lyriques were being written any longer, and audiences were increasingly turning their backs on those of older composers such as Rameau. The earlier type of opera found itself in an even more parlous state than it had been before Rameau's intervention. Once more, however, there was help at hand in the form of a powerful ally, a foreign composer who adopted a far deeper and far more logical approach to the problem of reforming serious music drama than even Rameau had done and who breathed new life into the old Renaissance ideal, investing it with a hitherto unknown purity. His name was Christoph Willibald Gluck. Gluck's arrival in Paris changed everything, unleashing a new and embittered struggle from which the German composer finally emerged victorious.

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The music dramas of Gluck

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–87)[1] studied first with Bohuslav Černohorský in Prague and then with Giovanni Battista Sammartini in Milan.[2] Between 1741, the year in which his first opera *Artaserse* was first performed,[3] and 1750, the year in which he married, he led an eventful and unsettled life, travelling around Europe as a composer of Italian operas, initially in the service of Italian and English theatres, then in that of the touring companies run by the brothers Pietro and Antonio Mingotti, with whom he is known to have visited Prague, Dresden, Leipzig, Hamburg, Copenhagen and possibly Graz, as well as Holland and Belgium.[4] During the course of these years of travel he was assailed by the most disparate artistic impressions, although the greatest of them – his acquaintance with Handel and with the music of Rameau – were not to bear fruit until the period of his operatic reforms. In general, Gluck's Italian operas coincide in their aims with those of Hasse and his school, a school among whose members Jommelli was temperamentally the closest to Gluck. Gluckian is the fondness for strict motivic procedures, especially in the orchestra, the writing for which was still heavily influenced by Sammartini. Gluckian, too, is the careful word-setting in the *secco* recitatives, which even now are already strikingly dramatic in tone and supported by expressive harmonies. And Gluckian, finally, is the orchestral colour, which in places is already surprising for its later 'Romantic' manner and which is found in particular in scenes of a darker or more impassioned character. As a matter of principle, the Metastasian type is still strictly preserved. Indeed, Gluck remains far behind Jommelli and Traetta in the freedom of his aria forms, to say nothing of his handling of the accompanied recitatives and his introduction of ensembles and choruses.[5] In 1758 he began to explore the world of French comic opera, in the history of whose development he was to play an important role. Although this may appear to have been a step in the opposite direction, his later reform operas are inconceivable without this

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3. See Saint-Foix, 'Les débuts milanais de Gluck', 28–46.
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groundwork, for it was here that he first became aware of the entirely new concepts of naturalness and dramatic characterization and, above all, of the need for a totally different relationship between words and music and a far greater formal variety than he had been used to in *opera seria*. For the first time in his career he had the chance to collaborate on a type of art that breathed the spirit of Rousseau's new ideal of nature and that was free from all convention, seeing its ultimate goal in a revival of the spirit of the folksong. This was an art that Gluck found far more attractive than is generally believed: nor was it only the tone of French songs that he successfully attempted to imitate, the youthful memory of Austrian and even Bohemian folksongs was suddenly rekindled. From the standpoint of the loftier kind of drama, these were only modest works, of course, but they enabled him to learn how to handle musical characterization within the succinct and small-scale forms of the song and to draw closer to a goal that was to strike the later reformer as of paramount importance in drama, namely, to express each musical idea in its most appropriate form, using as few and as simple means as possible. Even *Orfeo ed Euridice* already demonstrates the truth of this remark: the famous 'Cerco il mio ben così' in the opening act could never have been written in this form without the experience of these *airs nouveaux*.

At the same time – 1761 – Gluck took a further important step with his dramatic ballet *Don Juan*, to the plot of which we shall have occasion to return in the context of *Don Giovanni*. It is clear from remarks by the poet Gasparo Angiolini that in terms of its aims this was already a reform work, albeit limited to the world of dance.[6] Angiolini's demand for significant characters and simple plots, together with the markedly philological nature of his remarks, suggest affinities with Calzabigi[7] and indicate the same intellectual background, namely, the circle surrounding the Viennese intendant Count Giacomo Durazzo.

