety of both courtly and public musical dramas, including the court play *The Empress of Morocco* (1673), the masque *Calisto* (1675) and the through-composed court-sponsored operas *Ariane* (1674) and *Albion and Albanus* (1685), as well as a selection of highlights from what has become a standard list of patent-company “operatic” productions from the 1670s and 1690s: *Macbeth* (1673), *The Tempest* (1674), *Psyche* (1675), *King Arthur* (1691), and *The Fairy-Queen* (1692/1693). Other, similar works, not mentioned by Hume but generally considered constituents of this latter group, include *Circe* (1677), *The Prophetess, or the History of Dioclesian* (1690), *The Indian Queen* (1695), *Brutus of Alba* (1696), *Cinthia and Endimion* (1697), *The World in the Moon* (1697), *Rinaldo and Armida* (1698), and *The Island Princess* (1699), plus several more from the first decade of the eighteenth century. Even if we were to eliminate the courtly works, whose stage history and generic characteristics are in fact quite distinct from those of dramattick opera (and which I have therefore examined elsewhere<sup>4</sup>), Hume’s charge of irreducible diversity appears at first glance like a logical hypothesis, given the inconsistencies of traditional generic identity that the corpus exhibits: *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, and *The Fairy-Queen* are Shakespearean adaptations (the first tragic, the other two comic); *Dioclesian*, *The Island Princess*, and *The Indian Queen* are adaptations of tragicomic plays by John Fletcher and (in the last case) the Restoration gentleman-playwright Sir Robert Howard; *Psyche* is a reworked version of a French Arcadian *tragédie-ballet*; *The World in the Moon* is a ridiculous comedy; and *Brutus of Alba* is some kind of bizarre recycled pastiche, as we shall see in Chapter 5. Only *Circe* (a downright tragedy), *King Arthur*, *Cinthia and Endimion*, and *Rinaldo and Armida* (all tragicomic in character) can advance any claim to true dramatic originality—and even these are derived in the first instance from classic historical-mythological tales. Hence, according to the system of generic categorization usually applied to early modern drama, there is no single criterion aside from the presence of music that obviously binds these works together into a coherent group, and thus the most

3 Robert D. Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 205 and 209.

4 See Walkling, *Masque and Opera*, 85–88 (*The Empress of Morocco*); 88–111 (*Calisto*); 236–63 (*Ariane*); and 295–303 (*Albion and Albanus*). For *Calisto*, see also Andrew R. Walkling, “Masque and Politics at the Restoration Court: John Crowne’s *Calisto*”, *Early Music* 24 (1996): 27–62.

#### 4 Introduction

suitable response would seem to be to accept the polyglot nature of the form and simply move on, as Hume himself quickly does.

This kind of approach, however, does not foster a genuine understanding of dramattick opera, its theoretical underpinnings and its developmental history. Indeed, efforts to do precisely this have been few and far between, although one or two valuable contributions stand out. Perhaps the most thoughtful and penetrating introduction to the form provided to date is Richard Luckett's 1977 article "Exotick but Rational Entertainments: The English Dramattick Operas".<sup>5</sup> In this brief study, which adroitly tackles the double mission of articulating the genre itself and of contextualizing it as part of the larger rise of musical drama in the Restoration era, Luckett sketches out a number of premises that I treat in greater detail in the present book, albeit with a certain shift of focus. His approach hints at what I believe is a crucial duality in the conceptualization, production, and reception processes of dramattick opera, a duality that distinguishes, but also integrates, what might be called the sensual and the technical aspects of the form. On the one hand, Luckett differentiates one of the earliest dramattick operas, Thomas Shadwell and Matthew Locke's *Psyche* (1675), from antecedent traditions of English masque and even from the "operatic" projects of the 1650s (in which Locke had participated as a composer) for its deployment of "fabulous material for emotive ends, the object being the evocation and modulation of feeling" (p. 132). On the other hand, he rightly attributes to the great actor and impresario Thomas Betterton a primary responsibility for the full flowering of the genre between the mid-1670s and the mid-1690s—although as we shall see, Betterton was by no means the lone creative figure in this venture, and his activities, considerable though they were, must be set alongside the important contributions of such individuals as Thomas Killigrew, Sir Robert Howard, John Dryden, Henry Wright, John Guipponi, Charles Davenant, Nathaniel Lee, and Aphra Behn.<sup>6</sup> This latter notion of dramattick opera as a form driven in part by technical considerations is more fully explored in another frequently cited article on the subject, Judith Milhous's 1984 essay "The Multimedia Spectacular on the Restoration Stage".<sup>7</sup> Milhous helpfully approaches the genre from a production-oriented perspective, demonstrating the extent to which dramattick operas surpassed regular plays in such metrics as the numbers of actors employed, the costs incurred both by the companies and by ticket-buyers, and the extravagance of the spectacular stage effects. Despite being marred by some unwarranted assumptions and critical elisions (some of them evidently inherited from Robert Hume's discussion,

5 Richard Luckett, "Exotick but Rational Entertainments: The English Dramattick Operas", in Marie Axton and Raymond Williams, eds., *English Drama: Forms and Development: Essays in Honour of Muriel Clara Bradbrook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 123–41 and 232–34.

6 *Ibid.*, 133. As will become clear below, I strongly agree with Luckett's passing observation (p. 134) that Sir William Davenant seems ineligible for inclusion among such a company.

7 Judith Milhous, "The Multimedia Spectacular on the Restoration Stage", in Shirley Strum Kenny, ed., *British Theatre and the Other Arts, 1660–1800* (Washington: The Folger Shakespeare Library [Associated University Presses], 1984), 41–66.

cited above), Milhous's account does much to draw out an important corollary of the dual-aspect nature of dramattick opera alluded to by Luckett: music alone is insufficient to accomplish that amalgamation of the sensual and the technical that dramattick opera requires and thus, despite its undeniable importance, it must be considered as only one element among the whole array of production values—aural, visual, thaumaturgical, mechanical, financial—that combine to render dramattick opera a totalizing theatrical experience.

