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Enlightenment Ideologies and the Non-European Other in Eighteenth-Century Opera

by

Daniel Silva

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Music, Hunter College  
The City University of New York

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Date

Dr. Michele Cabrini

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Second Reader

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Froilan and Gaby, who emigrated to New York City from Bolivia. The memory of their strong work ethic has always been a source of inspiration that encourages me to persevere through challenges. As the first person of my family to receive a master's degree, I am proud to acknowledge the sacrifices that immigrants choose to make in order to pave the road for future generations. I will also like to thank my partner, Dr. Gabrielle Kappes, who has been an endless source of support and motivation. Her brilliance and creativity are the daily stimulation that sparks my intellectual curiosity and my aspiration to better myself.

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**Daniel Silva, MA Thesis**

**Enlightenment Ideologies and the Non-European Other in Eighteenth-Century Opera**

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## Introduction

On September 10 1725, Jean-Philippe Rameau attended a Native-American dance performance at the Théâtre Italien in Paris.<sup>1</sup> Two indigenous dancers performed three distinct dances from the Americas, inspiring Rameau to compose a harpsichord piece based on their movements. The harpsichord piece, titled *Les Sauvages*, was published in 1728 within a larger collection of Rameau's harpsichord pieces. In 1736, Rameau used *Les Sauvages* to create the fourth act of *Les Indes galantes*, an *opera-ballet*, which was added six-and-a-half months after the premiere of the first two acts.<sup>2</sup> Out of all the acts in the opera-ballet, *Les Sauvages* proves to be the most difficult to showcase in modern productions due to its cultural appropriation issues, even though it presents some of the most nuanced criticisms of eighteenth-century French society.

In fact, as scholar Georgia Cowart has argued, the genre of the opera-ballet most often served to criticize the autocratic control of the monarchy, specifically Louis XIV's royal propaganda. During his reign, Louis XIV used the *ballet de cour* and the *tragédie en musique* as a means to align his public image with the military might of heroes and gods from Greek mythology; namely Jupiter, Apollo, Pluto, Hercules, and Renaud.<sup>3</sup> The tragic operas by Jean-Baptiste Lully and the courtly dance performances of the *ballet de cour* showcase the French monarch as the supreme head-of-state. As a result of the king's absolutism, a counter narrative began to emerge outside of the walls of Versailles. Satirical parodies of tyrannical despotism

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<sup>1</sup> Joellen A. Meglin, "Sauvages, Sex Roles, and Semiotics: Representations of Native Americans in the French Ballet, 1736-1837, Part One: The Eighteenth-Century," *Dance Chronicle* 23, no. 2 (2000): 95.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Georgia Cowart, "Carnival in Venice or Protest in Paris? Louis XIV and the Politics of Subversion at the Paris Opéra." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 54, no.2 (Summer 2001): 272.

took root in the theatrical performances of the *théâtre de la foire*, Comédie-Italienne, and the Comédie-Française.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, the genre of the *opera-ballet* developed under a libertine spirit that covertly challenged autocratic domination. I argue that Rameau's *opera-ballet Les Indes galantes* follows in the vein of this subversive material. In addition, I showcase how Rameau participates in this counterculture due to his early associations with the fair theatre and collaborations with Marie Sallé, Louis de Fuzelier, and Louis de Cahusac. Furthermore, I present how this covert criticism and movement against the autocracy also informs the non-European representations in French Opera. Egalitarianism is used as political ploy to undermine the monarchy; however, the principle is color blind and therefore non-European representations lack cultural or social specificity. Rather, foreign cultures are used as a tool to further promote libertine ideals that are the cornerstone of the Enlightenment.

In Chapter 1, "The Literature Review," I examine the scholarship that informs my argument that Rameau participates in a covert criticism of the autocracy through the guise of egalitarianism and how non-European representations are a casualty in the promotion of Enlightenment ideologies. I review music and dance scholarship that underscores prominent Rameau collaborators, such as Marie Sallé, and examine texts that analyze non-European representations in eighteenth-century opera.

In Chapter 2, "Fair Theatre, Pantomime, and the Baroque *Opera-Ballet*," I highlight the prominent role that the *théâtre de la foire* or the fair theatre had in providing a public sphere that was free from autocratic regulations, thereby contributing to artistic innovations such as pantomime dance. Specifically, I showcase the choreography of Marie Sallé, a Rameau collaborator, who elevated French ballet into a mode of self-expression that contributes to the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 265-269.



story-telling of opera and showcases nuanced character traits by the use of facial and bodily gestures. The popularity of dance crossed over from the fair theatre onto the national stage and further propagated a subversive egalitarian principle that developed at the fair theatre due to the mixing of the different social classes who appeared in the audience. In addition, I showcase how the egalitarian ideal took root in the theatre causing the French public to imagine a distant utopia outside of Europe. As a result, French exoticism was due to an imagined ideal applied to foreign cultures and lands.

In the second half of the French Baroque period, composers such as Rameau sought to please the aristocratic and bourgeois circles that frequented the *Académie Royal de Musique*, commonly known as the Paris Opéra. According to Cowart, the opera house became the central hub for libertine ideologies that were popular among the audience members of distinct classes. Furthermore, libertine ideologies formulated the concept of utopia in popular literature and in theatrical plots.<sup>5</sup> The concept of utopia was applied onto foreign lands and people as a means to criticize tyranny, namely the rule of Louis XIV. *Les Indes galantes* is a prime example of French idealism applied to four distinct non-European regions. Reinhard Strohm goes on to underline that Rameau's *opera-ballet* follows in the convention established by Campra's *L'Europe galante* (Paris premiere 1697).<sup>6</sup> James R. Anthony summarizes *L'Europe galante* as the first *opera-ballet* with a prologue and four distinct acts that explore themes of love in four different countries, France, Spain, Italy, and Turkey, which are each featured with a personified tale of love.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Rameau's *Les Indes galantes* also has a prologue and four distinct acts, this time

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<sup>5</sup> Georgia Cowart, "Watteau's Pilgrimage to Cythera and the Subversive Utopia of the Opera-Ballet," *The Art Bulletin* 83, no. 3 (September 2001): 463-464.

<sup>6</sup> Reinhard Strohm, "'Les Sauvages', Music in Utopia, and The Decline of the Courtly Pastoral," *Il saggiaore musicale* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 23.

<sup>7</sup> James R Anthony, "L'Europe galante," Grove Music Online, 2002, accessed 23 April 2021, <https://www-oxfordmusiconlinecom.proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/om-o-9781561592630-e-5000003642?rskey=GJiAuB&result=1>

featuring non-European countries. Rameau extends the tradition of *L'Europe galante* by showcasing new continents and cultures which had captured the European imagination. Following the prologue, Cupid visits Turkey, Peru, Persia, and North America. The plot illustrates the personification of Love as the character of Cupid who witnesses the trials and tribulations of non-European couples in each new location. Ultimately, “love” triumphs in spite of despotic forces. In each act of the *opera-ballet*, French Enlightenment principles are personified as characters who guide the drama to a cheerful resolution.

Chapter 3, “Fantasizing Indigeneity in Rameau’s *Les Indes galantes* and Mozart’s *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*,” focuses on the exotic tropes within these two operas.<sup>8</sup> I examine how non-Europeans are depicted musically in the scores, costumes, and text. I highlight how a Europeanized egalitarianism erases the cultural specificity of the opera’s non-European characters. Finally, I inspect the *femtopia* of Rameau’s character Zima from the fourth act of *Les Indes galantes*, a Native American princess whose feminism complicates colonial representations of her otherness.