The members of this circle could count on Viennese opera's traditional resistance to fashionable trends from Italy.[8] Their aims, which had found increasingly clear expression in the sung and spoken drama for almost a century, finally assumed the form of a specific programme. As in the years around 1600, so it was the ideal of classical tragedy that was now revived, an ideal to which the spoken drama aspired through its introduction of choruses, while opera aimed for similar results by means of a completely new approach to its texts. It was a movement that was to lead ultimately to Schiller's *Die Braut von Messina* and Goethe's *Pandora* and, in parallel, to the music dramas of Gluck.[9] Metastasio's librettos, too, had purported to imitate classical drama, though they contained little of the classical spirit, unless we count the late Roman antiquity that is also found in Metastasio's unacknowledged French models. With the passage of time, the absence of one of the principal features of classical tragedy – the chorus – was increasingly keenly felt, and as librettists and composers became more familiar with French opera, so there were ever more vocal demands for a reinvigoration of Italian opera by means of a revival not only of the chorus, but of the dancing and instrumental music found in French works of this period. One of the most enthusiastic advocates of reform, Count Francesco Algarotti, openly voiced this demand in his *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica* of 1755.[10] Within Germany, Vienna was certainly the most fertile ground for such a suggestion, as it was necessary only to revive the aspirations of composers such as Johann Joseph Fux and Carlo Agostino Badia, aspirations that had been realized barely a generation earlier on the Viennese stage.[11] Of course, this purely formal expansion still left a great deal of work to be done. Composers could add as many choruses and dances to Metastasian texts as they liked (and as members of the Hasse school did with increasing frequency), but the end product was still the same, an expression of that rationalistic current in intellectual thought in which convention and fixed rules triumphed over nature and humanity, and the imagination was used, by preference, for purely decorative ends. Even before Gluck appeared on the scene, it was clear to the members of this group that if reforms were to be made, they must start with the texts. The pillars on which rationalism was built in Germany had already been undermined by a new wave of ideas that had come first from England and then from France: freedom from convention and the liberation of emotion from the tyranny of reason – this basic principle of the new doctrine was already an integral part of the thinking of the advocates of reform in Vienna. But it is Ranieri de' Calzabigi (1714–95)[12] who deserves the credit for applying the new spirit to Italian opera. Calzabigi began his career as an ardent champion of Metastasio and as the editor of his compatriot's works, and now Count Durazzo recommended Gluck to him as a composer well suited to implementing his new ideas. The three operas *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762), *Alceste* (1767) and *Paride ed Elena* (1770) were the fruits of their collaboration. As Gluck's Italian reform operas, they belong together as a self-contained group. The series of French operas that followed begins with *Iphigénie en Aulide*.

Like Metastasio, Calzabigi was not a true poet but a man of letters endowed with skill and good taste and, above all, an acute observer of the various trends in contemporary opera. He himself admitted that he merely gave the clearest expression to his predecessors' ideas, yet he will always be remembered as the man who progressed from mere speculation to artistic achievement and who, above all, helped Gluck to see precisely what his new goals were. In radical upheavals such as these, the last word is invariably spoken not by the speculative theorist but by the creative genius. However highly we rate Calzabigi's contribution, Gluck will always remain the true soul of the reform movement, for whereas Calzabigi may have been clever enough to devise these new ideas, it was Gluck who felt them on their deepest level.

Of decisive importance was the fact that Calzabigi had the courage to grasp the nettle and break free from the stranglehold of the Metastasian tradition. As a result, Gluck's reforms – like Wagner's a century later – began not with music but with the words, and musical reform ultimately proved to be only a natural consequence of poetic reform. Calzabigi's aim was to reassert the legitimate claims of individual emotion in the face of rationalistic convention. As a poet, he himself was prevented from achieving this end since he lacked the divine spark needed to do so, but he was intelligent enough to know how to ignite that spark in the soul of his musician and produce a white-hot flame. He set out from the belief that the plot should be as simple as possible, with