Yet even with this essential principle established, difficulties persist. Foremost among them is the question of terminology: “opera” remained a contested designation in England throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century, being applied seemingly indiscriminately to Italian and French through-composed works as well as to the distinctively English form under investigation here. Contemporaries seem not to have been much troubled by the lexical uncertainty—perhaps a consequence of the deeper generic ambivalences I have explored elsewhere<sup>8</sup>—but simply applying the default term “opera”, whose connotations have only become more fossilized in the intervening centuries, to these works that incorporate large amounts of spoken text is confusing and potentially misleading to modern readers. We are thus faced with the uncomfortable task of retrospectively and somewhat arbitrarily imposing our own subjective order on a language of generic description that originally had none. The preferred solution, of course, can be sought amongst those put forward by authors and commentators who had direct experience of the form. One such individual was the composer Matthew Locke, who was present at the genre's creation: in 1675 Locke self-published a score containing his contributions to the first two dramattick operas, which he entitled “*THE ENGLISH OPERA; OR The Vocal Musick IN PSYCHE, WITH THE INSTRUMENTAL Therein Intermix'd. To which is Adjoynd The INSTRUMENTAL MUSICK IN THE TEMPEST*”.<sup>9</sup> Although typographically subordinate to the names of the two works themselves, the phrase “English Opera” on the title page of Locke's publication has gained much attention among scholars seeking to differentiate between his achievement (together with several collaborators) and the standard Continental (specifically, French) through-composed form that was actively competing for space and attention on the London stage at the time. There can be no denying that Locke sought to appropriate the established designation “opera” for the product of his labors: his rather polemical preface, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, below, is at pains to defend the choice—this in spite of the fact that *Psyche*'s playwright/librettist Thomas Shadwell simply called the work

8 Walkling, *Masque and Opera*, 11–20.

9 (London: “by *T. Ratcliff*, and *N. Thompson* for the Author, and are to be Sold by *John Carr*”, 1675). The music for *Psyche* in the print includes all of the opera's sung passages and machine symphonies, all of which are by Locke, but lacks the (no longer extant) dances and incidental tunes composed by Giovanni Battista Draghi; Locke's “instrumental musick” in *The Tempest* consists of a theatre suite, some of which may be the work of the composer Robert Smith. The rest of the surviving *Tempest* music (by Pelham Humfrey, John Banister, Pietro Reggio, and possibly James Hart) is found in other sources, while Draghi's dances are (again) presumed lost.

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“A TRAGEDY”—and seeks to ground that defense in a kind of English exceptionalism.<sup>10</sup> But what the preface makes clear is that Locke manifestly wanted to claim an undiluted, if peculiarly English, operatic status for his work: *Psyche* (and, by extension *The Tempest*) is not an “English opera”—*i.e.* an exemplar of a new and distinct theatrical genre—it is simply an opera, to which certain necessary English attributes have been applied. The formulation “English opera”, therefore, is not only unwieldy (as can be seen in Robert Hume’s carefully structured rendition “‘English’ Opera”, which appears to echo Locke’s terminology while subtly pointing up its lack of utility), but also confusing, especially in the absence of a detailed explanation and accompanying qualifications. Locke and his collaborators, in fact, seem to have understood this, as there is no evidence of it ever having been pressed into service thereafter.

Rather than rely on Locke’s doubtful formula, we must look to those who had a better grasp, through the benefit of some hindsight, of the genre’s subsequent progress and development. Our efforts are hindered by the fact that, as Richard Luckett has observed, the contemporary literature offers surprisingly few comprehensive discussions of the style.<sup>11</sup> The only genuinely sustained commentary outside of that propounded by authors and composers themselves comes from the lawyer and amateur musician/theorist Roger North, one of the form’s most outspoken detractors. North’s multiple drafts of a grand history of music, none of which ever saw print during his lifetime, include several disparaging terms for what he regarded as a mongrel admixture whose spoken and sung elements “break unity, & distract y<sup>e</sup> audience[:] some come for the play & hate y<sup>e</sup> musick, others come onely for y<sup>e</sup> musick, and y<sup>e</sup> Drama is pennance to them, and scarce any are well Reconciled to both”.<sup>12</sup> The most well-known of North’s appellations for this phenomenon is “semi-opera”,<sup>13</sup> although he had previously tried out the phrases “ambigue entertain[en]t”<sup>14</sup> and, in one of his earlier drafts, “mezzo dramatiq musik”.<sup>15</sup> But “semi-opera” seems ultimately

10 Locke’s strategy, we should note, appears to have met with considerable success, given the staying power of both name and concept, not only into the early eighteenth century, but in the minds of scholars ever since. His formulation effectively begs the question of music’s role in associating the form with opera in the first place: *Psyche* (and by extension *The Tempest*) is only opera at all because Locke chooses to call it that, and without his determined intervention we might never have been led to think of these works as operatic at all.

11 Luckett, “Exotick but Rational Entertainments”, 139–40.

12 British Library, Add. MS 32533, f. 176<sup>v</sup>, transcribed in John Wilson, ed., *Roger North on Music: Being a Selection from his Essays written during the years c.1695–1728* (London: Novello, 1959), 307.

13 Hereford Cathedral Library, MS R.11.xlii, ff. 97<sup>v</sup> and 138<sup>r-v</sup> (“The Musical Grammarian being a scientifick essay upon the practise of musick”/“Memoires of Musick being some historico-criticall collections of that subject”, 1728), transcribed in Wilson, 274 and 353, and Mary Chan and Jamie C. Kassler, eds., *Roger North’s The Musickall Grammarian 1728* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 215 and 266–67. North spelled the term variously: “semi-opera”; “semi opera”; “semiopera”.

