

Score review: Rameau, Jean-Philippe. "Les Indes galantes" and "Daphnis et Eglé."

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Burgess, Geoffrey (2017) "Score review: Rameau, Jean-Philippe. "Les Indes galantes" and "Daphnis et Eglé.," *Performance Practice Review*: Vol. 22: No. 1, Article 3. DOI: 10.5642/perfpr.201722.01.03
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Score review: Rameau, Jean-Philippe. *Les Indes galantes: Symphonies*, RCT 44 ed. Sylvie Bouissou, ed. no. BA 7568. Paris: Société Jean-Philippe Rameau; international distributor: Bärenreiter, 2017; Rameau, Jean-Philippe. *Daphnis et Eglé*, RCT 34, ed. Érik Kocevar, piano reduction François Saint-Yves. Paris: Société Jean-Philippe Rameau; international distributor: Bärenreiter, 2017.

Geoffrey Burgess

The absence of a reliable edition of the instrumental music and dances from Rameau's popular *Les Indes galantes* has long been decried by conductors and ensembles. Up to now, orchestras have had to cobble together their own edition—anything from a custom-edited score taken directly from primary sources to a cut-and-paste of Paul Dukas's creative reorchestration in the *Œuvres complètes*. This new score is a welcome attempt to fill this gap and aims to satisfy the demands of both scholars and performers. But, as so often happens with such enterprises, the result is not without compromises for both camps.

Although this selection of instrumental excerpts is presented as a spin-off from the *Opera Omnia* (Paris, Billaudot, 1996; taken over by Bärenreiter, 2003-), Bouissou's edition of the complete *ballet-héroïque* is yet to be released. The volume of instrumental movements nevertheless takes full advantage of recent Rameau research and the meticulous editorial procedures of the collected edition. Like other editions of Rameau's operas undertaken by Bouissou that have been prepared in conjunction with modern revivals, it has benefited from refinement through the process of rehearsal. It is therefore regretful that this publication did not keep practical considerations in clearer view.

The score includes all instrumental movements and variants from the five versions staged during the composer's lifetime and can therefore claim some degree of authoritative supervision. Users have the choice of taking the original version from 1735, or alternate readings and substitutions from productions up to 1761 provided as *compléments* in an appendix. This makes for a flexible resource, but the absence of any editorial commentary can be confusing for those coming to the work for the first time. Apart from a table of contents and the reproduction of the general editor's introduction to the *Opera Omnia* (in French with an adequate English rendering), those seeking advice



on interpretative issues are referred to the (as yet unpublished) critical commentary that will accompany the score of the complete opera. It was probably the marketability of the *symphonies* that motivated Bärenreiter to prioritize the publication of this “off-print” before releasing the complete opera. But even when the critical commentary becomes available in the corresponding volume of the *Opera Omnia*, it will be expensive and not necessarily accessible to all performers. Further thought could have been given to providing a shorter practical guide in this publication, particularly as it will inevitably be used not only by early music specialists but other performers who may be less versed in eighteenth-century French style.

Other aspects of the edition show the signs of expedient production. The movements are imported directly from the edition of the full opera, along with the numbering of movements—and even the continuous numbering of bars in each *entrée*. While designed for easy reference to the critical commentary, this limits the autonomous life of this score. Not only can the separate numbering of movements within each *entrée* lead to confusion, particularly for musicians unfamiliar with the opera, dealing with bar numbers in the 100s is ungainly. It would have been far more user-friendly if each movement had been given unique numbering and independent bar numbers.