6. The principal reformer was Jean-Georges Noverre. ◆ See Lynham, *The Chevalier Noverre: Father of Modern Ballet*, and Tugal, *Jean-Georges Noverre, der große Reformator des Balletts*.
7. Angiolini adopted an even more rigorous approach than Noverre in this regard, with the result that in his introduction to *Les Horaces et les Curiaces* the latter attacked him for his 'pantomime sans danse'. ◆ Concerning Angiolini, see Tozzi, *Il balletto pantomimo del Settecento: Gaspare Angiolini*; Dahms, 'Anmerkungen zu den "Tanzdramen" Angiolinis und Noverres und zu deren Gattungsspezifik' and 'Wiener Ballett zur Zeit Metastasios'; Brown, 'Elementi di classicismo nei balli viennesi di Gasparo Angiolini' and 'Metastasio und das Ballett'.
8. See Kretzschmar, 'Zum Verständnis Glucks', ii.199–201. ◆ In general, see Bruce Alan Brown, *Gluck and the French Theatre in Vienna*; further, Puncuh, 'Giacomo Durazzo: Famiglia, ambiente, personalità'; and Gallarati, 'La poetica di Giacomo Durazzo e la *Lettre sur le méchanisme de l'opéra italien*'.
9. See Burdach, 'Schillers Chordrama und die Geburt des tragischen Stils aus der Musik'.

10. ◆ For a partial translation, see Fubini, *Music and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe: A Source Book*, 435–7 and 443–51. Further, see Cerami, 'Il Saggio sopra l'opera in musica di Francesco Algarotti: Analisi e critica nel contesto culturale del XVIII secolo'.
11. See Kretzschmar, 'Zum Verständnis Glucks'.
12. See Welti, 'Gluck und Calsabigi', 26–42; Lazzeri, *La vita e l'opera letteraria di Ranieri Calzabigi*; and Michel, 'Ranieri Calzabigi als Dichter von Musikdramen und als Kritiker'. For a German translation of Calzabigi's 1790 *Risposta*, see Einstein, 'Calzabigis "Erwiderung" von 1790'. As a member of the Arcadian Academy in Rome Calzabigi adopted the name of Liburno Drepanio. ◆ Further, see Piscitelli, 'I libretti napoletani di Ranieri de' Calzabigi'; Bellina, *Ranieri Calzabigi: Scritti teatrali e letterari*; and Del Monte and Segreto, *Christoph Willibald Gluck nel 200° anniversario della morte*.

Horace's 'denique sit quidvis simplex dumtaxat et unum'[13] as the model for all that he wrote. Metastasio's whole system of complex intrigues thus collapsed. But Calzabigi was sufficiently clever to realize that he also needed to block off the source of such unnaturalism, namely, Metastasio's *galant* view of love as a social phenomenon. It is here, perhaps, that his greatest achievement lies. Orpheus and Alcestis are no longer social beings whose actions and feelings are consciously or unconsciously adapted to conform to the moral code of an invisible aristocratic public. There is no longer any trace of love in the *galant* sense of the term: in both works, love exists only in its supreme ethical form as the love between husband and wife. And such fidelity proves itself not in some petty intrigue created by human hand but in a struggle with death itself. The sublime notion of love triumphing over death is one that Metastasio had often toyed with in a purely superficial way, but it now became the driving force of two entire dramas. But the idea is so overpowering, especially in *Orfeo*, that it robs the characters of their individuality, draining every last ounce of marrow from their bones. It is impossible to speak of Orpheus and Alcestis as characters in the sense in which we can speak of Agamemnon or Thoas as characters. They draw what life they have purely and simply from the underlying idea and are thus closer to allegory than to the concept of dramatic character. It is for this reason that the character of Cupid in *Orfeo ed Euridice* does not fall as far outside the action as is generally argued to be the case. Calzabigi was wrong to think that he was returning in this way to classical antiquity as the characters in classical drama are individuals, not universal symbols, in spite of all their simplicity.

None the less, he could be proud of his innovation. The fact that he placed great and simple ideas at the heart of his dramas was in itself sufficient to mark a tremendous advance on Metastasio, for whom such ideas had merely been a pretext for parading his modish gifts. Now music dramas finally had plots that developed through an emotionally charged, internally consistent series of antitheses. The call of 'back to nature' that coincided at this time with the demand for an end to convention thus won a decisive victory in the art of Italian libretto writing.