14 British Library, Add. MS 32533, f. 176<sup>v</sup> (“Notes of Comparison between the Elder and later Musick and Somewhat Historicall of both”, c.1726), transcribed in Wilson, 307.

15 British Library, Add. MS 32536, f. 75<sup>v</sup> (“An Essay of Musickall Ayre”, c.1715–20).

to have emerged as North's own preference,<sup>16</sup> and has been adopted by some scholars in more recent times. There are, however, two major drawbacks to any of North's epithets. The first is that they are intended to be pejorative: in contradistinction to Locke, North's view of "semi-opera" is that it is not opera at all, but rather some sort of *ad hoc* compromise fueled by Thomas Betterton's supposed belief "that 2 good dishes were better than one"<sup>17</sup> (an opinion North breezily dismisses as "a fond mistake"), and that it consequently lacks integrity as an artistic form. The second problem with North's terminology is its wholly retrospective quality: North's opinions, expressed in unpublished manuscripts written between c.1715 and 1728, may indeed have taken shape when the genre was in its heyday, but in their recorded state they represent his attitude at a time when this mixed approach to musical-theatrical entertainment had effectively disappeared from the London stage, having been (as North approvingly puts it) "forc't to yeild & give place to their betters the compleat operas."<sup>18</sup> Hence, adopting North's language would effectively mean granting normative status to his polemic, and thus endorsing the bias embodied in his personal (albeit firmly held) aesthetic inclinations.

It is preferable, therefore, to seek guidance from a contemporary who (unlike Matthew Locke) could draw upon settled practice but also who (unlike Roger North) had a stake in the success of the form and was directly involved in shaping it. Even here, the most promising candidate presents some difficulties: John Dryden's views on opera can hardly be characterized as consistent over time, and his stated partiality to Italian- and French-derived through-composed opera in the 1680s is notably idiosyncratic.<sup>19</sup> Yet within a few years thereafter, even as some of his old prejudices persisted, the ex-Laureate's thinking had clearly undergone a shift. This is nowhere more apparent than on the printed title page of his important 1691 contribution to the genre, *King Arthur*, which carries a new designation of Dryden's own invention: "King ARTHUR: OR, The British Worthy. A Dramatick OPERA." We can read the playwright's intentions here in two ways: the typographical emphasis on "OPERA", combined with the rather striking deaccentuation of the adjective that precedes it, bespeaks Dryden's continued hesitancy over appropriate usage, and echoes to some extent Locke's earlier approach. On the other hand, the novel coinage "dramatick opera" did offer something of a way forward, a genuinely nominalist solution to the controversy, in which Dryden had emerged as a key player, over the distinction between Continental and Insular operatic forms. The term's adoption was certainly neither rapid nor universal thereafter, but even the notion that a semantic differentiation between competing approaches to opera might be advanced proved helpful in setting aside at least one of the complicating factors in the ongoing debate among

16 Not only is it used exclusively in his final draft of 1728, but it also appears, alongside the other two terms, in the earlier versions of c.1726 (f. 175v; Wilson, 306) and c.1715–20 (f. 62v).

17 British Library, Add. MS 32533, f. 176v.

18 *Ibid.*

19 See the discussion in Walking, *Masque and Opera*, 16–18.

genres of musical theatre. When Dryden's phrase does turn up, we should note, it is in sources whose authority in the public realm is considerably greater than Roger North's: crucial examples are George Granville's *The British Enchanters* (1706) and Colley Cibber's widely read *Apology* of 1740.<sup>20</sup> In the present work, therefore, I have chosen to employ the term—distinguished by Dryden's seventeenth-century spelling but freed from the distancing effect of quotation marks (here we might bear in mind the self-consciously anachronistic orthography of the word *masque*)—to describe the entirety of that peculiarly English form as it existed between 1674 and 1706. In so doing, I follow a practice begun by Luckett back in 1977<sup>21</sup> and adopted more recently by such well-regarded commentators as Michael Burden, Kathryn Lowerre, and Rebecca Herissone.<sup>22</sup> It is true that some have cast doubt on the term's utility as a generic descriptor,<sup>23</sup> and that others have offered up more modern alternatives, among them Milhous's "multimedia spectacular". But even while acknowledging the validity of these arguments, I would maintain that the simplest, least value-laden, most widely applicable, and—if readers will forgive me—most authentick approach is to adopt "dramatick opera" as the preferred designation for that form with whose history I am concerned here.

Settling on an acceptable title for this genre whose form and qualities still remain so elusive is, of course, only a first step: the aim of the present book is to offer a fundamental reconsideration of the origin and development of dramatick opera as a theatrical genre. My investigation is necessarily historical in nature, and is consequently organized in the form of a chronological narrative; moreover, it derives its structure and rationale from a close engagement with developing