Lastly, in the coda, I examine how modern productions of *Les Indes galantes* confront issues of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation. Some productions take an avant-garde approach where the original plotline is altered to enhance a symbolic aesthetic, while other productions adopt hip-hop dance choreography in order to speak to current-day anti-racist politics.

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<sup>8</sup> While many scholars use the terms exotic and exoticism to describe non-Western musical tropes, in the remainder of the paper, I use the term non-European in order to move away from terms that historically were meant to invalidate and control people from non-Western countries.

## Chapter 1: Literature Review

I build upon the scholarship of Georgia J. Cowart, whose research calls attention to the subversive public sphere that developed during Louis XIV's final years and in the Regency. Many scholars have overlooked how the *opera-ballet* covertly undermined the monarchy in the spirit of libertine ideologies that would ignite the French Enlightenment.<sup>9</sup> Cowart showcases how the *opera-ballets* by André Campra were influenced by *commedia dell'arte* tropes prevalent in the fair theatre and the Comédie-Italienne theatre that satirically criticized the social hierarchy and Louis XIV's absolutism.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, Cowart examines other lesser-known *opera-ballets* whose themes revolve around love triumphing over militarism. Furthermore, the mingling of the bourgeoisie class with the aristocratic circles at the popular theatre created an imagined egalitarian haven, which served as the model for Utopia. The French artist Jean-Antoine Watteau represented this haven in his painting *Pilgrimage to Cythera*. *Cythera* was the mythological island where Venus created a temple for l'Amour (Cupid), an imagined sanctuary for couples who seek freedom from tyranny. Consequently, the *opera-ballets* of the Paris Opéra embodied this utopian ideology in the plotlines, where allegorical representations of love vanquish militaristic antagonists.

Furthermore, *Monstrous Opera* by Charles Dill highlights how the genre of the *opera-ballet* was misunderstood, as it strayed away from Jean-Baptist Lully's *tragédie en musique* model. Traditionalists and autocratic supporters were suspicious of the growing amount of music within Rameau's operas.<sup>11</sup> Debates that stressed the importance of text over music ensued, which

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<sup>9</sup> Cowart, "Watteau's Pilgrimage to Cythera and the Subversive Utopia of the Opera-Ballet," 466-469.

<sup>10</sup> Cowart, "Carnival in Venice or Protest in Paris? Louis XIV and the Politics of Subversion at the Paris Opéra." 295-298.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Dill, *Monstrous Opera* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1998), 3-30.

criticized Rameau's lack of lyricism. Rameau's *opera-ballet Les Indes galantes* was labeled as monstrous by some critics due to its emphasis on dance and music.

In Chapter 2, I highlight the prominent role that dance has in *Les Indes galantes* thanks to the choreographic prowess of Marie Sallé. Like Cowart, who takes on an interdisciplinary approach to art and music scholarship of the eighteenth-century, I approach my research from an interdisciplinary standpoint by including dance scholarship in my arguments. Susan Leigh Foster's scholarship highlights the overlooked legacy of Marie Sallé, arguably the most significant dance figure of the eighteenth-century. It is evident that Sallé was the innovator of pantomime dance on the French national stage. However, male figures such as Jean-Georges Noverre have often received scholarly attention due to their written treatises on dance reform.<sup>12</sup> Foster speculates that it is highly probable that Noverre witnessed Sallé's innovative choreography as a young man and may have been inspired to call for dance reform due to the groundbreaking expertise of Sallé.

Music and dance scholar Rebecca Harris-Warrick examines the multiple and meaningful roles dance plays in French opera.<sup>13</sup> She counters prevailing notions in operatic historiography that dance was ornamental in opera. She showcases how the *divertissement* provides an essential function in the structure of French opera and how composers like Rameau use dance to further develop the plotline. She further chronicles how the *commedia dell'arte* and other popular theatres influenced the Paris Opéra, as it became an intersection of musical, textual, choreographic, and staging practices.

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<sup>12</sup> Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing the Body Politic: Manner and Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Ballet," in *From the Royal to the Republican Body*, ed. Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 162-181.

<sup>13</sup> Rebecca Harris-Warrick, *Dance and Drama in French Opera: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 32-60.

I further incorporate first-hand accounts from the *French Baroque Opera Reader* and *The Rameau Compendium* by renowned French scholar Graham Sadler. These texts offer updated material on Rameau's contemporary figures, institutions, places, genres, instruments, technical terms, iconography, works, and specific publications.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the translated collection of letters, newspaper publications, and memoirs provides valuable primary sources.<sup>15</sup> Another useful reference text is James R. Anthony's *French Baroque Music: From Beaujoyeux to Rameau*. The text surveys and cites various genres and scores from the French Baroque period, which helps clarify which scores were created during the Regency period.<sup>16</sup>

In "Les Sauvages: Music in Utopia, and the decline of the Courtly Pastoral," Reinhard Strohm showcases how *Les Indes galantes* follows in the courtly, pastoral tradition while referencing an imagined utopian ideology. Strohm cites the travel narratives of Baron de Lohontan and Joesph-Francois Lafitau, French intellectuals who projected utopian sentiments onto the American French territories.<sup>17</sup> Indigenous people were described as innately possessing egalitarian values which were used as a political ploy to criticize French politics. Rameau used these narratives as source material for Act Four: *Les Sauvages*.

Joellen A. Meglin, in "Sauvages, Sex Roles, and Semiotics: Representations of Native Americans in French Ballet," pays attention to the sexual politics of Zima, the Native American princess of Act Four, whose freedom to choose her spouse underscores a feminist utopia. Zima challenges European gender roles and embodies the Enlightenment ideal of freedom of choice.<sup>18</sup> However, Meglin points out that Zima's costume was originally in a courtly gown aesthetic with

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<sup>14</sup> Graham Sadler, *The Rameau Compendium* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2014), 15-223.

<sup>15</sup> Caroline Wood and Graham Sadler, *French Baroque Opera: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2017), 1-190.

<sup>16</sup> James R. Anthony, *French Baroque Music: from Beaujoyeux to Rameau* (New York: Norton, 1978), 130-146.

<sup>17</sup> Strohm, "'Les Sauvages', Music in Utopia, and The Decline of the Courtly Pastoral," 21-50.

<sup>18</sup> Meglin, "Sauvages, Sex Roles, and Semiotics: Representations of Native Americans in the French Ballet, 1736-1837, Part One: The Eighteenth-Century," 87-127.

the ornamentation of feathers. The image of a courtly French woman is superimposed over Zima's indigeneity complicating her identity which is both European and Other.

Ralph P. Locke has numerous publications on exoticism and covers a wide range of composers and scores. I specifically examined Locke's scholarship on eighteenth-century opera, which includes Rameau's *Les Indes galantes* and Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*.<sup>19</sup> Locke surveys various compositional techniques used by European composers to portray otherness. I use examples from Locke's score collection in order to present exotic tropes, which are used in the music of Rameau and Mozart.

Finally, Olivia A. Bloechl's scholarship focuses on French Opera from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, early Atlantic colonialism, and racial representation in musical theater.<sup>20</sup> She emphasizes critical theory on ethics and politics of musical practices, along with postcolonialism, cultural theory, and historiography. Her scholarship offers in-depth analysis on the French political power structure's relationship to opera.

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<sup>19</sup> Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 97-105, 114-126.

<sup>20</sup> Olivia Bloechl, *Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 177-215.

