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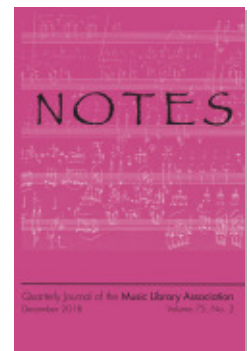
Isis: Tragédie en musique. Livret de Philippe Quinault.
Édition de Lionel Sawkins by Jean-Baptiste Lully (review)

Rebekah Ahrendt

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MUSIC REVIEWS

EDITED BY KEITH COCHRAN

LULLY'S *ISIS*

Jean-Baptiste Lully. *Isis*: Tragédie en musique. Livret de Philippe Quinault. Édition de Lionel Sawkins; édition du livret: Sylvain Cornic et Lionel Sawkins. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2014. (Œuvres complètes. Série III: Opéras, vol. 6.) (Musica Gallica.) [Gen. pref. in Fre., Eng., Ger. (Jerôme de La Gorce, Herbert Schneider), p. v–vii; introd. in Fre., Eng., p. ix–xlii; introd. to the livret in Fre., Eng., p. 3–6; livret, p. 7–33; table of contents, p. 35–38; liste des rôles/list of characters, p. 39–40; score, p. 41–311; annexe 1a–b [singers, dancers, instrumentalists on-stage], p. 313–17; facsimis., p. 319–32; crit. apparatus in Eng., p. 335–51; table of contents, p. 353; note on revision/engraving, p. 354; list of volumes in edition, p. 355–56. Cloth. ISBN 978-3-487-15193-9. €298.]

Every would-be editor of the operas of Jean-Baptiste Lully is faced with one cold fact: there are no autograph manuscripts. Instead, the principal sources are generally the printed editions issued by the house of Ballard, which held a music printing monopoly in the kingdom of France, and which from an early date established a cooperation with the composer. The first *tragédie en musique* to be printed by Ballard was Lully and librettist Philippe Quinault's fifth exercise in the genre, *Isis* (premiered in January of 1677). The opera was issued sometime after March 1677 not as a score, but in a set of ten partbooks in oblong quarto format. Why Lully turned to printing his *tragédies en musique* only at this point remains an open question, as does the fact that *Isis*, unlike any other, was issued as a set of parts. A full score of the opera would not be published by Ballard until 1719.

Oblong quarto partbooks carry a particular use value: they are intended for *performance*, and not for score study. Such is not the case for a critical edition (more on this below). The volume

here under review marks the third of Lully's operas to appear in the series published by Olms, after *Armide* (ed. Lois Rosow, 2003) and *Thésée* (ed. Pascal Denécheau, 2010). Like its forebears in the Olms series, *Isis* has been published as both a full score and a keyboard-vocal reduction (ed. Noam A. Krieger, including simple continuo realizations; not reviewed here). *Isis* has been the subject of a modern edition before, as part of the Chefs-d'œuvres classiques de l'opéra français series, edited by Théodore de Lajarte in the late nineteenth century. Lajarte's edition might seem lamentable from the purist's perspective, as it is a wildly unfaithful piano-vocal reduction, but it is golden as an example of nineteenth-century reception of earlier musics. The complete works edition started by Henry Prunières in 1930 and continued by Broude Brothers in the 1960s and 1970s never got around to *Isis*, thus this marks the first attempt at a modern critical edition. (For a history of the various Lully editions, see Ronald Broude's review of Lois Rosow's Olms

edition of *Armide*, *Notes* 62, no. 3 [March 2006]: 797–802, at 797.)

One of the most important features of a critical edition for this reviewer, at least, is the introduction to the volume. Sawkins covers an enormous amount of ground in his introduction; unfortunately, the line of his argument is not always clear. Readers unfamiliar with *Isis* might not understand all of the important points Sawkins attempts to make, for he tends to write around some of the major issues of the opera and its reception, rather than clearly stating the problems. Such is the case for one of the central elements of the traditional *Isis* narrative: that this opera was understood as tacit criticism of Louis XIV's amours and the character of Io was identified with Mme de Ludres, while Mme de Montespan was seen in jealous Juno. Supposedly, the fall out led to Quinault's disgrace and censure at the court, thus depriving Lully of his favorite librettist. This story has been rehearsed so frequently in the literature that it is perhaps unsurprising that Sawkins only gestures at it sideways. At the outset of his introduction, Sawkins cites at length a review from *Le nouveau mercure galant* (1677) as evidence to say that "it is clear that *Isis* suffered a mixed reception and was criticized at court," and that the reception was "disappointing" (p. xxvii). He then proceeds to lay out the evidence that *Isis* was certainly read and approved by all relevant censors (including the king himself), and that surely no one thought it might cause a scandal—thus implying that it is perhaps time to lay to rest the myth of the dueling mistresses.

