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Seicento opera edited

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hinted at his identity. Instead it opens with a preface addressed ‘To the vertuous Lovers of Musicke’, in which ‘R.H.’ claims that the English adaptations are his own. Evidently ‘R.H.’ was able to read in Italian, could write tolerable verse, and understood music notation; so who was he? Joseph Kerman suggests William Hole, England’s first music engraver, but I wonder if he might instead have been the royal singer and lutenist Robert Hales (*d* 1615), Groom of the Privy Chamber to Anne of Denmark; Hales probably had all the necessary skills to make these adaptations. In the end, though, we can only guess. To add to the mystery, the original 1608 sheets were reissued in 1611 with a cancel title-page, as if to revive flagging sales—or, perhaps, to relaunch what had originally been a vanity publication meant more for private distribution than for sale.

John Morehen’s new edition of *Musica sacra* encourages us not only to ponder all these things, but also to take a closer look at the settings themselves. Croce’s music is sober and sonorous, as befits its function as solemn devotional song. It would sound well enough without words—as indeed ‘R.H.’ claims to have heard it performed in England, before making his translations—and I can imagine it working well on viols. As for the English verses by ‘R.H.’, they cannot be claimed as great poetry, but they are perfectly adequate as ditties to Croce’s music. If nothing else, these pieces would bring effective contrast to a programme of six-voice madrigals by Weelkes, Wilbye and Ward.

Morehen’s edition has been scrupulously made, and I was puzzled only by two small decisions. First, Francesco Bembo’s original Italian texts are nowhere to be found in the volume, and the reader curious about the translation process will have to look elsewhere for them. (They can in fact be located in Alfredo Obertello’s *Madrigali italiani in Inghilterra* (Milan, 1949), although Morehen does not say so.) It seems odd to omit the very material on which both Croce and ‘R.H.’ based their work. Second, Morehen has suppressed the few accidentals that are unique to the London version. Since his aim has been to edit Croce as savoured in 1608 London, not in 1597 Venice, this might be reckoned almost perverse. Admittedly a special symbol marks those places where the London accidentals have been removed, and they are easily restored. I wonder, though, how many singers will simply follow Morehen’s main text, without delving into the critical apparatus to see how that text has been made. Recently Early English Church Music has been using footnotes to alert readers to the most significant editorial decisions. The system works very well. Perhaps it should be more widely adopted?

## Hendrik Schulze

### Seicento opera edited

*La danza barocca al teatro: ritornelli a ballo nell’opera veneziana del seicento*, ed. Riccardo Carnesecchi (Venice: Neri Pozza Editore, 2003), €22.

Francesco Cavalli, *La Doriclea*, ed. Christopher J. Mossey, *Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era*, cxxxii (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2004), \$129.

Loreto Vittori, *La Galatea*, ed. Thomas D. Dunn, *Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era*, cxix (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2002), \$94.

In the last few years 17th-century Italian operas have become something of a hit with many opera-houses and festivals. Audiences relish their exoticism as well as the often very lively plots. Opera-houses like the chance to broaden their programmes without running up the huge cost of hiring large specialist orchestras. One catch, though, is the lack of suitable editions, which forces the producers to make an edition of their own for almost any opera except those by Monteverdi. However, the market is responding to this need; in recent years more and more editions of formerly obscure works by composers such as Stefano Landi and Antonio Sartorio have appeared, and further publications are planned. If done carefully, these editions will not only be an asset to performers, but also to music-lovers and to scholars, for research as well as for teaching purposes.