## Chapter 2: Fair Theatre, Pantomime, and the Baroque *Opera-Ballet*

In 1748, Jean-Phillipe Rameau's *opera-ballet Pygmalion* premiered in Paris. Marie Sallé, the principal dancer and choreographer for the Paris Opéra, played the title role of a statue who magically comes to life in the climax and final *divertissement* of the piece. This *divertissement* was revolutionary because Sallé adapted the tradition of pantomime in order to dramatically use physical gestures to emote and conclude the story-telling of the third act of the *opera-ballet*.<sup>21</sup> In the early Baroque period French composers had a tradition of following strict rules of operatic structure, which were developed by Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687). Dance sections were generally placed at the end of an act as a separate section, usually as distinct short *entrées* outside of the large plotline of the opera.<sup>22</sup> After Lully's death, composers began to incorporate dance more inclusively throughout sections of an opera, giving ballet a more prominent role within the story-telling. Simultaneously, in the second part of the French Baroque period (1700-1750), the craft of pantomime dance was developing in the non-aristocratic circle of the fair theatre, which was not run by the French state. This popular venue sat outside of autocratic rule and was frequented by all classes of French society. As a result of artistic experimentation in fair theatre productions, popular tastes in entertainment reflected an egalitarian sensibility. This enlightened ideal favored individualist modes of expression. By incorporating pantomime, Sallé broke free from the restrictions forced upon French dance in the productions of the Paris Opéra, showcasing a loosening of the social restrictions placed upon the arts and emphasizing a new appreciation for individual expression. This pivotal moment in the history of ballet would further lead to the

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<sup>21</sup> Foster, "Dancing the Body Politic: Manner and Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Ballet," 162-164.

<sup>22</sup> Harris-Warrick, *Dance and Drama in French Baroque Opera*, 20-22.

creations of new dance genres, including *ballet d'action*.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, French ballet would evolve into an imitative art form which could contribute to the dramatic story-telling of an opera through physical gestures.

In this dance evolution, it is significant to highlight Sallé's long collaborative history with the operatic productions of Rameau and his librettists. In fact, Sallé also played a central dance role in the *divertissement* of Act III in *Les Indes galantes* (1735), prior to *Pygmalion*. Likewise, it is equally important to acknowledge how the fair theatre scene influenced the development of a cohesive collaboration between dance and music that stressed individual expression due to its popular and nonpolitical association to the French state. Through early experimentation in their careers, both Rameau and Sallé gained new perspectives and ideas, which cultivated innovative forms of expression that reflected populist ideologies. The blending of music and dance was enhanced in Rameau's operas due to the emerging egalitarian principles that were dismantling autocratic control in the late French Baroque period. Likewise, the expansion of French colonialism brought forth imagined representations of non-European people onto the national and popular stage.

In "Watteau's *Pilgrimage to Cythera* and the Subversive Utopia of the Opera-Ballet," Georgia Cowart showcases how the *opera-ballet* emerged as a genre that opposed the autocratic control of the monarchy through an emphasis on freedom and equality. In fact, Watteau's famous painting *Pilgrimage to Cythera* was inspired by a utopian ideal. Cythera was a Greek mythological island where Venus created a temple for her son Cupid which was run by the poet Sappho. The island was free from autocratic control and ruled only by love. In fact, couples from all social classes sought refuge on the island, exemplifying an egalitarian ideal. Cowart argues

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<sup>23</sup> Edward Nye, *Mime, Music, and Drama on the Eighteenth-Century Stage* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-3.



that this imagined utopia was frequently referenced by comedic productions in the fair theatre and by *opera-ballets*. Two examples of *opera-ballets* are *Le triomphe des arts* by La Motte and *Les amours déguisez* by Louis de Fuzelier. Cowart highlights that these *opera-ballets* display the triumph of Venus and Cupid over the power of Mars. Consequently, Venus and Cupid represent the libertine ideologies of both the aristocratic and bourgeoisie classes who sought freedom from autocratic control, represented by Mars.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, for the purposes of my argument, it is critical to highlight that the *opera-ballet* represented libertine and egalitarian ideologies, which Rameau exploits in *Les Indes galantes*.

In this chapter, I intend to highlight the significant contribution dance had on the operas of Rameau, specifically in *Les Indes galantes*, which features dance more prominently in the story-telling and serves as an early prototype for the inclusion of pantomime dance. In this interdisciplinary approach to eighteenth-century French opera, I aim to bridge the gap between music and dance scholarship while emphasizing the pivotal role that fair theatre as a form of popular entertainment had on the early careers of Rameau and Sallé.<sup>25</sup> Susan Leigh Foster underlines that dance scholars have often excluded popular entertainment traditions from the lineage of dance history and development, instead focusing on a solely aristocratic heritage.<sup>26</sup> Building upon Foster's scholarship, I place importance on the prominent role that the fair theatre had upon the blending of dance and music in Rameau's operas.

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<sup>24</sup> Cowart, "Watteau's *Pilgrimage to Cythera* and the Subversive Utopia of the Opera-Ballet," 466-473.

<sup>25</sup> It is important to note that the librettists and Rameau collaborators, Fuzelier and Cahusac, also wrote works for the fair theatre.

<sup>26</sup> Foster, "Dancing and the Body Politic," 180-181.

### **The Prominence of Dance in *Opera-Ballet***

As an innovator in French opera, Rameau not only expanded on the function of music in opera, but also experimented with the use of dance as an additional tool of story-telling. This is a significant factor that is often overlooked by scholarship. Within the operas of Rameau, instrumental sections most often included the ballet. In fact, dance became more prominent throughout Rameau's operatic career. Critics of Rameau often stated that the composer used too much music in his operas and likewise too much dance.<sup>27</sup> The extended musical/dance sections threatened to overshadow the poetic text. Enlightenment thinkers and writers of the eighteenth-century believed rationality was best expressed through the spoken or written word and therefore were threatened by Rameau's new conceptualization of dramatic expression in opera which featured music and dance prominently. Olivia Bloechl confirms, "Rameau's operatic music seemed to assert an unaccustomed musical presence that competed with the expressivity of the poetic text, long deemed the sole legitimate vehicle of dramatic sense."<sup>28</sup> Critics of Rameau constantly attacked the composer for tainting French opera with ostentatious amounts of music which weakened the written or verbal storytelling. In *Monstrous Opera* Charles Dill highlights how the traditionalists did not understand the *opera-ballet* genre as it strayed away from the *tragédie en musique* model. The critics used the text over music argument to label Rameau and his music as monstrous.<sup>29</sup> The minor playwright and composer Charles Collé relates in his memoirs, "In his works he [Rameau] looked only at what concerned him directly and not at the goal to which opera should aspire. His [one] wish was to compose the music, and to that end turned everything into ballets, dances, and symphonies; everything was situated in sea ports, and

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<sup>27</sup> Wendy Heller, *Music in the Baroque* (New York: Norton, 2014), 215.

<sup>28</sup> Bloechl, *Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music*, 178.

<sup>29</sup> Dill, *Monstrous Opera: Rameau and the Tragic Tradition*, 17-18.

he could never abide scenes of dialogue.”<sup>30</sup> Although Collé suffered from an estranged relationship with Rameau due to a failed operatic collaboration, his bitter remarks highlight how critics thought Rameau emphasized music and dance over the dialogue of the librettos. These opinionated attacks showcase how Rameau’s compositions moved beyond a single-minded vocal story-telling into new modes of visual expression and story-telling through dance.