- 20 Colley Cibber (ed. B. R. S. Fone), *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber: With an Historical View of the Stage During his Own Time* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), 57. Editions of Cibber's influential work appeared in 1740 (2 editions in London; 2 more in Dublin), 1750, and 1756 (Fone, xvi–xvii); Fone's edition is a largely diplomatic transcription of the first 1740 edition (London: "Printed by JOHN WATTS for the AUTHOR"). For Granville, see Chapter 5.
- 21 Luckett, "Exotick but Rational Entertainments", 125: "dramatick opera . . . is surely the best of the contemporary names". For an even earlier example of the term's use in a scholarly study, see D. M. Walmsley, "The Influence of Foreign Opera on English Operatic Plays of the Restoration Period", *Anglia* 52 (1928): 37–50. Walmsley modernizes it to "Dramatic Opera" (with capital letters).
- 22 Michael Burden, "Aspects of Purcell's Operas", in *idem*, ed., *Henry Purcell's Operas: The Complete Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3–27, p. 3 n. 1; *idem*, "The Dramatick Opera 'Libretto' as Monument", in Benoît Bolduc, ed., *Texte et Représentation: Les Arts du Spectacle (XVI<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles): Texte: Revue de Critique et de Théorie Littéraire* 33–34 (2003): 255–87; Kathryn Lowerre, *Music and Musicians on the London Stage, 1695–1705* (Performance in the Long Eighteenth Century: Studies in Theatre, Music, Dance; Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 87ff.; Rebecca Herissone, "Introduction", in *idem*, ed., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Henry Purcell* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 8–9 n. 21.
- 23 See Roger Savage, "The Theatre Music", in Michael Burden, ed., *The Purcell Companion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994; Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1995), 313–83, p. 368: "all good operas arguably are dramatic operas, and all good operas before the mid-eighteenth century (by which time the 'k' was dropped) could presumably be called 'dramatick'." Savage favors North's "semi-opera".

practice in London's theatre world after 1660, and from the same kinds of empirical and archival approaches that informed *Masque and Opera*. As I hope to show, the history of dramattick opera—in particular its antecedents and the immediate context of its emergence in the mid-1670s—is less tied to immediate political, religious, and nationalistic concerns and more deeply rooted in the theatrical history of Restoration England than most commentators have supposed. The emergence of the form onto the London theatrical scene in 1674 (with *The Tempest*) and 1675 (with *Psyche*) has often been viewed as a reaction against the contemporaneous appearance of French through-composed opera under court sponsorship and the broader political controversies signaled by that innovation, particularly those surrounding the second marriage of James, Duke of York, Charles II's now openly Roman Catholic brother and heir presumptive.<sup>24</sup> Certainly, the timing of the two theatrical productions cannot have been entirely coincidental, nor can the effort to tie *Psyche* to the rising star of the Protestant Duke of Monmouth, Charles II's favorite (but illegitimate) son. And we cannot ignore Matthew Locke's effort, already discussed, to appropriate the foreign term "opera" to describe the form. Yet, at the same time, any simplistically chauvinistic explanation for the creation of dramattick opera does not stand up to scrutiny. *Psyche* (a work derived in part from a French model) was already in the planning stages in August 1673, before the Duke of York's remarriage scheme had become public. Charles II actively patronized both *The Tempest* and *Psyche*, attending performances and loaning his violinists and his Chapel Royal singers, even as his court sponsored the production of the Royall Academy of Musick's through-sung French-language *Ariane* at Drury Lane. And a variety of inconsistencies arise when we consider the generic discourse surrounding the appearance of the form, including the prompter John Downes's retrospective characterization of the 1673 revival of *Macbeth* as "in the nature of an Opera"<sup>25</sup> and the seeming ambivalence in John Dryden's vociferous condemnation of both the Duke's Company's and the Royall Academy of Musick's operatic endeavors (see p. 158) even as he created and subsequently promoted his own *The State of Innocence*, a work prominently labeled "AN OPERA" on its printed title page.

It is clear enough that contemporaries, however much they may have struggled with terminology, understood the difference between a through-composed French work like *Ariane* and one like *Psyche*, with its more eccentric marriage of music and drama—and the public's preference, at least into the early years of the eighteenth century, seems to have been decidedly for the latter. At the same time, however, it is worth taking cognizance of the extent to which contemporary developments in French drama did have an impact on the English form as it first emerged. *Psyche* is a case in point: however much Locke may have wanted

24 For discussion of the performances mounted by the court in response to this important political event, see Walkling, *Masque and Opera*, 219–63 (chapter 6).

25 [John Downes], *Roscius Anglicanus, or an Historical Review of the Stage* (London: H[enry] Playford, 1708), 33.

to frame his creation as an opera, the French exemplar upon which Thomas Shadwell and the show's other producers drew for inspiration was a *tragédie-ballet*, a new dramatic experiment crafted by Molière in 1671, the formal qualities of which closely matched that of the established genre of *comédie-ballet* (which included Molière's celebrated *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* of the preceding year). Yet whereas the French *Psyché*, in effecting a shift from everyday comic characters to gods, heroes, and pastoral figures, may have helped to inspire Jean-Baptiste Lully's own turn to the through-composed *tragédie en musique* only a couple of years later, its English redaction ended up pointing in a rather different direction, proceeding instead along a stylistic trajectory that the French, even as early as 1673, had largely abandoned. There are various possible reasons for this notable divergence of generic priorities. It is true that English poetry was widely considered less inherently "singable" than French or Italian, and, moreover, that the elusive operatic "technology" of recitative still remained to be perfected by its English practitioners.<sup>26</sup> Such explanations, however, do not fully account for the characteristic features of dramatic opera that manifested themselves during the first half of the 1670s. The decision to deploy musical elaboration in *Psyche* (and, to a lesser degree, in *The Tempest*) may have been inspired in part by Lully and Molière's success with the *comédie-ballet* and *tragédie-ballet* forms, but it is notable that only the latter appears to have held any currency with London theatrical producers. Despite English audiences' well-attested taste for comedies, and notwithstanding the availability of such able composers as Matthew Locke, Pelham Humfrey, and John Banister, the 1670s London stage saw only one comic production approaching the scope of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*,<sup>27</sup> suggesting that it was not so much the musical element, broadly speaking, of French *comédie-* and *tragédie-ballets* that held an appeal for English impresarios and their customers, but rather something unique to the second of these forms. What Molière and Lully's *Psyché* in fact offered was a particular set of features that would have been especially attractive to English theatre practitioners seeking to advance their preexisting product to a new level of complexity and sophistication. With its allegorical text, its divine and mythical characters, and its elevated, rhymed language, all embellished in performance with songs, dances, and theatrical spectacle, including elaborate scenes and stage machinery, the *tragédie-ballet* incorporated all of those essential components of the classic English masque that would have been readily translatable from a courtly setting to the public stage. The point, of course, was not to recover the lost glory days of the masque as such, but rather to exploit to the full the technologies of theatrical spectacle to which the post-1660 theatres had fallen heir. These technologies, which promised to satisfy the ever-growing desire of London audiences for spectacular performance effects, represented

26 See the discussion in Walking, *Masque and Opera*, 143–48.

27 This was, in fact, an adaptation of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Edward Ravenscroft's *The Citizen Turn'd Gentleman* (for which, see p. 83, below).

the coming to fruition of a Baroque stagecraft that, as we shall see, had already taken hold in the English playhouses over the preceding dozen years, but that now, inspired by new developments abroad, was primed to appear in its full resplendence.

