



# **Dance and Drama in French Baroque Opera: A History (Cambridge Studies in Opera)**

*Rebecca Harris-Warrick*

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Since its inception, French opera has embraced dance, yet all too often operatic dancing is treated as mere decoration. *Dance and Drama in French Baroque Opera* exposes the multiple and meaningful roles that dance has played, starting from Jean-Baptiste Lully's first opera in 1672. It counters prevailing notions in operatic historiography that dance was parenthetical and presents compelling evidence that the *divertissement* - present in every act of every opera - is essential to understanding the work. The book considers the operas of Lully - his lighter works as well as his tragedies - and the 46-year period between the death of Lully and the arrival of Rameau, when influences from the *commedia dell'arte* and other theatres began to inflect French operatic practices. It explores the intersections of musical, textual, choreographic and staging practices at a complex institution - the Académie Royale de Musique - which upheld as a fundamental aesthetic principle the integration of dance into opera.

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