
Francisizing Opera: Ballard and the Printing of Cavalli's *Ercole Amante*

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Résumé

In 1659, Cardinal Mazarin commissioned an opera for the upcoming wedding of Louis XIV to the Infanta Maria Theresa of Spain. Written by Venetian composer Francesco Cavalli, *Ercole Amante* premiered three years later to little success. Henry Prunières and Jérôme de La Gorce attribute this poor reception, at least in part, to anti-Italian sentiment at court following the death of Mazarin in 1661. This conclusion is problematized by the continuing debate over whether *Ercole Amante* is an Italian or French opera. I approach this question by studying the publication, distribution, and reception of the opera text. By examining the 1662 libretto published by Robert Ballard, I argue that Cavalli's opera is marketed as a product by and for the glory of the French nation. However, its multilingual *mise-en-page* assigns a transnational identity to the work. I conclude that this hybrid national identity doomed *Ercole Amante* to obscurity.

Mots-Clés: Louis XIV, opera, Francesco Cavalli, libretto, Ballard

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