In her review of the “Reviewed Work(s): *Les surprises de l’amour* by Jean-Philippe Rameau and Sylvie Bouissou: *Pièces de calvecin en concerts* by Jean-Philippe, Denis Herlin and Davitt Moroney,” Rebecca Harris-Warrick highlights the challenges in the scholarship of Rameau due to inaccurate or incomplete score publications.<sup>31</sup> Rameau often re-worked compositions. Early operas like *Les Indes galantes* had many revisions with additional sections added years later. When scholars attempt to make sense of the various sections of an opera, they often miss or overlook important information such as dance notes.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, it is crucial to look at the ballet as a counterpart to the musical score in order to understand *Les Indes galantes* as a whole. This is especially pertinent when analyzing the elements of the opera that are meant to represent non-European characters because these figures are showcased in Rameau’s operas through a collection of lyricism, musical instrumentation, costume, and dance. In order to understand the non-European characters in *Les Indes galantes*, it is necessary to pay close attention to these dances. For example, the directions for nuanced facial expressions and gestures by the dance ensemble may highlight important factors of the drama or offer a counter story to the non-European characters. Although I have not come across any specific dance notes for *Les*

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<sup>30</sup> Charles Collé, “Journal et mémoires, entry for September 1764” in *French Baroque Opera: A Reader*, ed. Caroline Wood and Graham Sadler (London: Routledge, 2019), 187-188.

<sup>31</sup> Rebecca Harris Warrick, “Reviewed Work(s): *Les surprises de l’amour* by Jean-Philippe Rameau and Sylvie Bouissou: *Pièces de calvecin en concerts* by Jean-Philippe, Denis Herlin and Davitt Moroney” *Early Music* 26, no. 2 (May 1998): 343-345.

<sup>32</sup> Rameau’s later operas in collaboration with the librettist Cahusac preserve ballet notes, as Cahusac was a proponent of giving ballet a more prominent role in the storytelling.

*Indes galantes*, Cahusac remarks on the nuanced facial gestures that Marie Sallé displayed in Campra's *L'Europe galante*: "She [Sallé] brought it to life by degrees; in her expressions one could read a series of emotions: she went by turns from fear to hope; but at the moment when the sultan gave a handkerchief to his favorite, her face, her glances, her whole bearing changed rapidly. She dragged herself from the stage with the kind of despair shown by lively and tender spirits who can only express themselves by excessive despair."<sup>33</sup> These observations are critical to interpreting the plot and nuanced subplots of opera, and in particular, to *Les Indes galantes*, which was so closely modelled on *L'Europe galante*.

### **The Lullian Opera Model**

Lully established early French baroque opera through the themes of ancient Greek tragedies that were attuned to the tastes of the monarch Louis XIV. The early French opera genres include the pastoral (*pastorale-héroïque*) and the lyrical tragedy (*tragédie lyrique* or *tragédie en musique*). Both genres rely on lyricism and a simple but elegant musical accompaniment. Dance was usually reserved for the conclusion of an act in its own *divertissement* section. During the reign of Louis XIV autocratic rule extended into all facets of French life, including the opera. Operas had distinct sections and a hierarchal order which in turn reflected the social order of the king's court. However, by 1697 the success of Campra's *L'Europe galante* introduced the genre of the *opera-ballet*, which centered around themes of love rather than tragedy.<sup>34</sup> *Opera-ballets* grew in popularity due to their lighthearted themes of love in contemporary settings, which no longer stressed an absolute obedience to sovereignty and

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<sup>33</sup> Louis de Cahusac, "La Danse ancienne et modern, 1754" in *French Baroque Opera: A Reader*, ed. Caroline Wood and Graham Sadler (London: Routledge, 2019), 87.

<sup>34</sup> Anthony, *French Baroque Music: from Beaujoyeux to Rameau*, 130-138.

social hierarchy as Louis XIV aged and weakened. After the death of Louis XIV, *opera-ballets* and various comedic styles of opera began to emerge notably. French composers experimented and expanded on the Lullian model for opera.

The Regency period perpetuated the rise of the fair theatre.<sup>35</sup> In fact, scholar James Anthony states that Rameau wrote four *ariettes* for the *opéra comique* of the fair theaters but unfortunately none of the music has survived.<sup>36</sup> Graham Sadler in *The Rameau Compendium* lists these collaborations with the librettist Charles Alexis Piron. These works include the titles *L'Endriague*, *L'Enrôlement d'Arlequin*, *La Robe de dissension* and *Le Pucelage ou La Rose*.<sup>37</sup> It is also important to note that the original harpsichord piece for *Les Sauvages* was first performed at the fair theatre in 1725, which shows that the pieces were created to please public audiences.<sup>38</sup> These examples highlight how Rameau was active in the fair theatre scene prior to his successful career in the national Opera house (Paris Opéra). Furthermore, the fair theatre was often used as a low-stake testing ground for new modes of expression by most of the leading French artists in the mid-eighteenth-century. The fair theatre can be analyzed as a venue that encouraged artistic innovation and experimentation, which was subsequently crafted and molded in reaction to popular reception.<sup>39</sup> During the reign of Louis XIV, Lully and other French composers adhered to the tastes of the French monarch. In contrast, during the regency, French composers sought to gain the favor of the public. Both the aristocratic class and commoners frequented the fair theatre; hence, societal distinctions of status and class were blurred.<sup>40</sup> As a result, the fair theatre displayed an egalitarian consensus of what was popular during the regency. In turn, the artists of

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<sup>35</sup> Between 1715 to 1723 Louis XV was a minor and France was governed by Philippe d'Orléans (a nephew of Louis XIV).

<sup>36</sup> Anthony, *French Baroque Music: from Beaujoyeux to Rameau*, 158.

<sup>37</sup> Graham Sadler, *The Rameau Compendium* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2014), 161-162.

<sup>38</sup> Anthony, *French Baroque Music: from Beaujoyeux to Rameau*, 417.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 139-140.

<sup>40</sup> Foster, "Dancing and the Body Politic," 177-180.

Rameau's period would reflect an egalitarian ideology which would also blur the divide between lyricism, music, and dance in order to accommodate and capture public attention.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Rameau would include and further develop popular modes of expression such as pantomime. Rameau is regarded as the height of the French Baroque aesthetic not only with regard to pleasing the monarchy but also in developing popular mediums alongside the cultivated and aristocratic tradition, which Rameau inherited from Lully. This was especially true for the genre of *opera-ballet* which was relatively new in the mid-eighteenth-century. Unlike the *tragédie en musique*, which strictly followed the traditional Lullian model, the *opera-ballet* was free to explore populist modes of expression.

### **Pantomime's Presence in *Opera-Ballet***

In "Dancing the Body Politic: Manner and Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Ballet," Susan Leigh Foster highlights Marie Sallé's connection to the fair theatre. Sallé's parents had both performed in the fair theaters, and her uncle was a famous harlequin. This fair theatre legacy informed Sallé's early artistic development, which was further enhanced by her own experience as a choreographer for the fair theatre and later for the Paris Opéra. Sallé's exploration of new modes of expression through imitative dance such as pantomime was the natural course of development by someone who had been exposed to this artform from an early age.<sup>42</sup> As a result, Sallé would bridge the gap between the fair theatre (popular) and the Paris Opéra (national). Foster highlights how Sallé left behind the traditional mask and corset used in ballet in order to showcase facial expressions and unrestricted body gestures as a story-telling device on the

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<sup>41</sup> Cowart, "Watteau's 'Pilgrimage to Cythera' and the Subversive Utopia of the Opera-Ballet." 468, 472.