Even so, Calzabigi was unable to sever all his links with Metastasio: he was far too much of a rationalist for that, as is clear, not least, from his extensive speculations on the rules governing the new drama, speculations that preceded his work on the drama and continued even while he was engaged on it. As a result, his stage works are not elemental poetic experiences but considered and ordered illustrations of a preconceived theory of drama. Although he went beyond Metastasio's conventional handling of his subject matter, he remained bound by his predecessor's general method. Calzabigi's heroes, like Metastasio's, are not unique, individual characters but the embodiment of certain characteristics based on his own observations: he, too, began with particular qualities and created his characters on the strength of them. That he failed to attain the same high level as his classical models even in his interpretation of his subjects is clear from his uninspired, euhemeristic account of the legend of Alcestis.[14] But Calzabigi was a rationalist even on points of detail, including his curiously stylized bombast, his fondness for alluding to all manner of recondite legends, his tendency to produce subjective effects by means of objective portrayals and formal clarity, and, finally, various aspects of his poetic diction. Admittedly, he makes a genuine effort to avoid Metastasio's self-conscious eloquence, notably his predecessor's similes, but there is still the same delight in finely polished form, the same attempt to display his erudition and to show

13. This quotation from Horace's *Epistles* iii.23 appears as a motto at the head of the score of *Alceste*.

14. For Calzabigi, Alcestis is a tender-hearted wife whose husband is suffering from an infectious disease. She tends him and saves him but in the process is herself infected by his illness, with the result that she can ultimately be saved only by an experienced and sympathetic physician; see Einstein, 'Calzabigis "Erwiderung" von 1790', 72.

off his elegance and the breadth of his reading, and his audiences were no more spared his sententious moralizing than had been the case with Metastasio.

On the other hand, he succeeded in an area in which Metastasio had known only failure, conceiving his scenes from the outset in such a way that the composer no longer needed to sidestep the drama, while the dramatist no longer needed to be afraid of trespassing on the composer's preserves. This was a natural consequence of his simplified approach to the drama and it is one that was to prove immensely important: instead of the intricate ratiocinations that had been necessary to advance the plot in Metastasio's librettos, Calzabigi was able to invest the dialogue with a far greater degree of emotion, meeting the musician halfway and enabling him to restore the aria to its dramatic context. Even for Calzabigi, the aria was still the 'perorazione del discorso e conclusione della scena', just as it had been for Metastasio, but it no longer served merely as a sensual or conceptual embellishment but as a genuine climactic conclusion to the individual emotion aroused in the earlier part of the scene. In this way, one of the basic shortcomings of Neapolitan opera – the dislocation of drama and music – was avoided, and it was now only a question of how the musician would follow up these suggestions.

Gluck, too, began his career as a rationalist of the old school. Not only his personality, in which thinking of something was tantamount to wanting it,[15] but also his whole background, especially his upbringing by the Jesuits at Komotau (Chomutov), predisposed him to adopt this outlook. But unlike so many of his contemporaries, including Calzabigi, he was not content to fall into line with the others. For Calzabigi, the whole rationalistic system of thinking and of writing poetry was an immutable fact of life. Gluck, by contrast, was a man of tremendous intellectual resolve, the sheer force of which caused this ossified system to melt and achieve new life. All the traditional principles became living forces again thanks to his ability to assimilate every last one of them and make them uniquely his own. Rationalist thinking had always lacked inner experience, but with Gluck that lack was at last made good to the extent that thought and experience now became one. In this way he succeeded in salvaging the highest and purest achievements of rationalism in opera, marking both the culmination and end of that movement.

As a result Gluck quickly outgrew his librettist. Although Calzabigi's characters had cast aside their old conventional masks, they did not acquire a life of their own until they had drunk the warm blood of Gluck's personality as an artist. In this they may be said to resemble the Homeric shades. Common to both the composer and his librettist was the fact that they gave precedence to the thinker over the artist and to the forces of order over those of creative disorder. Order, clarity and logic – rationalism's old ideals – were also Gluck's ideals, as is clear in particular from his characterization of his heroes. For Gluck, too, they are not characters in the modern sense of the term, they are not unique figures combining within them the most disparate emotional and psychological forces, but representatives of specific, clear and intelligible ideas reduced to their simplest formulas, with the result that all other characteristics are bound to seem secondary or to disappear altogether. As a result he is unfamiliar with the modern concept of dramatic psychological development, and herein lies the decisive difference between his own approach to drama and that of the later period, including Mozart. For Calzabigi, the classical image of Orpheus as the embodiment of the bard's ideal beauty is fixed for all time and it remains so even in situations such as his very first strophe and his famous 'Che farò', where one would expect very different emotions, namely, grief and despair. Of course, these emotions still come into their own, but in the recitatives: this,

15. See Heuß, 'Gluck als Musikdramatiker'.

then, is an art that is well ordered and carefully considered. For Calzabigi, the most important consideration is always his depiction of the underlying idea, for the sake of which he reduces everything to the most basic antitheses within which there is no longer any room for psychological complications of a modern kind. Yet in the wonderful plasticity of these scenes and their inspired emotional consistency it is impossible not to see the way in which thinking and hypothesizing are transformed into an emotional experience for Gluck. This takes us far beyond Calzabigi, revealing a relationship between poet and composer that allows us to see their differing attitudes to rationalism in the clearest possible light: Calzabigi remained entrenched in it, whereas Gluck triumphed over it by turning its rules into living forces.