Hypothetical scandal aside, *Isis* never did seem to enjoy the enduring popularity of other Lully-Quinault collaborations. Its initial run at the French court at Saint-Germain-en-Laye lasted from 5 January until sometime in February 1678. *Isis* then moved to the Paris Opéra in August of 1677, where it

continued in repertory until March 1678. Parisian revivals occurred only in 1704, 1717–18, and 1732—far below the number of revivals other operas enjoyed—and it received only limited attention in the French provinces and abroad. Yet *Isis* does occupy an important place in the history of French opera outside of France. Drawing on the research of Rudolf Rasch, Sawkins mentions seven performances at the Amsterdam Schouwburg between 25 November 1677 and 3 February 1678. Sawkins notes (p. xxxi) that these were the first performances of the opera outside of France; in fact, they are (so far as we know) the first performances of *any* Lully opera beyond the French kingdom. Alas, all that is known of the Amsterdam appearances derives from advertisements in the *Amsterdamse Courant*, and account books related to the theater.

Besides these performances in the Dutch Republic, Sawkins mentions a *livret* printed at Regensburg in 1683, "which may have been associated with performances there" (p. xxxi), an idea derived from Carl B. Schmidt ("The Geographical Spread of Lully's Operas during the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries: New Evidence from the Livrets," *Jean-Baptiste Lully and the Music of the French Baroque: Essays in Honor of James R. Anthony*, ed. John Hajdu Heyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 183–211, at 208). *Pace* Schmidt, and by extension Sawkins, the material evidence for a performance in Regensburg simply does not hold. The idea was already ruled out in 1981 by Herbert Schneider, who noted that the *livret* is in fact merely an academic exercise in German translation, retaining sense, but not form (Herbert Schneider, "Opern Lullys in deutschsprachigen Bearbeitungen," *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* 5 [1981]: 69–80, at 70). Having examined the Regensburg

livret myself (F-Pn Y² 7291), I would have to concur with Schneider, and no other evidence for performances in Regensburg has ever emerged.

The edition itself conforms to the standards set for this series. The score is generously laid out and easy to read, with headers noting act and scene allowing the user to easily navigate the opera. The extensive critical apparatus is informative, particularly the table of manuscript corrections and additions to extant copies of the partbooks (pp. 338–40). Sawkins has (predictably) used these partbooks as his principal source. Given that the gold standard of edition-making for works prior to Bach remains the composer's "first" intentions (rather than the *Fassung letzter Hand* for later pieces), it seems natural that Sawkins would choose the only musical source to have a clear association with Lully. The association is confirmed by a feature common to all Lully editions produced during the composer's lifetime: every surviving partbook bears a *paraphe*—an identifying mark in ink. Sawkins notes that most of the many in-house corrections present in surviving copies of the partbooks appear to have been made "by one or other of only two people, who may, perhaps, be distinguished by the two different *paraphes* (flourishes) evident on the first page of Act III of each partbook; presumably these were added to indicate that corrections had been entered, although why on that page rather than the first page is not clear" (p. 336). (Facsimiles of the two *paraphes* are included in annexe 2: Ex. Ic [Paraphe 'A'], p. 321, and Ex. Id [Paraphe 'B'], p. 322.) Sawkins notes that Paraphe 'A' "features on many other copies of Lully scores published in the composer's lifetime, and may be Lully's, since the agreement he later finalized with Ballard gave him the right to approve all copies before sale" (p. 336). A similar conclusion was reached by Pascal

Denécheau in an article in 2006, uncited by Sawkins (Pascal Denécheau, "Un signe du caractère soupçonneux de Lully: Le monogramme «L. D»,” *Revue de musicologie* 92, no. 2 [2006]: 381–97). Denécheau notes that, with the exception of *Bellérophon*, all of the scores printed between 1677 and 1686 bear this same *paraphe*. Generally, it may be found on the recto of the last page of the printing, but it sometimes appears on the verso of the final page. More rarely, according to Denécheau, the *paraphe* appears at the beginning or end of a cahier; *Isis* is the only one to include the *paraphe* at the beginning of the third act (Denécheau, p. 384). Thus, despite the fact that we have no Lully autographs, we at least have Lully's "autograph" to confirm the authenticity of the edition.