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There can be little doubt that the form that first emerged on the London stage in the mid-1670s and then came fully into its own a decade and a half later was the product of a rich cross-fertilization, encompassing elements of heroic drama, masque, *comédie*- and *tragédie-ballet*, *ballet de cour*, and even conventional through-composed opera.<sup>28</sup> But if we are to understand dramattick opera as the flowering of a uniquely English vision of spectacular theatre, it is necessary to inquire more deeply into its nature, its constituent elements, and its internal logic. Music is an obvious place to start: however fragmentary its character and however ambiguous its place within the mix of performative components that make up dramattick opera, music is indisputably a crucial feature of the form, and one that helps to bind its disparate members together in order to lend them coherence as a genre. Yet the process whereby music came to exercise this function is complex and must be understood to incorporate a variety of other considerations that, while less intelligibly articulated by contemporaries, are nonetheless equally essential to the formation of dramattick opera's unique character. This should not entirely surprise us since the relationship between drama and music in English thinking was a highly fraught one throughout the early modern era, and consequently any efforts to resolve the tensions inherent in that relationship would have implicated other (*i.e.* non-musical) performative features as a means of justifying the use of music according to the specific set of principles to which English theorists subscribed. It is on this basis that, I will argue, the phenomenon we are exploring needs to be distinguished from other theatrical forms—in particular conventional opera—in order to account for its quite different approach to the place and function of music, alongside a variety of other components, within the dramatic fabric.

Dramattick opera is commonly regarded as having arisen out of a desire to fashion an English musical-theatrical form, but tempered by certain widely-held objections to what were perceived as the excesses of the Continental operatic style. Such objections naturally found expression with regard to the role of music, centering on a pair of related considerations: a broad, philosophical argument about dramatic verisimilitude, and a narrower utilitarian one based on particular English notions of taste. The former was rooted in an oft-rehearsed critique of through-composed opera that drew upon Classical notions of dramatic propriety: if the principal aim of the theatre is to offer an idealized (in tragedy) or a debased (in comedy) reflection of lived experience from which

28 Walmsley's 1928 study (see n. 21, above) offers a surprisingly thorough overview of the topic.

members of the audience can draw lessons of conduct by means of a fruitful comparison between their situations and those represented on stage, how can a drama articulated in song achieve the force of analogy when it is so manifestly unrealistic in its presentation? As the émigré French intellectual the Sieur de Saint-Évremond, writing to George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, sometime around 1677, observed:

There is [a] thing in *Operas* so much *against nature*, that my Imagination is *offended* with it, and that is to make the whole Stage do nothing but *sing* from the beginning to the end; as if the *Persons* represented, were *bound* most ridiculously, in *Musick* to treat of both the most *common* and most *important* affairs of their Lives. Can any Man fancy, that a *Master* should *call* his *Servant*, or give him orders for such or such things, while he is *singing*? that one Friend should declare a *secret* to another in a Song? that Men should *deliberate* in a Privy Council Singing? or, that they should *melodiously* kill one another in a *Duel*?<sup>29</sup>

Saint-Évremond's argument is a commonplace one, shared among detractors of opera Europe-wide throughout the seventeenth century and beyond. The main target of this objection, it should be observed, is not music in general, but rather a specific kind of music, what I have elsewhere characterized as the operatic "technology" of recitative, an approach to the rendering of speech in music with which English composers had struggled throughout the seventeenth century—hence its special applicability to English circumstances.<sup>30</sup>

The second argument forms a corollary and an attempted answer to the first, arising out of a particular English aversion to the Continental model of musical drama that focused on a notion of taste as embodied in the national character, and on the implications of that notion for the reception of music on the stage. While the Italians, in the early years of the century, had discovered a way to adapt their spoken language to full-blown musical elaboration, and with the French now eagerly imitating that innovation, Anglophone writers in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and the opening decade of the eighteenth were largely in agreement that the effete ultramontane style was ill-suited to more robust English sensibilities, and, by extension, that if the term "opera" were to be adopted, it must be taken to mean something different from what it did for Continental practitioners and theorists. As Matthew Locke put it

29 Charles de Marmontel de Saint-Denis, Seigneur de Saint-Évremond, "Upon Opera's. To the Duke of Buckingham", translated in Ferrand Spence, *Miscellanea: or Various Discourses . . . By the Sieur de Saint Euvremont* (London: Sam[uel] Holford, 1686), 44–45. For a different translation of this passage, see Walkling, *Masque and Opera*, 9.