But this basic principle of Gluck's art also conditioned his attitude to music.[16]

The earlier view that Gluck found composition relatively difficult and that he therefore made a virtue of a necessity by subordinating the musician to the poet[17] is one that becomes impossible to sustain when we recall his prolific years in Italy. Nor does one have the impression that the specifically musical element gave Gluck any difficulty as an artist. And, given his way of working, there was certainly no question of this to begin with. As we have seen, the thinker invariably took precedence, and it was only when the building was complete that the composer was allowed to set foot inside it,[18] and even then his task was limited to not altering or concealing the basic outlines of the finished structure but simply to reinforcing them and making them clearer. In this way the composer became the servant not of the poet Calzabigi (as is so often claimed) but of the thinker in Gluck, a thinker who had annealed the libretto in the refining fires of his intellect. Never were the creative forces as strenuously subjected to the forces of order as they were here. Indeed, Gluck even thought that he could banish the ambiguity and irrationality of music from the language of the music drama. He openly admitted that music, especially its melodic aspect, was limited in its means,[19] a claim that places him at the very opposite end of the spectrum to Mozart. But it also explains the whole nature of his music, which aimed for simplicity and clarity (and hence, in Gluck's mind, for all that was natural), even if a number of 'absolute' musicians today regard it as merely primitive. And it further explains his elemental rhythmic effects and his antipathy to coloratura and to every kind of dramatic polyphony, which he inevitably found confusing and unnatural; and, finally, it explains one of the principal characteristics of his music, its declamatory style, with each individual thought and concept chiselled out with the hardness of steel. In the area of recitative, this had the momentous consequence of replacing the old *secco* recitative with *accompagnato*, but with the passage of time it also, and increasingly, affected the melodic lines of his arias. As a result, the two sections of the older type of opera, the 'unmusical' *secco* and the 'purely musical' aria, which had been drifting further and further apart, were brought together again in a new-found unity based on a totally different conception of the relationship between words and music, a concept that reflected the underlying principle that only the libretto could be allowed to determine the way in which the music itself was expressed. Essentially, the whole new structure of the music drama was the natural consequence of these underlying principles. This is especially true of the displacement of the *da capo* aria and its replacement by more varied forms ranging from the

16. See Heuß, 'Gluck als Musikdramatiker', 282.
17. See, for example, Jahn, *W. A. Mozart*, fourth edition, i.518ff.
18. Gluck's well-known remarks on this subject may be found in Anton Schmid, *Gluck*, 425: 'Before I set to work, I attempt above all to forget that I am a musician. I forget myself in order to see only my characters.' See also Schmid, *Gluck*, 433–4: 'Once I have sorted out the composition of the whole [that is, the overall design] and the characterization of the main characters, I consider the opera finished, even though I have not yet written down a single note. This groundwork normally takes about a year and not infrequently makes me very ill, in spite of which many people regard it as tantamount to writing light songs.'
19. Anton Schmid, *Gluck*, 427.

simple song, the natural expressive force of which Gluck had already explored in his comic operas, to the freest through-composed numbers.[20] Of course, he had a number of Italian forerunners in this regard, foremost among whom were Jommelli and Traetta, but they had abandoned the struggle while it was still half finished, leaving Gluck to stay the course and fight on with implacable resolve, achieving a monumental uniformity of style of which his predecessors had never even dreamt. Gluck no longer admitted to any distinction between the dramatically important and the less important: with him, the unimportant had already been removed even before the first musical sketches were made.