The music is presented in short score throughout. This is practical and space saving (particularly when compared with the generous full-score presentation in Saint-Saëns’s *Œuvres complètes*), but readers need to be warned to be vigilant for changes and occasional, misleading designations. All instrument names and annotations are in French, and a list of all the performing forces is given at the end of the detailed table of contents. This is also in French, respects period nomenclature, and is not without ambiguities. The term *parties* is elaborated as “*hautes-contre et tailles de violon*,” but the equivalence to violas will only be clear to anyone without a knowledge of Rameau’s orchestra from observing that, in the score, both parts are notated in alto clef. (As for all instruments, original clefs C1 C2 are given at the head of each movement.) The explanation of the bass section, however, is less satisfactory. Bouissou lists “*Bassons, basses, contrebasses, basse continue (basses du petit chœur, clavecin)*.” But what is meant by “*basses*”? This was a generic term for instruments in bass register, technically an abbreviation of forms like *basses de violon* in the string family, and *basses de flûte* and *basses de hautbois* (= bassoon) in the wind section. *Basse de violon* would not have been more accurate, as *Les Indes* dates from the period where *basses de violon* tuned Bb-F-C-G are likely to have been played alongside cellos and *basses de viole*. Then there is the question of how to interpret *basses du petit chœur*. This expression usually refers to the continuo instruments that accompanied the voices in airs and recitatives. Available evidence indicates that it is unlikely that they participated in the performance of dance movements. Graham Sadler has argued convincingly that the absence of figures—and often even the entire basslines—from the dances in the harpsichordist’s partbook indicates that, at the Opéra, there was no chordal accompaniment in these movements.¹ While this seems clear for the

1. Graham Sadler, “The Role of the Keyboard Continuo in French Opera 1673–1776,” *Early Music* 8/2 (1980): 148–57.

practice at the Paris Opéra, in other theatres or in salon performances involving smaller ensembles, a harpsichordist may have played these movements. Certainly, few modern revivals of Rameau's operas and concert performances of his instrumental music expend with chordal continuo—particularly when the ensemble is directed by a keyboardist. Harpsichordists wanting to play these extracts have an additional challenge, as the part is unfigured and Bouissou did not provide a realization in the score. But, if she is a proponent of the purist argument that the harpsichord should remain silent in the *symphonies*, why did she list *clavecin* in the instrumentarium? Perhaps this is simply a carry-over of the list of instruments required in the opera.

In addition to the general listing of instruments, an indication of the scoring of each movement would have been useful, particularly as this is not always immediately apparent from the short score. Likewise, suggestions for orchestral configuration and balance and a description of the roles of the different divisions of the orchestra would have been helpful. For instance, where is it appropriate for the flutes and oboes to play together, or, when doubling the violins, how should they handle out-of-range notes? It is not always clear from the score how many instruments should be playing. When *divisi* winds reunite it is assumed that both parts double. This can be particularly problematic in the case of oboe parts, as in French “hautbois” is both singular and plural.

The edition presents scoring as designated in the primary source material, but it is sometimes necessary to adapt orchestration to modern circumstances. Why are instruments sometimes given as optional (“[Hb] et Vln”) and at other times not? In the Matelot scene from *Le Turc généreux*, the score shows oboes as optional, but in the Ritournelle and Marches pour les Esclaves from *Les Fleurs* they are required. Based on the character of the music, it would be more appropriate to have them present for the sailors' music, and to substitute flutes in the dances from *Les Fleurs* where the writing is higher and in tonalities better suited to flutes than to oboes.

Some of these issues may be addressed in parts for separate instruments, but if they have been generated from the score, there is no guarantee that cues will be included to cover practical exigencies. Not every modern ensemble will have musette players at their disposal, so even where it is clear from the sources that they played on their own at the opening of the Musette (movt. 4 in the Prologue), it would be wise for their part to be cued into the oboists' music. (The oboes at any rate double the musettes for the remainder of the movement.) These sorts of changes could have been accommodated at the Académie Royale de Musique in Rameau's day because the copyists routinely duplicated parts where there was any ambiguity about who was to play. One can hope that the rental parts with this score provide the same degree of flexibility.

Eighteenth-century notational conventions have been used for some aspects of the notation. The appearance of the ornaments has been kept as close as possible to the form found in Rameau's autograph. Repeats and double bars can be ambiguous in eighteenth-century manuscript as well as print sources, so Bouissou has faithfully reproduced Rameau's symbols, and left interpretation up to the performer.

A particularly confusing aspect of the edition is the appendix of *Compléments*. Some of these are Rameau's rewrites and revisions. In some cases, evidence points strongly to the possibility that the original was never heard in Rameau's day but replaced even before the start of the first run with a revised version. It is possible to trace the history of the *symphonies* in *Les indes* in this edition—but only with difficulty. It is, for instance, interesting to be able to compare the two versions of the *Loure en rondeau* from *Les Incas*, but, being separated by some fifty pages, and with completely different bar numbers, the differences will be difficult to identify.