30 Walkling, *Masque and Opera*, 148. The best discussion of the quest for an English recitative form can be found in Peter Walls, *Music in the English Courtly Masque, 1604–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 86–103.

in 1675, defending his decision to use the word to describe his and Thomas Shadwell's "tragic" drama *Psyche*:

*it may justly wear the Title, though all the Tragedy be not in Musick: for the Author prudently consider'd, that though Italy was, and is the great Academy of the World for that Science and way of Entertainment, England is not: and therefore mixt it with interlocutions, as more proper to our Genius.*<sup>31</sup>

The key concept here lies in Locke's rather vague phrase "our Genius", which resurfaces in Peter Anthony Motteux's 1692 essay comparing English and Continental operatic forms, accompanied by a somewhat fuller explanation:

Other Nations bestow the name of Opera only on such Plays whereof every word is sung. But experience hath taught us that our English genius will not relish that perpetual Singing . . . our English Gentlemen, when their Ear is satisfy'd, are desirous to have their mind pleas'd, and Music and Dancing industriously intermix'd with Comedy or Tragedy.<sup>32</sup>

Motteux's pronouncement emphasizes the centrality of spoken drama as the true source of intellectual pleasure, and one into which music is to be introduced only as a leaven and a momentary respite. Essentially the same view can be found in a dictum of the actor-manager Thomas Betterton, who observed late in his life that:

Music . . . ought still, as originally it was, to be mingled with the *Drama*, where it is subservient to Poetry, and comes into the Relief of the Mind, when that has been long intense on some noble Scene of Passion, but ought never to be a separate Entertainment of any Length.<sup>33</sup>

However we might choose to interpret Betterton's stipulation "of any Length", the implication of all of these statements is clear: according to English theorists, music in drama is best employed as a temporary release from the intellectually richer repast of spoken dialogue. The argument from taste thus seeks to address the perceived problem of verisimilitude via a subtractive process, asserting a peculiarly English solution whereby unnecessary musical elaboration is cleared away in order to allow a purer, less artificial drama to emerge.

31 Locke, *The English Opera*, sig. χ1<sup>v</sup>.

32 *The Gentleman's Journal: or The Monthly Miscellany*, January 169[2] (*Register*, no. 1412): 7 (1st issue)/5 (2nd issue). Motteux subsequently adds the observation that "what is unnatural, as are Plays altogether sung, will soon make one uneasy, which Comedy or Tragedy can never do unless they be bad."

33 [Charles Gildon], *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton, the late Eminent Tragedian* (London: Robert Gosling, 1710), 158.

Yet with all this said, it is necessary to question the underlying logic of the argument from verisimilitude. Even stripped of musical declamation, much of the serious drama of the period—English and otherwise—deployed sophisticated metaphor, uttered high-minded sentiment, and was delivered in verse, resulting in a form whose claims to genuine dramatic realism are hardly more compelling than that of a piece sung in recitative. Indeed, the musicality, and hence artificiality, of the text was one of its chief selling points: as George Granville observed in 1706, when speaking of his dramattick opera *The British Enchanters*, one of the last such works to reach the stage:

The Dialogue, which in the *French* and *Italian* is set to Notes, and sung, I would have pronounced; if the Numbers are of themselves harmonious, there will be no need of Musick to set them off; a good Verse, well pronounced, is in it self musical[.]<sup>34</sup>

Granville's statement echoes one made in 1692 by the anonymous author of the preface affixed to the text of Henry Purcell's last dramattick opera, *The Fairy-Queen*. In asserting the precedence of Sir William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656) as "*the first Opera we ever had in England*", the writer characterizes Davenant's through-composed piece as:

*indeed a perfect Opera: there being this difference only between an Opera and a Tragedy; that the one is a Story sung with proper Action, the other spoken. And he must be a very ignorant Player, who knows not there is a Musical Cadence in speaking; and that a Man may as well speak out of Tune, as sing out of Tune.*<sup>35</sup>

In this formulation, the desire for verisimilitude touches only superficially on concerns about the delivery of characters' dialogue in musical language since, as both Granville and the *Fairy-Queen* prefator argue, musicality can be present even when music, strictly speaking, is not. Hence, the opposition to recitative, while it advances a certain narrow logic on aesthetic grounds, cannot really be taken to constitute a sweeping objection, on the basis of verisimilitude, to opera as a form.<sup>36</sup>

34 *The Genuine Works in Verse and Prose, Of the Right Honourable George Granville, Lord Lansdowne* (London: J[acob] Tonson and L[awton] Gilliver, 1732), [197]. Granville continues, in the vein of Saint-Évremond, with the time-tested observation that "Speech is certainly more natural for Discourse, than Singing. . . . The Singing, therefore, should be wholly applied to the Lyrical part of the Entertainment, which, by being freed from a tiresome, unnatural Recitative, must certainly administer more reasonable Pleasure."

35 *The Fairy-Queen: An Opera* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1692; rev. 1693), sig.  $\chi 1^r-v$ . For an explanation of the playbook's collation, see Bruce Wood and Andrew Pinnock, "*The Fairy Queen: A Fresh Look at the Issues*", *Early Music* 21 (1993): 44–62, pp. 59–61 ("Bibliographical Addendum").

36 As Richard Luckett points out ("Exotick but Rational Entertainments", 138), a crucial problem with the importation of French recitative into England in conjunction with other French operatic innovations is that the Gallic form had been created by Jean-Baptiste Lully specifically to "energise[] the French language by giving it the emphatic accents that can only be artificially imposed", a technique that "is largely redundant in the case of a language as rich in accentual stress as English."

Given the lack of any truly substantive distinction between non-verisimilar recitative and non-verisimilar dialogue delivered in ornamental verse, the English reluctance to allow music to overwhelm spoken drama presents some unexpected implications for our understanding of the resulting dramattick opera form. If sung episodes are incorporated into a performance solely to provide a respite from the dialogue upon which the story principally rests, to what extent should the music be regarded as a subsidiary, or even a peripheral, element? Musical interpolations that are not integral to and explicitly supportive of the drama run the risk of becoming music purely for its own sake, a series of interruptions that bring the dramatic momentum to a halt rather than helping to propel it forward. This quandary has received ample attention, perhaps most comprehensively in Curtis Price's seminal study *Music in the Restoration Theatre*,<sup>37</sup> but it nevertheless raises fundamental questions about how opera, in an English context, should be assessed and interpreted—indeed, if it can be appropriately regarded as primarily a musical form at all.