Where the Italian composers had taken only the most tentative steps, Gluck was far more consistent in introducing choruses, dances and autonomous instrumental music – a further formal innovation. Here we may detect the influence not only of the old Viennese school, but also of the Italian composers of the period, to say nothing of Rameau and Handel. But, of all his predecessors, only Handel had revealed such resolve in turning the chorus into one of his *dramatis personae*. There is no longer any trace here of the search for outward splendour or simply for a fuller-toned musical effect: either the chorus functions as the hero's dramatic antagonist, as in the scene with the Furies in *Orfeo*, or it etches in the atmospheric background, as it does with compelling force in *Alceste*. Entirely worthy of Handel is the way in which Gluck, in *Paride ed Elena* and later works, uses the chorus to extend the scope of the opera until it assumes a universal dimension. And he treats dance in the same way, even if he is sometimes too keen to imitate the French style, especially in his Parisian operas. Moreover, as we have seen, attempts had already been made by Noverre and his school to reform the world of dance. But solo singing, choruses and dance are no longer placed alongside each other in a non-organic way, but are treated as links in a living, dramatic organism in the form of dramatic scenes which, although anticipated in various details by his predecessors, are systematically raised by Gluck to the point where they support the whole structure of his dramas.[21]

Gluck's music dramas, finally, are inextricably bound up with an important development in terms of the orchestra. It is significant that he treats the two most elemental aspects of music – rhythm and orchestral tone colour – in particularly characterful ways. Following up French ideas, he was able to exploit the expressive force inherent in the timbre of each individual instrument, especially the winds, often investing it with such dramatic power that one can legitimately describe him as the forefather of the later 'Romantic' art of orchestration.[22] But even here he is never concerned with the purely sensuous side of his newly expressive language but only with its dramatic aspect. Such passages are intended to seem exceptional, and modern 'adaptors' are guilty, therefore, of traducing Gluck when they turn these passages into the general rule in their attempts to curry favour with their audiences.

It is extremely dangerous to judge Gluck's dramatic language by the standards of later composers such as Mozart and Wagner. It follows its own rules, and we ourselves must respect them, come what may. It is innocent of the later delight in psychological problems, but in its basic

20. In the light of what we have said, Calzabigi's declaration that it was only in *Orfeo ed Euridice* that he finally showed Gluck the correct form of declamation in his recitatives and drew his attention to the themes of his arias and choruses requires no further comment. In 1794 he even thought that he had discovered in Paisiello the true 'philosophical' composer.
21. As a result there is nothing more foolish than the division of scenes like that with the Furies into individual numbers. Although found in many of today's vocal scores, this sort of compartmentalization amounts to a massacre of the score. The same is true of Mozart's operas, as it is of those of any dramatist who deserves to be taken seriously.
22. It is no accident that it was precisely this aspect of Gluck's works that Berlioz particularly admired; see Kretzschmar, 'Zum Verständnis Glucks', ii.203.

ideas and their development it follows only the goal of supreme simplicity and clarity, qualities that only a judge who swears blind by psychology could ever regard as primitive. Listeners who really understand Gluck will feel his art to be no less genuine than that of his successors. Indeed, they will even regret that, disregarding all later progress, an appreciation of such elemental opposites has been lost as a result of the subsequent interest in individual characterization. Take *Orfeo*: the scene of lamentation (a scene doubly moving on account of its suppressed sadness) is followed by the tremendous climax of the scene with the Furies, the high point of the work as a whole, with its sense of a life-and-death struggle and its wistful echo in the bright yet faraway world of Elysium. With the final act comes the gradual dying away of emotion. This tendency to create a three-part structure with the greatest tension in the middle is found in *Alceste* and the majority of the later works. In it we may again detect an echo of 'classical' French tragedy, and it certainly introduces us to a further merit of the Gluckian music drama, that of total organic unity, in which each section has a particular function to fulfil.

The individual characters in *Orfeo* are as typical of Gluck as its structure: the hero is the bard who sings of the purest beauty, a beauty which in keeping with Winckelmann's ideas is Apollonian rather than Dionysian; and Eurydice is typically ruled by female desires. Between them is the allegorical figure of Cupid, whose Rococo wings are clearly visible in his first-act aria. It is no accident that there is more Italian blood in this work than in any other by Gluck. Individual reminiscences of particular models no doubt mark it out as Gluck's first attempt at a reform opera,[23] but they cannot detract from its importance as a reform work. That it was regarded as such is evident not least from its lukewarm reception and from the various attempts to revise it and thus to align it with current tastes.[24]