<sup>42</sup> Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreography Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire* (Indiana University Press, 1998), 39.

national stage. Due to her efforts, pantomime dance would crossover from the popular fair theatre scene onto the national stage and onto Rameau's premier operas.<sup>43</sup> Foster also highlights that Sallé's innovations inspired the dance reforms advocated by Jean Georges Noverre.<sup>44</sup> Foster makes the point that Noverre is often credited for dance reform due to preserved letters, books and publications, which often state a call for dance reform. However, Sallé should be given more credit for pioneering pantomime in the French theatre as an innovative means of story-telling.

Rebecca Harris-Warrick in "Ballet, Pantomime, and the Sung Word in the Operas of Rameau" also reveals how the librettist Louis de Cahusac was another Rameau collaborator who emphasized the story-telling capabilities of dance. In fact, Cahusac stressed that dance should complement the drama of the plot, and criticized older French operas that used dance as an ornament which was inconsequential to the main storyline. As a result, Cahusac often included "ballets figurés" (dance directions or notes) in the librettos of Rameau's late repertoire.<sup>45</sup> These dance notes showcase how Rameau and his collaborators were reimagining dance as an equal component to the music and plot. Cahusac did not place dance solely at end of an act, but instead, conceptualized dance sections within the main sections of the plot. As a result, dance was given a prominent role in Rameau's later repertoire due to the efforts of collaborators such as Sallé and Cahusac. In his book *La Danse ancienne et moderne*, Cahusac states, "In opera...the most difficult of all the dramatic genres, every element, from the smallest to the largest, must be continually in motion. It is customary to regard dance as a separate adornment of the lyric theatre. However, it is essential that it is always closely bound in with the main action and forms a single whole with it, and that it unfolds with an exposition, a development, and a

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<sup>43</sup> Foster, "Dancing and the Body Politic," 180-181.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>45</sup> Rebecca Harris-Warrick, "Ballet, Pantomime, and the Sung Word in the Operas of Rameau," in *Coll'astuzia, col giudizio: Essays in Honor of Neal Zaslaw*. ed. Cliff Eisen (Ann Arbor: Steglein Publishing, 2009), 31, 43.

denouement.”<sup>46</sup> Cahusac was quite clear in his vision of opera as a genre that incorporates all the theatrical elements. However, in order to understand the trajectory of dance, scholars should look back at Rameau’s second opera *Les Indes galantes*, which provides important early examples of how Rameau and his collaborators started to emphasize pantomime or action ballet. The third act of *Les Indes galantes* was added specifically for the dance section, highlighting the French public’s demand for dance and showcasing Rameau’s conviction to the dancing prowess of Marie Sallé.

Cahusac’s predecessor was Louis Fuzelier, the librettist who wrote *Les Indes galante* throughout an extended period of time. Acts I and II were premiered in 1734, subsequently Act III was added in 1735 and Act IV in 1736. Due to the fact that *opera-ballet* was less associated to the autocratic tastes of the court than *tragédie en musique*, Rameau used the different acts of *Les Indes galante* as an innovative testing ground to freely integrate dance, music, and lyricism. In the prologue of the opera-ballet, Rameau uses dance as a visual extension of the music to showcase the conflict of the plot. The ballet works as an additional story-telling tool outside of the *divertissement*. In the plot, the goddess Hébé has assembled young couples from four nations of Europe to celebrate love’s sweet moments; however, they are interrupted by Bellone, the goddess of war, who summons the young men off to battle. Warrick-Harris states, “A militaristic dance for two warriors bearing flags is followed by an ‘Air’ for the loving youths and maidens who follow Bellone. The music is anything but militaristic: ...it changes character in rapid alteration, a measure of two at a time, from swift running figures for treble and bass strings, to languorous sighs from flutes and violins, unaccompanied by the bass.”<sup>47</sup> Figure 1 illustrates a

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<sup>46</sup> Louis de Cahusac, “La Danse ancienne et modern, 1754” in *French Baroque Opera: A Reader*, ed. Caroline Wood and Graham Sadler (London: Routledge, 2017), 87.

<sup>47</sup> Harris-Warrick, “Ballet, Pantomime, and the Sung Word in the Operas of Rameau,” 46.



portion of the score during this dance sequence. Harris-Warrick further states, “the music makes it clear that the men are trying to hasten off to the wars, the women trying to hold them back—presumably to appropriate, and alternating, gestures on the part of the two groups of dancers.”<sup>48</sup>

**Figure 1.** *Les Indes galantes*, prologue, “Air pour les amantes et amantes qui suivent Bellone.”  
*Oeuvres complètes de Rameau* (Paris, 1902), vol. 7, p.45.

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system includes staves for Flûtes, Violons, and Basse continue. The Flûtes part starts with a rest, then a half note, followed by a quarter note with a trill, and ends with a half note. The Violons part plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Basse continue part plays a simple harmonic accompaniment. The second system continues the Violons and Basse continue parts, with the Flûtes part re-entering. The third system shows the Flûtes, Violons, and Basse continue parts continuing their respective parts.

Although *Les Indes galantes* has numerous moments where the dance ensemble visually aids the music, pantomime dance is prominently featured in the *divertissement* of the third act. Act III is titled *Les Fleurs: Fête persane* and the nine consecutive instrumental dances that close the Persian entrée are showcased within the *Ballet des Fleurs*. Harris-Warrick states, “The instrumental dances that close the Persian entrée—framed as a performance put on as part of the flower festival—tell a simple story about a personified rose, who is besieged by the North Wind

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 46.

and rescued by the West Wind.”<sup>49</sup> Warrick-Harris adds, “No vocal airs helped guide the original viewers; the only operative texts were the ones the spectators could read in the libretto.”<sup>50</sup> The modern edition of the score lists the following titles for the nine consecutive dance pieces:

1<sup>er</sup> Air pour les Fleurs  
 2<sup>e</sup> Air pour les Fleurs  
 Gavotte en rondeau  
 Orage [Storm]  
 Air pour Borée  
 1<sup>er</sup> Air pour Zéphyr  
 2<sup>e</sup> Air pour Zéphyr  
 Air pour les Fleurs  
 Gavotte

Harris-Warrick goes on to highlight that the third act of *Les Indes galantes* was specifically added to showcase the dancing capabilities of Marie Sallé as the rose in the *divertissement*.<sup>51</sup> In fact, Louis Fuzelier, the librettist, states in the preface of the libretto that act III was conceptualized to highlight the flower festival due to the popularity of dance with the French public.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the *divertissement* drove the choice of the story for the Persian entrée. Based on the 1991 production by Les Arts Florissants, which sought to reproduce the 1735 version of *Les Indes galantes*, the flower festival dance sequence consists of 56% of the third act.<sup>53</sup> These factors are significant in emphasizing the prominent role Rameau and Fuzelier placed on dance and the pantomime capabilities of Marie Sallé, which was aimed at pleasing the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>52</sup> Fuzelier, preface to the libretto of *Les Indes galantes* (Paris: 1735), vi-vii.

<sup>53</sup> According to Harris-Warrick, this calculation is based on the recording made by Les Arts Florissants (1991), which aims to reproduce the version of the work heard at its premiere in 1735. This *entrée*, however, was radically revised after the initial few performances, and the part of it that communicates the storyline was shortened from seven scenes to four. As a result, the disproportion between *divertissement* and the rest was probably even greater in the work’s subsequent performance history.

French public and its growing egalitarian taste. Act III presents how Rameau was experimenting with the dramatic form and story-telling of French opera through dance.