We must therefore seek other ways of thinking about opera generally, and about dramattick opera in particular, and music's role therein. Key to this endeavor is to look at music not as a function of contentious opinions about logic or taste or entertainment value, but structurally, as a component in the drama's episodic fabric. The affective force of the English version of opera—and hence its potency on the Restoration stage—relied in part upon the irregular shifts between spoken dialogue and sung passages that characterize the form, and thus it is crucial that we consider this structural quality as a basis for dramatic analysis.<sup>38</sup> Such a consideration is hinted at, albeit not addressed with any clarity, in the dictum articulated by Locke, Motteux, and Betterton. Opera, Locke tells us in general terms, should be “*mixt . . . with interlocutions*”, but neither he nor his successors stipulates any principle or process. How, precisely, is music “to be mingled with the *Drama*”, and to what end? For the beginnings of an answer, we can turn again to the Sieur de Saint-Évremond. Notwithstanding his disapprobation of through-sung opera with its non-verisimilar recitative, Saint-Évremond was quite happy to admit music into the drama, so long as it did not affront common sense. He therefore sought to identify circumstances in which music might provide a welcome enhancement not only to the sensual but also to the intellectual aspect of the entertainment:

There are such things as *ought* to be sung, and may be, without any offence to *decency* or *reason*: *Vows*, *Prayers*, and *Praises*, and generally *every* thing, relating to the service of the *Gods*, have been sung in *all* Nations and at

37 Curtis A. Price, *Music in the Restoration Theatre* (Studies in Musicology, 4; Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979), 93–110. The classic survey of the role of music in serious drama of the period is Robert Gale Noyes, “Conventions of Song in Restoration Tragedy”, *PMLA* 53 (1938): 162–88; Noyes is at pains to demonstrate the extent to which playwrights “consciously endeavored to place their lyrics in natural relationship to the context of the play, and [that] the content of the song in almost every case was intimately related to the situation which it accompanied” (p. 188).

38 An illustration of the value of such an approach can be seen in Table 3.4, below, which compares the 1675 English *Psyche* with its structurally, and hence dramatically and musically, very different French progenitor of 1671.

all times. *Tender and dolorous Passions are naturally expressed in a sort of singing: The utterance of an amour just in its birth, the irresolution of a Soul, tost and tumbled with several motions, are fit matter for Stanza's, and Stanza's will do well enough for a Song. . . . [W]hatever belongs to conversation and conference, whatever concerns Intrigues and affairs, whatever appertains to Counsel or Action, is proper to be recited by Comedians [i.e. actors], and ridiculous in the mouth of a Musician. . . . If I were fit to give advice to our Men of sense, that take much delight in the Stage, I should direct them, to resume our best Comedies into their hands, where Dances and Musick might be introduced, that would not spoil the Play. The Prologue might be sung with very pleasant Attendances: In the Chorus's a Song would animate such words as might seem to be the very Soul of what is Acted. And then, the Epilogue might be sung, or some Reflection on the greatest Beauties in the Play: The Idea and shadow might be enhanced and strengthened, and the Impression more cleverly and lastingly made on the Spectators minds.<sup>39</sup>*

Saint-Évremond's proposed solution to through-composed opera's offenses against the dictates of verisimilitude is of particular interest precisely because it does not advocate a wholesale rejection of music. Rather, he avers, music is entirely admissible—and exerts considerably greater power—if deployed in a nuanced fashion, where it is mustered (often in partnership with its physical manifestation, dance) into discrete sites of emotional and ceremonial intensity. This sounds precisely like a recipe for dramatick opera, with its characteristic blend of spoken dialogue and interpolated sung episodes of varying lengths, ranging from single songs to elaborate sung-and-danced masques. Indeed, the specificity of Saint-Évremond's remarks prompted one near-contemporary writer to conclude that the London-based expatriate had actually attended performances of the dramatick operas of the mid-1670s,<sup>40</sup> thus potentially rendering the statement quoted above as much descriptive as prescriptive.

It is important to recognize the broader compass of Saint-Évremond's argument, which articulates two principles that are applicable in one way or another to all types of seventeenth-century opera, through-composed and otherwise.

39 Saint-Évremond (trans. Spence), "Upon Opera's", 46–49. As Richard Lockett ("Exotick but Rational Entertainments", 135) points out, Saint-Évremond's specific mention of prologues and epilogues as candidates for musical setting helps to justify his own efforts in that area, which are discussed in Walkling, *Masque and Opera*, 284–90.

40 Jean-Laurent Lecerf de La Viéville de Fresneuse, *Comparaison de la Musique Italienne, et de la Musique Française. . . . Seconde Edition* (3 vols.: Brussels: François Foppens, 1705–6), 2: 177: "M<sup>r</sup> de S. Evremond dit \* qu'il a vû des Comedies en Angleterre où il y avoit beaucoup de Musique; ce qui peut s'apeler des Opera, & il n'a pas tenu à nous qu'on n'y ait pris toutes nos manieres & toute nôtre habileté." The asterisk that promises substantiation of Saint-Évremond's supposed statement leads to a marginal note that reads "*Oeuv. S. Ev. tom. 2 sur les Opera*", that is, the letter to Buckingham itself. Saint-Évremond was certainly in London when *The Tempest*, *Psyche*, and *Circe* were being performed; however, it is worth noting that, despite his longstanding residence in that city, he is believed never to have mastered the English language.