From *Alceste* onwards, Gluck no longer made any secret of his reformist aspirations. The basic problem is the same: the victorious struggle of a mortal raised above him- or herself by the force of a moral idea and locked in conflict with the divine representative of dull and ineluctable fate in the form of death. But the two main characters have not only exchanged roles when compared with *Orfeo*, they have also risen above the innocent, fairy-tale world of that work and entered the realm of high tragedy. The semi-unconscious desire that leads Orpheus to the shades of the underworld becomes the blinding light of conscious morality in the case of Alcestis. Unlike Orpheus, she follows no youthful impulse, but as a wife and mother she forces herself to reach the ultimate decision, while remaining every inch a queen and revealing that inner and outer regality from start to finish. In exactly the same way, Admetus is forced to suffer all the torments of his destiny in a state of total awareness. In this way the antitheses found in *Orfeo* are made incomparably deeper, even if they are not more complicated. The three-part structure is again in evidence: first there is the overwhelming increase in tension such as few other operas can boast in the whole history of the genre, a tension that mounts throughout the whole of the opening act and culminates in act two, scene five, when Admetus finally forces his wife to utter her terrible confession. As with *Orfeo*, it has to be conceded that the release of tension is less successfully achieved. The succession of opposites, too, reveals undeniable progress: they are now more numerous and their effects more subtly calculated.

23. The opening scene recalls the famous *tombeau* in Rameau's *Castor et Pollux*, while the scene with the Furies bears a strong resemblance to a similar scene in Traetta's *Ifigenia in Tauride*. And the beginning of the scene in Elysium is reminiscent, finally, of the scene in which Rinaldo falls asleep in Traetta's *Armida*; see Abert, *Christoph Willibald Gluck: Orfeo ed Euridice*. We have already noted the influence of *opéra comique* on the brief, songlike numbers. Among such numbers is the final one of all, which, formally speaking, is a complete vaudeville.
24. See Engländer, 'Zu den Münchener Orfeo-Aufführungen 1773 und 1775', 26ff.

Not only has the drama gained in depth, so too has the expressive range of the music, revealing a breadth and profundity that are particularly clear from the instrumental sections of the recitatives as well as from the choruses and their combination of solo singing and dancing. Although this signifies a marked increase in French influence, Gluck's achievement here, as elsewhere, far exceeds all his models, with the ancient device of repeating individual choral numbers now producing whole blocks of scenes of unprecedented monumentality.

In spite of all these merits and notwithstanding its aggressively worded preface, *Alceste* was by no means an outright success. Although there were a few enthusiastic voices raised in its defence,[25] these were offset by the eloquent silence of such authorities as Hasse. There were only two productions in Italy, one in Bologna in 1778, the other in Naples in 1785,[26] but neither led to anything further. Nor did the opera fare any better at its first foreign staging in Christiansborg in Denmark,[27] while in northern Germany it was rejected almost completely not only by King Frederick himself[28] but also by his musicians.[29]

Gluck came out fighting, expressing himself in no uncertain terms in his preface to *Paride ed Elena*, complaining at the public's tepid response and at the stupidity of the musicians and declaring his intention of remaining true to his new ideal. Unfortunately Calzabigi proved unequal to the new challenge, and in both its five-act structure and its treatment of its subject matter, *Paride ed Elena* is a failure, albeit one that is not without interest in terms of its transitional nature and its anticipation of the French operas that were to follow. Here the dramatic conflict does not stem from a basic idea that determines everything in advance, be it plot or *dramatis personae*, but from the antagonism between two characters. For this to work, the characterization would have had to be in the style of *Iphigénie en Aulide*, but it was Calzabigi's misfortune to imagine that he could get by here with his earlier approach. As before, he tried to achieve his effects by means of elemental antitheses, and it is typical of his whole manner that he highlighted the contrast between his two main characters by giving it a universal dimension and seeing in it a clash between Europe and Asia and, hence, between culture and barbarism. But this contrast remains no more than a detail when compared with the matter in hand, the manner in which the fatal affair develops. And it is precisely here that Calzabigi came to grief. The idea that love is a source of ruin as soon as it assumes the form of a primeval force and boundless passion is entirely typical of the 'Age of Reason'; but the rationalist in Calzabigi lacked the power of inner experience to carry this through into the drama. As a result, Love remains a pale child of reason, for all that she is the main character whose presence permeates the piece, and matters are only made worse by the fact that the action is spread over five whole acts. Not even Gluck was able to overcome this problem, even though the work reveals an undeniable advance in terms of its musical characterization. His Paris is an inspired and genuinely Gluckian creation: he is the Asiatic hero who, in Gluck's eyes, has not enjoyed the principal blessings of a civilized education, blessings that include clarity of mind and firmness of will. As such, he represents those chaotic instincts which, for Gluck, were the root of all evil. Helen is his antithesis, no Circe-like figure but a majestic princess who, as Gluck says, is still 'respected by Hector' even after committing so heinous a crime and whom he therefore subtly