It is exactly that kind of mix of users to whom Riccardo Carnesecchi’s edition of dance music is addressed. It includes music from the so-called Contarini collection of 17th-century opera manuscripts, which is preserved at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice. But—and here is the first problem—it includes not only the dances, but also some arias and instrumental pieces the editor thought might have been used for dancing, sometimes with good reason, but quite often without. The music is printed without any indication of its dramatic context; even the characters of the dancers are mostly omitted. Worse, the edition abounds with mistakes, and its practical value to performers is diminished even further by Carnesecchi’s decision to change those clefs of the instrumental parts that in the original are in alto or tenor into treble, or even treble clef at the octave. Worse still, the editor alters metres and note values without any indication at all, apparently to make the music conform to some artificial modern-day

notion of regularity. Thus, for instance, in Olimpia's aria 'Donne offese' from Aurelio Aureli's and Domenico Freschi's opera *Olimpia vendicata* (Venice, 1682) he stretches the music of the last bar to two bars by doubling the note values (but not in the parallel passage four bars earlier). By this drastic intervention, he creates something like a four-bar phrase, but the edition loses any value as documentation of dance music. Carnesecchi also omits the last ensemble of *Olimpia vendicata*, even though the libretto clearly states that it was used as a dance.

Such shortcomings unfortunately render this edition useless to either musician or musicologist. Anyone interested in the phenomenon of dance in Venetian opera of the 17th century would be well advised instead to consult Irene Alm's dissertation *Theatrical dance in 17th-century Venetian opera* (UMI 9604208), to which Carnesecchi does not refer. Although Alm did not intend her musical examples to be an exhaustive record of extant Venetian dance music, her transcriptions are reliable and give the dances in their proper context.

Much more gratifying are two editions that recently appeared in the Recent Researches series of the American publisher A-R Editions. Thomas D. Dunn has edited Loreto Vittori's opera *La Galatea* (published Rome, 1639), while Christopher J. Mossey has turned part of his dissertation into an edition of Cavalli's *La Doriclea* (Venice, 1645).

Francesco Cavalli's opera *La Doriclea* was written to a libretto by Giovanni Faustini, the then up-and-coming librettist in Venetian opera, whose style and formal ideas were to be imitated by most other librettists throughout the major part of the 17th century. For this reason, an edition of the opera is particularly welcome, all the more so because it is the first critical edition of a Cavalli opera to be issued by a major publisher.

One characteristic feature of these early operas is their relative lack of arias. Present-day producers may worry that this makes the opera seem boring to an audience, yet Cavalli's lively recitative style (a mix of recitative and short arioso) more than makes up for this apparent shortcoming. Mossey, therefore, is quite right to reserve most of his preface for discussing and praising the recitative. However, I cannot but wonder if his emphasis on tonal relations is well advised: first, the recurrence of a certain tonality throughout the opera would probably not be noticed by a present-day audience; and second, his notion that Cavalli linked certain tonalities to certain characters is not totally convincing. (The composer makes frequent use of tonal characterization, but more on a level of situations

and feelings than assigning fixed tonalities to characters.) It might have been a better idea to focus on Cavalli's lively mix of metres; the great variety of styles between dry recitation and lyrical melodies; the elegant counterpoint and interaction between continuo and vocal lines; and the often abrupt but always exciting tonal shifts, which by their close connection to the drama will hold any audience spellbound.

Performers will find the edition very usable. It provides a good English translation of the libretto, as well as a synopsis, a list of all characters and their voice ranges, and some historical background to the plot. Words and music are eminently readable (for continuo cellists or lutenists, who would have to read from music-stands, the text and continuo figures may appear a little too small), and some effort has been made to avoid page turns within larger closed forms. The musical text itself contains relatively few mistakes. (One or two examples would be Act 1, sinfonia 2, bar 3, voice 3, 2nd note: *f#* instead of *f*; Act 3, scene 2, bar 86, continuo: figures should read '5 #6' in succession rather than as a single chord.) These errors, however, are small and would not spoil any performance, even if they went uncorrected. Mossey is somewhat inconsistent in supplying missing continuo figures, and it can be hard for the performer to see which figures are editorial; but since most continuo players add their own figures anyway, this is not a serious problem. The text underlay is well done and easily readable.