In conclusion, I have underscored the prominent roles Marie Sallé and Louis de Cahusac had in granting dance an equal role to the lyricism and music in Rameau's operas. In fact, Rameau and his collaborators (Sallé, Cahusac, Fuzelier) had all participated in fair theatre productions, which offered an opportunity for artistic innovation outside of autocratic control. Likewise, it is critical to reveal the prominent place that fair theatre had in establishing an egalitarian consensus for theatre and opera after the death of Louis XIV. Populist ideology began to surpass autocratic control and, as a result, French artists in the second half of the French Baroque period expressed a greater affinity to public opinion. Therefore, it is important to take into account the influence of the fair theatre on the development of French popular taste, which inspired Rameau to feature pantomime dance. The second half of the eighteenth-century saw the expansion of populist egalitarian ideologies within France which culminated with the French revolution. In my next chapter, I will detail how the ideology of egalitarianism affected Rameau's representations of non-European characters in *Les Indes galantes*. French exoticism was a direct result of imperialism and Enlightenment ideologies, which placed non-Europeans within an ill-defined and imagined French colonial narrative. *Les Indes galantes* is a prime example of how European ideologies were superimposed onto foreign demographics.

### Chapter 3: Fantasizing Indigeneity in Rameau's *Les Indes Galantes* and Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*

After the death of Louis XIV, an egalitarian ideology began to circulate around the emerging French bourgeois populace. As stated in the previous chapter, the fair theatre was the site where all French social classes could come together, highlighting this egalitarianist ideology. The fair theatre acted as public sphere of artistic taste.<sup>54</sup> As a result, popular entertainment reflected a consensus that was unified and threatened to overthrow the autocratic regulations of the monarchy, which were based on class distinctions.<sup>55</sup>

In the following chapter, I look specifically at the non-European characters in Rameau's *Les Indes galantes* and Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in order to show how these characters portray a Europeanized egalitarianism that eradicates any cultural specificity. For example, the noble savage trope depicts a non-European who is not sophisticated in a cosmopolitan fashion and instead displays deep values of rational and philosophical thoughts which align themselves with Enlightenment ideals. Consequently, the non-European characters in *Les Indes galantes* and the character of Pasha Selim in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* showcase a personification of these ideals. Therefore, for the purposes of my argument, it is especially noteworthy to examine how *Les Indes galantes* was originally performed during Rameau's lifetime and how it visually depicts non-Europeans. In fact, the costumes of the

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<sup>54</sup> Ian Buchanan, "public sphere." *Oxford Reference*. 2002, accessed 16 April 2021, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199532919.001.0001/acref-9780199532919-e-567?rsk=Jmsr1M&result=4>

<sup>55</sup> The *Oxford Reference* defines egalitarianism as: "A social doctrine that emphasizes the goal of equality among all members of a society—or, indeed, all humanity. Eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers closely linked egalitarianism to the appreciation of common humanity, based on the capacities for language use and reason." Craig Calhoun, "egalitarianism." *Oxford Reference*. 2002, accessed 16 April 2021, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195123715.001.0001/acref-9780195123715-e-515>

original production portray non-European people in a European courtly aesthetic, not in culturally appropriate dress. The *opera-ballet*'s indigenous Native Americans, Turkish, Peruvian, and Persian characters are romanticized through a European Enlightenment lens, which glosses over cultural differences. I will analyze the original score and costume design of *Les Indes galantes* in order to provide a historical and cultural context that will illuminate the complexities and nuances of how the early eighteenth-century imagined the non-European Other and reveal how this *opera-ballet* participates in what the scholar Mary Louise Pratt calls "contact zones," places where disparate cultures meet, engage, and try to come to terms with one another.<sup>56</sup> I will also use some examples from Mozart's opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, which highlight how exotic tropes were popular in the eighteenth-century. In fact, Mozart's opera takes its Turkish plotline directly from the first act of *Les Indes galantes*. Finally, I place emphasis on the *femtopia* of Rameau's character Zima from *Les Indes galantes*, a Native American princess whose feminism complicates colonial representations of her otherness.

It is first, important to stress that I am analyzing this *opera-ballet* from a post-colonial theoretical standpoint. Scholar and theorist Edward Said's *Orientalism* proposes the existence of a "subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against non-Western peoples and their culture, which originates from Western culture's long tradition of false, romanticized images of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East."<sup>57</sup> Said critiques orientalism as the source of the false cultural representations with which the Western world perceives the non-West. The West, here represented by Rameau and Mozart, imagines the non-European (Turkish, Persian, Peruvian Inca, Native American) as exotic and romanticized, and more importantly, projects European

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<sup>56</sup> Ian Buchanan, "contact zone," *Oxford Reference*. 2010, accessed 23 April 2021, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199532919.001.0001/acref-9780199532919-e-145>

<sup>57</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 49.

ideologies upon them in this rendering. This is significant because in the context of *Les Indes galantes* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, the non-European people become extensions of Enlightenment ideals. As such, the musical score and costume design showcase this imagined ideology.

### **The Enlightenment Other: *Les Indes galantes* and Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail***

In the first act of *Les Indes galantes*, the story takes place on an island close to Turkey and depicts the well-established plotline of a generous Turk who frees enslaved European captives. Titled, *Le Turc généreux*, the original story dates back to the Renaissance, specifically to the *Decameron* written by Giovanni Boccaccio in 1353.<sup>58</sup> The story embodies the trope of the noble savage and portrays how Enlightenment ideals such as rationality are projected onto non-European people, as is displayed by the generosity of the Turk Pasha Osman. In the first act, Osman falls in love with a French girl, Emilie, who is sold to him as a slave by pirates. However, Emilie stays true to her European betrothed, who also ends up being captured after he is shipwrecked. In a twist of events, Osman recognizes the fiancée as the man who had freed him from slavery. In a show of gratitude, Osman frees the European lovers and reciprocates the debt.<sup>59</sup> These Turkish rulers are depicted as tyrannical and dangerous, but also as harbingers of rationality who might display moments of clemency.

In 1782, forty-seven years after Rameau's opera, Mozart presents his version of this popular plotline in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. It is important to highlight that Rameau's *Les*

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<sup>58</sup> Timothy D. Taylor, "Peopling the stage: Opera, Otherness, and New Musical Representations in the Eighteenth Century," *Cultural Critique Cultural Critique*, no. 36 (1997): 61.

<sup>59</sup> Graham Sadler, "Les Indes galantes," Oxford Music Online, 2002, accessed 16 April 2021, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000005181?rsk=y=zFVMHD>

*Indes galantes* set the precedent for how non-European cultures could be depicted on the operatic stage. Figures 2 and 3 from the musical scores of both Mozart's and Rameau's operas emphasize the metric ambiguity of the down/upbeat. Both pieces begin on an upbeat, which disorients the rhythmic center of its conventional Western starting point. Although it is a small technicality, musical off-centeredness, whether tonally or metrically, was frequently used to personify the non-European Other as contrary to the European standard. Even though Rameau's music is not specifically accurate in its representation of non-European music, there are musical tropes that illustrate the Other such as metric ambiguity (starting on an upbeat or the use of the hemiola), avoidance of a tonal center, lack of musical orientation, and the use of occasional dissonances.<sup>60</sup>

**Figure 2: Rameau, *Les Indes galantes*, “Le Turc Généreux”: “Premier Tambourin,” opening. An example of an unconventional upbeat starting point.**



**Figure 3: Mozart, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, act 1, no. 5, “Chorus of Janissaries.” An example of an unconventional upbeat starting point.**