As in other volumes, an edition of the *livret* (prepared by Sylvain Cornic and Sawkins) has been included. The helpful "Introduction to the *Livret*" (provided in both French and English, pp. 3–6) outlines the history of the printed editions, and presents a list of sixteen consulted exemplars—all of which vary to some degree, according to the editors. The principal source for their edition is that of the first performances at the château of Saint-Germain-en-Laye in January 1677, from an exemplar judged by Buford Norman to derive most probably from the first printing (Philippe Quinault, *Livrets d'opéra*, ed. Buford Norman, 2 vols. [Toulouse: Société de Littératures classiques, 1999], 1:1vi). Further, this introduction provides useful background to Quinault's inspiration for the story and an overview of notable moments (including the opera-within-an-opera of act 3) and general remarks about the quality of Quinault's versification. To assist the reader in imagining the music through the text, musical events (dances, etc.) not noted in the original *livret* have been inserted. Cornic and

Sawkins also provide a number of helpful notes regarding variants between the libretto and scores, as well as commentary related to interpretation, characterization, and connections to contemporary events—much of which is not referenced in either introduction. Unfortunately, these notes are given only in French.

The edition of the *livret* (only in French) follows the guidelines of the Lully *Œuvres complètes* in that orthography has been modernized, but original capitals and punctuation has been retained “where appropriate,” according to the introduction to the *livret* (p. 5). The *livret* edition is silent about which instances were considered appropriate in this regard, though alternate readings of lines present in other sources (including musical ones) are footnoted throughout. In fact, it would be more appropriate to say that the edition *nearly* always modernizes orthography, an exception being “François,” because of received opinion on how it should be pronounced in order to rhyme with “Roi.”

Somewhat confusingly, the edition of the *livret* is not the text used in the body of the score. No rationale is given for this practice, despite Sawkins’s discussion of “Orthography and Pronunciation” in the introduction (p. xxxvi); it is the standard of the series, and I am not the first to note that it is somewhat odd (see esp. Graham Sadler’s review of Lois Rosow’s Olms edition of *Armide*, in *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 13, no. 1 [2007], <http://sscm-jscm.org/v13/no1/sadler.html>, accessed 31 August 2018). And while the introduction claims that textual variants between the libretto and the score will be noted in both places (p. xxxv), this does not seem to be the case.

The score instead uses the text of the 1677 partbooks, but corrects punctuation according to the *livret* that was used as the principal source for the edi-

tion of the *livret*. Sawkins notes in the introduction that where orthographic differences exist between the partbooks of 1677, the “more modern” (p. xxxvi) spelling has been chosen for inclusion in the edition. But some spellings are more modern than others, and some old spellings are unfamiliar enough that they might confuse anyone attempting to use the score. For example, act 4, scene 4, features the chorus singing “Tôt, tôt, tôt” in the edition of the libretto (p. 28), but “Tost, tost, tost” in the score (pp. 256–60; incidentally, “tôt” also appears in Ballard’s full score of 1719). This practice has the potential not only to create misunderstandings of meaning, but could also affect performance, given current debates about pronunciation: one current school of thought would argue that the *s* in *tost* be pronounced. Or perhaps the practice could be seen as a case of having one’s cake and eating it too—the editors have both fulfilled their charge and preserved the original spellings of their source material.

Regardless, the orthographic muddles and their lack of explanation in the introductions to this volume seem out of step with Sawkins’s detailed discussion of punctuation in the sung text (pp. xxxiv–xxxv)—even though punctuation was even less standardized than orthography in this period. Sawkins notes the inconsistency of punctuation among the partbooks of 1677; in some cases he sought resolution by consulting a particular *livret* “apparently closest to the printed parts themselves,” which he regards as “more likely to contain appropriate punctuation” (p. xxxv). Occasionally, Sawkins relies on musical phrasing to propose another solution for punctuating the sung text. One example he highlights in his introduction (p. xxxv) is lines 70 and 80 of the prologue. As Sawkins describes it, “the printed voice parts are punctuated ‘Hâtez-vous Plaisirs, hâtez-vous’ reflect-

ing the musical phrasing, whereas in the *livrets*, an additional comma is inserted: ‘Hâtez vous [*sic*], Plaisirs, hâtez-vous.’” What is to be found in his edition of the score, from p. 93, is “Hastez-vous Plaisirs, hastez-vous.” Orthographic quibbles aside, one could argue that the punctuation of the *livrets* and indeed Ballard’s full score of 1719 *does* follow the musical phrasing—depending on how performers might want to emphasize the line. The bass line in particular might indicate that the additional comma is justified, as m. 229 beat 4 to m. 230 beat 1 features a strong 5–1 motion (in F) in the bass underscoring “Plaisirs.” This 5–1 motion in quarter-notes, echoing the rhythm of “plaisirs,” is repeated in the bass line (in G) at mm. 230–31 to support “hâtez-vous,” except the text then moves on to “démontrer vos charmes”—without an intervening comma. This punctuation scheme fits the overall sense of the line, where “Plaisirs” occurs as an emphatic interruption directing the action of the scene and underscoring the urgency of the celebration: “Hâtez-vous, Plaisirs, hâtez-vous démontrer vos charmes.”