For the researcher the edition is less valuable. The critical commentary is incomplete and not always accurate. For instance, the editor notes that in Act 1, scene 12, bar 192, voice 3, the second note initially was *a'* but then was crossed out and replaced with *e'*. In the manuscript, however, this note is not crossed out but erased; and in the same bar the second note of voice 2 is altered in a similar fashion from *e''* to *c#''*, which is not noted in the critical report at all. Editorial accidentals are not always indicated as such, while some of the accidentals shown as editorial in fact appear in the original. The editor has kept track of the irregular barring of the original by using dotted bar-lines where, according to modern use, they would be missing. The intention is laudable, for it retains the appearance of the original manuscript and at the same time preserves a regular count of bars, but the indications are not always reliable. It also sometimes creates the problem of note-values that exceed single bars; the editor tries to solve the problem by splitting the note-values and using ties, which he only very inconsistently shows as alterations to the original. Likewise, he frequently alters the original's

use of tied notes, often replacing two tied minims in the continuo with a semibreve. He never indicates such changes, even when the tied minims clearly have a musical function, as in Act 1, scene 10, bars 52–5, where in the course of a 7–6 sequence the chord changes on the second minim of each bar.

Musicologists would also appreciate a more thorough discussion of sources. The opera had its only known run of performances in 1645; the surviving copy of the score, however, was made for posterity sometime after 1667, apparently under the supervision of Cavalli. (Mossey misquotes Peter Jeffery in stating that the copy stems from the 1650s.) Given the large gap of at least 22 years between performance and copying, one might question the authenticity of some elements of the score: for instance, the two middle parts of the five-part string orchestra used in the instrumental pieces look suspiciously like later additions. Mossey places much weight on the use of the *quadro* sign to indicate B instead of B $\flat$ . But the meaning of the sign might have changed between 1645 and 1667, and it might have been introduced unconsciously by the copyist. Nor is there any discussion of the copyist's source, or of what purpose the copy served. Hence this edition is no substitute for consulting the original source, although it does offer the researcher an easy-to-read overview of the opera, and it amply suffices for teaching purposes.

*La Galatea* is Loreto Vittori's only surviving opera. Born at Spoleto as a nobleman, Vittori became a soprano castrato, and his services as singer were very much in demand from the 1620s until the late 1640s. He was active both in Rome, where he served the pope and the nobility, and in Tuscany. He appeared in performances of such operas as Domenico Mazzochi's *La catena d'Adone* (Rome, 1626). In 1639 he published the opera *La Galatea* to his own libretto. It was not intended for a specific performance but was probably staged in 1644 at Naples.

Thomas D. Dunn is an old hand at editing music from the 17th century. His edition of *La Galatea* therefore shows every aspect of unobtrusive professionalism. The preface is brief and to the point; it contains a discussion of the text and the music, as well as background information about

the subject of the opera and its composer. The libretto is given together with a very elegant English translation that to a great extent preserves the structure of the Italian text. The layout of the score is in the same style as the edition of *La Doriclea*, and is very easy to read, while the editing of the music is highly reliable. Dunn chooses not to follow the irregular barring of the original, supplying additional bar-lines where necessary. While this does not diminish the practical value of the edition, his decision to beam together quavers and semiquavers in syllabic recitative can sometimes make it hard to grasp the text underlay. Like Mossey, Dunn adds a few continuo figures, but he has a clear policy of adding only those figures that are indicated by the pitches of the voice part, explicitly leaving the decision of how to execute the continuo to the individual performer.

At first glance Dunn's refusal to give advice about performance practice appears to be a shortcoming. But as experience has shown, the performance practice of 17th-century Italian opera is complex, and involves knowledge of numerous conventions, so any instructions restricted to a few pages would probably do more harm than good. As yet there is no canon of generally accepted rules for performing this music—and I hope that there never will be—and each production has to experiment in order to find individual solutions. There is considerable historical justification for such an approach, for the evidence suggests that this was how operatic productions were handled in the 17th century. Rather than suggest that there could be a single correct way to perform the opera, Dunn sensibly leaves space for a creative realization of the piece.

With these two editions of *La Doriclea* and of *La Galatea*, A-R and their editors have presented a huge gift to the opera-loving community. These volumes have every potential to form the basis of many productions of the operas, and they will certainly raise interest in 17th-century Italian opera among students and scholars alike. It is to be hoped that they will be followed by many more editions that will lift the cloud of obscurity from the vast treasure of attractive operas still to be discovered.