In addition to the musical examples above, Ralph P. Locke in *Musical Exoticism* identifies the following key musical devices as compositional tools that were used by composers to imitate Turkish musical tropes. There was not a standard set of rules to follow, but these

<sup>60</sup>Taylor, “Peopling the stage: Opera, Otherness, and New Musical Representations in the Eighteenth Century,” 64.

devices include: a preference for simple key signatures with few flats or sharps, usually A minor, A major, and C major.<sup>61</sup> The harmonic vocabulary stresses root chord positions with the tonic and dominant emphasized, as well as sudden shifts from one tonal area to another, like modulations by third or mode changes. Simple melodies were used with repeated notes often in thirds. Repeated rhythmic patterns usually followed a long, long, short, short, long pattern. Instruments were doubled at the unison or at the octave, creating simple orchestral textures. Melodies display descending lines with decorative neighbor notes or escape notes, along with long note values at the beginning of the phrase, followed by shorter ones. European composers also frequently used quick melodic decorations like trills and acciaccaturas. In addition, melodic motion moves either stepwise up and down or hops between two notes. Percussion instruments were added to the orchestration such as the bass drum, cymbals, and triangle. Some keyboards could also be fitted with an attachment that mimics Janissary percussion.<sup>62</sup> Finally, sometimes the Lydian mode was also used to employ a foreign sound. The first chorus of *Entführung* uses a raised fourth degree and ii7 chord, which goes back and forth with the tonic (D7 to C).<sup>63</sup> A simplified example of most of these devices can be found in Mozart's K331 piano sonata. Figure 4 showcases the *Alla Turca* style from Mozart's piano sonata in A major, K331. The example is in duple meter with frequent acciaccatura grace notes, stacked thirds, a descending bass line, and a simple harmonic progression in A major.

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<sup>61</sup> Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 118-121.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 118-121.



Figure 4: Mozart, Piano Sonata in A Major, K331, movement 3, “Alla turca,” mm. 1-8.



It is critical to emphasize that Rameau’s and Mozart’s non-European musical representations are fabricated to speak to a European aesthetic, which imagines the non-European through a romanticized lens. Although the scores are loosely based on European accounts of non-European music, they are not culturally accurate; they are what Said would term *orientalized*. Therefore, by showcasing these examples by Rameau and Mozart through a post-colonial lens, I relate how the European imagination composes the Other.

### Dressing French: Romancing the Other in Costume

In addition to the musical score, it is also important to examine how French and European productions of Rameau’s opera in the eighteenth century have depicted non-European characters through costume design. Louis-René Boquet (1717-1814) was the premier costume and stage designer for French opera. In addition to being an acclaimed painter, Boquet’s watercolor paintings for operatic custom designs are preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.<sup>64</sup> Figure 5 and 6 underscores how Rameau’s non-European characters were depicted in a courtly

<sup>64</sup> “The Mirror of the Indies,” Opera National de Paris, accessed April 16, 2021, <https://www.operadeparis.fr/en/magazine/the-mirror-of-the-indies>.

pastoral fashion. The tradition of the pastoral can be defined as “an idealized world of shepherds and other rustic figures in benign and beautiful rural landscapes.”<sup>65</sup> The dress resembles courtly French attire with the addition of feathers, which emphasize the characters’ traits as colorful and animalistic. Phani’s (Act II Inca princess) and Zima’s (Act IV Native American princess) gowns resemble a European fashion common to the Baroque period. Huascar’s (Inca priest) armor portrays the vestige of Apollo and Greek mythological figures. In fact, Joellen A. Meglin goes as far as to state, “Huascar, the Grand Priest of the Sun...is an eerie reflection of a Sun King (Louie XIV) gone fanatic.”<sup>66</sup> Boquet’s eighteenth-century costumes are fundamental in understanding the French mindset in staging opera during the Baroque period, which projected an imagined European pastoral aesthetic onto the indigenous peoples of the Americas. It is unclear how much the general European (French) audiences knew about the Americas, but for composers these “new lands” provide a *tabula rasa* for theatrical representations that were newly imagined and evocative of past-European traditions. Examples 4 and 5 showcase Boquet’s custom drawings from a 1761 production of *Les Indes galantes*. As the reader can see, the dress of Huascar, the Incan priest, resembles a Roman orator’s garbs while the Native American princess Zima appears in an embellished courtly dress with a brocade of feathers that signify her indigeneity. The costumes are evidence of the European imagination reconceptualizing non-European identity.

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<sup>65</sup> J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *History of Western Music*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 2014), 243-244.

<sup>66</sup> Meglin, “Sauvages, Sex Roles, and Semiotics: Representations of Native Americans in the French Ballet, 1736-1837, Part One: The Eighteenth Century,” 92.

**Figure 5: Huascar (Incan priest) and Phani Pallas (Incan princess): Act II of *Les Indes galantes*, “Les Incas de Pérou.”**



**Figure 6: Zima (Native American princess): Act IV of *Les Indes galantes*, “Les sauvages.”**



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

### Rameau's *Femtopia*

Act IV of *Les Indes galante* showcases a feminized utopian narrative, centered around Zima, a Native American princess. Early travel narratives and ethnographic research by French scholars in the Americas often idealized indigenous populations as having a commonality with Enlightenment virtues and embodying the notion of utopia. Meglin states, “*Sauvage* society became a blank canvas upon which utopian sentiment could be projected with an appetizing palette of colors and subtle social texturing.”<sup>67</sup> Since the sixteenth century, the Americas captured the European imagination and writers projected utopian ideals onto the inhabitants of newly discovered lands.<sup>68</sup> Strohm provides ample research on both literary and ethnographic sources that depicted the Americas through a utopian lens. Jesuit missionary Joseph-Francois Lafitau’s *Moeurs des sauvages américains* (1724) states the anthropological claim that indigenous religious practices and rituals from the Americas mirrored those of ancient Greece.<sup>69</sup> Lafitau also goes on to describe American musical instruments in comparison to ancient Greek and Egyptian ones.<sup>70</sup> French explorer Louis de Lom d’Arce (Baron de Lahontan) published *New Voyages to North America (Nouveaux Voyages)* in 1703, applying liberal Enlightenment ideals to his encounters with indigenous populations. In *New Voyages*, the Baron states: “Their Friendship is firm, but free of Transport: for they are very careful in preserving the Liberty and Freedom of their Heart, which they look upon as the most valuable Treasure upon Earth: From whence I conclude that they are not altogether so savage as we are.”<sup>71</sup> *New Voyages to North*

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<sup>67</sup> Meglin, “Sauvages, Sex Roles, and Semiotics: Representations of Native Americans in the French Ballet, 1736-1837, Part One: The Eighteenth Century,” 88.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas More’s *Utopia* was published in 1516 after the discovery and during the exploration of the Americas. Strohm, “‘Les Sauvages’, Music in Utopia, and The Decline of the Courtly Pastoral.” 34.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>71</sup> Meglin, “Sauvages, Sex Roles, and Semiotics: Representations of Native Americans in the French Ballet, 1736-1837, Part One: The Eighteenth Century,” 104.