All of these factors bring me back to the question of performance—and to the as-yet-unspoken question (in this review, at least) of who will use this edition. Ronald Broude posited in his review of *Armide* (cited above) that the success of this Lully edition “will depend upon how accurately editors and publisher identify the users to whom the edition is best addressed” (p. 797). I remain uncertain that editions like this one have found their best audience. While Broude (and Sadler, in his review of *Armide*) was hopeful that the Olms edition with its parts on rental would doubtless lead to productions, I cannot be so sure that *Isis* will enjoy *Armide*’s success on stage. Sawkins does note in his introduction (p. xxxi) that his edition was used in the first modern

revival—a 1995 concert performance in Birmingham Town Hall, UK. But he fails to mention a 2005 live recording of (most of) the opera by Hugo Reyne and La Simphonie du Marais (Accord 476 8048 [2005]), using a score prepared by Hugo Reyne and Claire Guillemain. Even had Sawkins’s Olms edition been available back then, Reyne might not have used it. As the conductor observes in the liner notes to the recording, “The problem with Lully is that there are very few modern, practical editions of his works or, when they do exist, the exorbitant cost of renting the materials is discouraging. Therefore, one has to realise one’s own edition. . .” (p. 5, trans. by John Taylor Tuttle). Indeed, Olms *does* charge exorbitant rental fees, thus limiting the possibilities for the fruits of Sawkins’s labor to ever hit the stage again.

It is unfortunate, in a way, that we continue to privilege full scores (and full performances), because that is not how most people experienced “opera.” What would happen if we began approaching opera in another way, as excerpts or extracts or arrangements? This is, after all, most commonly how it appears in today’s classrooms, or even today’s concert halls. Even the Ballard firm acquiesced to the demands of music lovers with short attention spans back in the day. The house began to produce its own inexpensive arrangements of Lully airs around the turn of the eighteenth century, shifting “full score” production to engraved editions in reduced scoring; though not quite the partbooks that are unique to *Isis*, these editions were much kinder to your average performing music lover. And, from the early 1690s, each opera score included a “Table of Airs that might be detached.”

And on this question of “detachment” I will conclude my observations. Considering that most people back then experienced Lully’s operas almost

exclusively in extracts and arrangements (including, most likely, the “Isis” that appeared in Amsterdam in 1677), should we not rather adopt the same focus? What would happen if, rather than attempting to recreate a unified “work,” we began to appreciate opera

as a collection of potential hit songs—as airs to sing and to play, by oneself, for one’s friends, to enjoy while doing, to learn by heart?

REBEKAH AHRENDT
Utrecht University

CRITICAL EDITIONS OF GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. *The Yeomen of the Guard. Full Score.* Edited by Colin Jagger, with David Russell Hulme. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. [Contents, p. iii; preface, p. v–vii; sources, p. vii–x; editorial method, p. xi–xv; critical commentary (with appendices), p. xvi–xxxv; dramatis personae & orchestra, p. xxxvi; score, p. 1–407; musical appendices, p. 408–20. ISBN 978-0-19-341313-9. \$95.]

W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. *The Yeomen of the Guard. Vocal Score.* Edited by Colin Jagger. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. [Contents, p.v; introd., p. iv; textual notes, p. v–vi; dramatis personae, p. vi; score, p. 1–204; appendices, p. 205–9; index of vocal ranges and dialogue, p. 210. ISBN 978-0-19-338920-5. \$23.50.]

W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. *Iolanthe. Full score.* Edited by Gerald Hendrie, with Dinah Barsham, and Helga J. Perry. (The Operas, 6.) 3 volumes. New York: The Broude Trust, 2017. [Part A, overture and act I: publisher’s pref., p. vii; acknowledgments, p. ix–x; contents, p. xi–xii; editorial policies, p. xv–xix; sigla, p. xxi; dramatis personae & instruments, p. xxiv; score, p. 1–331. Part B, act II: contents, p. vii–viii; editorial policies, p. xi–xv; sigla, p. xxvii; score, p. 1–194. Part C, commentary: contents, p. vii–viii; introduction, p. 1–17; libretto, p. 21–62; critical apparatus, p. 65–157; musical appendices, p. 161–90; literary appendices, p. 193–211; bibliography, p. 215–17. ISBN 0-8540-3006-X. \$350 (inclusive of all three parts).]

Looking back, what was the most significant work for the English (or even English-language) musical stage of the nineteenth century? Of the titles that come to my mind, the bulk if not the whole of the short list would be from among the collaborations of William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. These fourteen works are remarkably varied, although there is an unfortunate tendency not only in popular culture but in music history textbooks to pigeon-

hole their oeuvre, regarding the pieces as little more than a string of clever words spat out over innocuous accompaniments. The patter songs may be among the most memorable—and certainly the most easily and frequently parodied—aspects of the Savoy operas, but they have only contributed to the too-easy dismissal of the lot.

For more than a century now there has been a steady stream of publications about the G&S canon, but the li-