First, in conceding the appropriateness of musical expression in a dramatic context where such “*Tender and dolorous Passions*” as “*The utterance of an amour*” or “*the irresolution of a Soul*”<sup>41</sup> could be deemed “*fit matter for Stanza’s, and Stanza’s will do well enough for a Song*”, Saint-Évremond hits upon an essential attribute of opera, namely, that it seeks to elicit, through the use of a variety of heightening mechanisms, an enhanced response from its audience. Whether through-sung or not, opera functions as a medium of intensification, provoking not just Aristotelian *katharsis* but also awe and astonishment at the emotional, solemnizing, and/or spectacular power effectuated by the dramatic representation. Music is an important vehicle for this response, contributing alongside such visual elements as dance, costume, scenery, and machine effects to what we might call an economy of wonder, whose object is to inundate or overwhelm the audience’s sensory faculties. Viewed from this perspective, Continental through-composed opera and English dramattick opera may be understood as different facets of a single coherent phenomenon, in which emotional intensification is achieved in large part through an alternation of narrative dramatic action and reflective static tableaux. Opera, broadly defined, comprises a balance of these two elements—a quality that, it should be observed, has far less purchase in traditional serious non-musical drama. Moreover, each of the different national operatic styles evinces its own distinctive method of juxtaposing action, with its impelled forward momentum, and pictorializing stasis characterized by emotional intensity: in Italian opera, recitative gives way to aria; in French *tragédie en musique*, combined recitative and arioso-like declamation lead to elaborate act-punctuating *divertissements* featuring choruses and dances;<sup>42</sup> and in English dramattick opera, the spoken dialogue that carries the narrative alternates with sung episodes of varying lengths, from simple songs to ostentatious masques, that draw upon both Italian and French practices for stylistic inspiration.

The second principle implied in Saint-Évremond’s prescription for dramattick opera takes the logic appertaining to the introduction of heightening mechanisms a step further. Here again, the English form shares certain basic theoretical premises with its Continental counterparts, but in this case the specific practice and the dramatic consequences thereof reveal a significant difference. The distinction

41 See Saint-Évremond’s complimentary reference, in an undated letter to Hortense Mancini, Duchess Mazarin, to “*Les chants les plus passionnez des Opera*” that “*ne font d’impression sur moy que par celle qu’ils ont faite sur vous*” (René Ternois, ed., *Saint-Évremond: Lettres* [2 vols.: Paris: Marcel Didier, 1967–68], 2: 71–75, pp. 72–73).

42 For a brief discussion of this idea, see Rebecca Harris-Warrick, *Dance and Drama in French Baroque Opera: A History* (Cambridge Studies in Opera; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 23. Harris-Warrick cites a telling passage from the eighteenth-century playwright and opera librettist Louis de Cahusac’s *La Danse Ancienne et Moderne ou Traité Historique de la Danse* (3 vols.: The Hague: Jean Neaulme, 1754), 3: 60: “*Le charme d’un pareil chant [i.e. an Italian aria] fait oublier apparemment ce défaut-énorme de bienséance. Il est cependant d’autant plus inexcusable, que l’Aria n’est presque jamais qu’un morceau isolé & cousu sans art, à la fin de chaque Scène, qu’on peut l’ôter sans que l’action en souffre; & que, si on le supprimoit, elle changeroit presque toujours*”.

lies in dramatick opera's particular reliance on the mixing of speech and song that we have already noted; it is a function of the impulse towards verisimilitude and at the same time has important implications for the configuration and the efficacy of the aforementioned economy of wonder. In its interspersal of emotionally heightened and sensorially provocative *tableaux en musique*, not with other types of musical articulation (as in through-composed opera), but rather with spoken text, dramatick opera establishes a notional framework in which speech—however poetically ornamented and hence non-verisimilar it may actually be—functions as a marker of what we can call “literalism” against which the interpolated musical episodes can be assessed and internalized by the audience as integral components of the mimetic experience. By advancing a claim of a kind of totalizing realism whose force derives from, and is rooted in, the conventional Western practice of representational spoken drama, dramatick opera seeks to knit together the spoken and sung, the active and static, the narrative and pictorial, the mundane and the heightened, into a unified logical construct. This dynamic is quite different from that found in other, supposedly analogous, “mixed” dramatic forms such as *Singspiel*, *opéra-comique*, ballad opera, operetta, Broadway musical, and Bollywood film, in which characters discoursing in an everyday manner suddenly break into song and dance, momentarily throwing off the trappings of dramatic literalism in favor of an unselfconsciously artificial performative mode. In contrast to these genres, dramatick opera strives in the first instance to justify its intermingling of spoken dialogue and sung episodes according to the principle of diegesis. That is to say, it is necessary that the introduction of music and related performative elements make logical sense within the dramatic context of the play: a character who sings must be *expected* to sing, because he or she is a god, or a spirit, or a pagan priest or necromancer, or perhaps a shepherd, or at the very least a performer in a masque, and that singing is to be *understood* as singing (rather than as a surrogate for speech) within the verisimilar context of the drama: the god or spirit manifests him- or herself to mortals; the priest intones a solemn ritual; the shepherd participates in the recreational music-making typical of Arcadians; the masquer performs “on stage” within the encompassing play.<sup>43</sup> As these examples clearly show, some of the justifications for introducing music into the drama may involve “natural” events—such as a priest performing a religious ceremony, or a shepherd (or even a contemporary music-master) singing a song—but many are supernatural, as for example divine pronouncements or magical incantations. This distinction between natural and supernatural, as we shall see, is an important one for dramatick opera. In either case, however, such occurrences of diegetically performed music are characterized by the fact that they necessitate an audience—not merely the primary audience in the theatre itself, but a secondary, on-stage audience, composed of one or more dramatic characters who are

43 Music is also an essential marker of dramatic madness: see Amanda Eubanks Winkler, *O Let Us Howle Some Heavy Note: Music for Witches, the Melancholic, and the Mad on the Seventeenth-Century English Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 114–65 (chapter 4).