The edition of *Daphnis et Eglé* is an off-print corresponding to the latest volume published as part of the *Opera Omnia Rameau* (série IV, volume 22), the tenth of the projected 31 volumes of stage works.

In contrast to the immensely popular *Les Indes galantes*, the performance history of *Daphnis et Eglé* is less illustrious. One of several shorter stage works composed after most of Rameau's major operas had been premiered and shortly before he began the process of revising them for revivals (beginning in 1754 with *Castor et Pollux*), *Daphnis* was designed to showcase the talents of the two principal stars of the Opéra, haute-contre Pierre Jéliote and soprano Marie Fel, who respectively took the title roles. Calling for just four vocal soloists, but a full chorus, dance troupe, and orchestra, it was written in response to a royal commission intended for a single performance at the court of Fontainebleau in October of 1753. However, according to Graham Sadler, it is likely that the performance was withdrawn at the last minute because of inadequate preparation, and the work permanently shelved.² In his commentary to the vocal score, Kocevar makes no mention of Sadler's theory, so we must assume that he had no reason to question the wording on the printed libretto: "représentée devant le roi à Fontainebleau le 30 Octobre, 1754." *Daphnis* was not included in the *Œuvres complètes*, but Marc Vaubourgion published an edition in the 1970s (Paris: Éditions françaises de musique). In the last century, the instrumental music attracted the attention of baroque orchestras. Recordings are available from Capella Savaria and La Petite Bande; the complete *pastorale héroïque* has only become available with the release in 2014 of Les Arts Florissants' DVD *Maître à danser*.

With its emphasis on divertissement and virtuosity, the work exudes with an abundance of wonderful music, including a stylistically progressive overture, over sixteen dances, and *ariettes* for the eponymous couple, and a surprise feature is a *pantomime* with stage directions by the composer.

2. Graham Sadler, *Rameau Compendium* (Suffolk: Boydell, 2014).

Unlike other works by Rameau that went through multiple versions, one would suspect that editing *Daphnis* would be a relatively uncomplicated matter, particularly as the libretto, autograph score, and original performing parts are all preserved (available online along with other original sources at Gallica). But creating a modern edition is not entirely straightforward, as Rameau made numerous revisions, substitutions, and structural reconfigurations in preparation for the aborted performance. Deciding that the final version is more well-rounded, Kocevar opted to present the revised form in the main text and to include earlier variants in two appendices. This is explained briefly in the preface, but the layout is not so easy to follow. Instead of giving just substitute movements to be inserted in the main sequence in the appendix, the editor decided to print the revised scenes in their entirety, along with the seemingly redundant duplication of some extended movements.

Another edition prepared by Nicolas Sceaux in 2014 for the ensemble Siècle des Lumières and readily available at IMSLP takes the opposite tack by privileging Rameau's original version and relegating his revisions to the annexes. It is fortuitous that both editors have not jettisoned any of the material, and both approaches have their merits. Even if the later version appears more complete and honed for performance, there are instances where his vision was clearly compromised. The substitution of a Minuet and Gavotte in the place of the pantomime with its careful choreographic scenario suggests that Rameau's initial aspiration for dance to be integrated into the narrative proved too challenging to choreograph in time for the performance.

Daphnis affords a unique glimpse at Rameau working with given circumstances. Scant documentation relating to the work's commission and composition suggests that it occupied Rameau for six to nine months. He firstly addressed setting the text; the overture came later, and the dances show his desire to integrate dance into the drama. The new *ariettes* he composed for both principal singers are, if anything, more technically demanding than the first. The sustained stratospheric writing for the haute-contre is another reason why the work is rarely heard.

It is to be hoped that the new critical edition will allow *Daphnis et Eglé* to take its rightful place alongside Rameau's other shorter works such as *Pygmalion*, *La Naissance d'Osiris*, and *Anacréon*. Kocevar has retained Rameau's meticulous notation of ornaments, and, together with Saint-Yves' practical piano reduction, this edition will provide a valuable resource for singers ready for the challenges of Rameau's vocal music.