*America* is full of subtle and overt criticisms of French and European society. The entries by the Baron showcase some fundamental beliefs held by French intellectual circles, including Rameau. In fact, in his final entry, the Baron writes back to his indigenous friend of the Huron tribe, Adario, a European name given to an indigenous leader, where the Baron critiques the social ills of French society. Consequently, Rameau uses the name Adario as the character name of the indigenous love interest of Zima in Act IV of *Les Indes galantes*.<sup>72</sup> In this act, Zima chooses to marry Adario, an indigenous warrior from her tribe, instead of a fickle French and jealous Spanish suitor. Therefore, it seems very possible that Rameau was influenced by Baron's depictions of indigenous people, and subsequently Rameau also participates in the French collective imagination romanticizing and idealizing non-European people. Figure 7 is a duet that showcases Zima's and Adario's singing about their romanticized and utopian natural habitat where they are free to follow the laws of nature instead of the laws of man.

**Figure 7: Translated lyrics by Joellen A. Meglin: Zima and Adario Duet ACT IV, *Les Sauvages***

**Zima and Adario**

Peaceful forests, Never a vain desire troubles our hearts here:  
If they are smitten,  
It is not at the cost of your favors, Fortune.

**Chorus of the Savages**

Peaceful forests... [refrain]

**Zima and Adario**

In our retreats  
Greatness, never come  
To offer your false attractions;  
Heaven, you have made them  
For innocence and for peace.

**Chorus of the Savages**

Peaceful forests... [refrain]

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<sup>72</sup> Strohm, "“Les Sauvages”, Music in Utopia, and The Decline of the Courtly Pastoral." 27.

**Zima and Adario**

Revel in our havens,  
Relish the tranquil fruits.  
Ah, can one be happy  
When one forms other desires?

**Zima**

Reign Pleasures & Games; triumph in our Woods:  
We recognize only your laws here.  
All the wounds  
Tenderness  
Is our ardors unknown.  
Nature who makes our hearts  
Takes care to guide them without cease.  
Reign Pleasures & Games; triumph in our Woods.  
We recognize only your laws here.<sup>73</sup>

The lyrical images from Zima and Adario's duet depict nature as ideal, fruitful, and pastoral. The characters' ideological mindsets are grounded in the laws of Nature, signifying that Rameau portrays these non-European characters as conduits for Enlightenment ideologies.

Furthermore, the character of Zima is particularly important to examine because, as a female character, she demonstrates a non-European character with a prominent amount of agency. In "Sauvages, Sex Roles, and Semiotics: Representations of Native Americans in French Ballet," Joellen Meglin states, "The last scene, the climax of *Les Sauvages*, itself the last entrée of *Les Indes galantes*, would certainly have reinforced the entire opera-ballet's themes of make-love-not-war and its subtle sign-play between the language of *gloire* and the language of *galanterie*."<sup>74</sup> Zima plays the pivotal role of an idealized non-European character whose authority in choosing a spouse exemplifies the ideals of French Enlightenment because Zima has the individual freedom of choice. As Meglin goes on to state:

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<sup>73</sup>Meglin, "Sauvages, Sex Roles, and Semiotics: Representations of Native Americans in the French Ballet, 1736-1837, Part One: The Eighteenth Century," 98-99.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 99-100.

The trope of the *sauvagesse* who chooses her own marriage partner regardless of parental dictates, existed in contradictions to longstanding practices in French society, where marriage contracts were used to solidify social, political, and economic standing in families. Thus, the love-match symbolized a vehicle through which women could express their independent will and escape being pawns of their families; at the same time, it symbolized a social contract of relations freely entered, mutually agreed upon. The marriage for love would become a staple of the nineteenth-century ballet.<sup>75</sup>

Therefore, Zima's role in the opera-ballet is significant as it challenges traditional eighteenth-century European gender roles. Her character can be read as a romanticized vision of a feminist utopia or *femtopia*. In fact, as I highlighted earlier, the original costume of Zima depicts her in a courtly gown made from feathers. The image of the courtly French woman is superimposed onto the Native American woman, further revealing the complexities of her identity that is at once European and Other. Ultimately, the erasure of Zima's indigenous characteristics opens up a space for feminism, albeit Rameau's version of an imagined female agency, that complicates the East and West binary of Said's orientalism.

In conclusion, I have examined how Rameau developed musical tropes to represent non-Europeans that were later followed by Mozart and other eighteenth-century composers. I further reveal how eighteenth-century opera's costumes were not culturally specific to indigenous figures, but rather, featured a courtly, European aesthetic with the added adornment of accessories that colonists would consider exotic, such as feathers and animal skins. These accoutrements act as signifiers of non-European figures as different, but not dangerous. Though Rameau adds sonic and visual cues that signal these non-European characters as Other, they still inhabit Enlightenment archetypal ideologies, making them familiar to French audiences. The paradox of this estranged familiarity is most prevalent in the character of Zima, who embodies the Enlightenment values of individualism and freedom of choice while acting out her role as

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 106.

Native American princess. In the character of Zima, Rameau composes a female character who derives power from her adherence to Western thought yet whose *femtopian* stance contradicts France's patriarchal societal codes. I argue that Rameau is able to subtly critique France's gendered power structures due to Zima's otherness. She is non-threatening to audiences because of her indigeneity. In the following Coda, I draw attention to present-day productions of *Les Indes galantes* and how these productions have sought to reinterpret Rameau's non-European characters through modern and hip-hop dance choreography.



## Coda

### Thinking Ahead: Modern Productions of *Les Indes Galantes*

The 2005 William Christie and Les Arts Florissants production of *Les Indes galantes*, one of the most recent productions, depicts the non-European characters in exoticized costumes and dismisses any kind of cultural specificity, which though light-hearted and comedic in its tone, are deeply troublesome in their racist representations. By embracing indigenous costumes that are a caricature of themselves, the offensive tone of the production results in Zima's loss of female agency. Unfortunately, Zima becomes a parody of both her indigenous and female identity, which in turn, only emphasizes orientalist tropes and dismisses any historical specificity of the original production or composer's authorial intent.

In contrast, German Bayerische Staatsoper produced a 2016 version of *Les Indes galantes* that replaces indigenous specificity with a modern avant-garde dance aesthetic and provides a social critique on the global issues of immigration and social inequality. This German production, perhaps careful not to engage with the representations of the non-European, completely changes the plotline of the fourth act. Most recently in 2019, Opéra National de Paris produced a version of *Les Indes galantes*, where the choreographer Bintou Dembélé creates a street, club, and hip-hop dance spectacle to the original score. This Parisian production, directed by Clément Cogitore, received high acclaim internationally and was only recently shut-down due to COVID-19. It can be argued that the new production features the urbanization of Rameau's orientalist utopia in a twenty-first-century setting, establishing a "new contact zone" where black bodies are celebrated through dance rather than erased as was in Rameau's period. As Cogitore

comments, “I didn’t want the dancers to be ornamental accessories to the protagonists...They needed to participate in the action, to have real roles, even if they remained silent.”<sup>76</sup>

While the *New York Times* review of the opera highlights this production’s groundbreaking inclusivity of cast and content, it also insinuates that Cogitore’s production challenges Baroque-era productions that represent the non-European in exoticized and racist costumes. However, I would add that by increasing the dramatic importance of the dancers, Cogitore fulfills in a significant manner one of the early eighteenth-century goals of *opera-ballet*, that is, to be less ornamental and to further the development of the plotline. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 3, by placing *Les Indes galantes* within its historical and cultural context, it is apparent that eighteenth-century productions imagine non-European characters through an idealized and French Enlightenment lens. These Baroque productions highlight the complexities and nuances of how the West represents the Other as fantastical yet also a mirror of itself.

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<sup>76</sup> Madison Mainwaring, “Vogue Dancers Subvert a Baroque Spectacle at the Paris Opera.” *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/25/arts/music/indes-galantes-paris-opera-hip-hop.html>

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