25. Sonnenfels, *Briefe über die wienerische Schaubühne*; Hiller, *Wöchentliche Nachrichten*, iii (1768), 127ff.; and Riedel, *Ueber die Musik des Ritters Christoph von Gluck*, IXff.
26. Ricci, *I teatri di Bologna nei secoli XVII e XVIII*, 625ff., and Florimo, *La scuola musicale di Napoli e i suoi conservatorii*, iv.350. ♦ Loewenberg, *Annals of Opera*, 295–8, also lists performances in Padua in 1777 and Florence in 1786.
27. See Wotquenne, *Thematisches Verzeichnis der Werke von Chr. W. v. Gluck*, 208.
28. *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* x/2.31; Nicolai, *Beschreibung einer Reise durch Deutschland und die Schweiz im Jahre 1781*, iv.529; and Reichardt, *AmZ*, iii (1800/1), 187 and xv (1813), 612.
29. Agricola, *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* xiv/1.3ff. and especially Forkel, *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* x/2.29ff.

portrays in her cruel reserve even towards her own retinue of earthy athletes. But it is for precisely this reason that there is something unsatisfactory about her final change of heart. The conflict between nature and religion so masterfully embodied by Agamemnon (see below) is still barely sketched out here. Gluck himself appears to have been aware of these shortcomings and never returned to the piece but merely helped himself to individual numbers when writing his later works.

Paride ed Elena proved no more of a breakthrough for Gluck than his earlier operas had done. Viennese audiences could make nothing of Gluck's art of ethnographical characterization, an art which for today's listeners is the most accessible aspect of the work. It is no wonder, therefore, that he accepted an offer from the then attaché to the French embassy in Vienna, François Louis Gand Leblanc du Roullet, to write his next opera for Paris. Du Roullet himself was keen to prepare a libretto based on Racine's *Iphigénie en Aulide*. It was thus Du Roullet who took the decisive step and gave a new direction to Gluck's operatic reforms, exchanging an Italian basis for a French one. Du Roullet was entirely right to predict that success would come more easily to Gluck if he pursued this new course. The German temperament, in which the chaotic and elemental element has always been particularly pronounced, had offered dull and instinctive resistance to this implacable dramatic logic, and only the upper echelons of Viennese society, who had in any case been favourably disposed to the French educational ideal, had been won over to Gluck's cause. Paris, by contrast, was the home of the rationalist 'classical' drama, the city of Racine and Corneille: here Gluck's art was very soon felt to reflect the national spirit, a spirit that saw in logic, clarity and order the supreme goals of human endeavour. Rationalism had started life in Paris in the form of 'classical' tragedy. After a lengthy period of paralysis it had now been restored to life and returned to its old home with the Gluckian music drama, and it was no accident that Gluck's first French work was based on a piece by Racine.

In spite of everything, it must none the less have seemed a risk to appear just now before Paris audiences with a new opera that harked back to the old *tragédie lyrique*. As we have seen, the old type of opera à la Rameau had sunk considerably in general esteem since the time of the *Querelle des Bouffons*, and for Rousseau and the whole of the younger generation it had become the epitome of unnaturalness and backwardness. Even so, it was Gluck who very soon emerged as the almost total victor, with even Rousseau finally proving to be one of his most ardent supporters. The reason for this apparently surprising turn of events lay in the fact that, unlike the radical *Bouffon* faction that had dismissed the older type of opera out of hand, Gluck had been able to distinguish between its outward manifestation and its universal intellectual aims.[30] He abandoned the former but retained the latter as something to which he himself could relate. Yet even in *Iphigénie en Aulide* he found himself confronted by a whole series of new problems that forced him to pursue a rather different course from the one he had taken so far. The heroes of his three most recent operas had all embodied certain elevated ideas and these alone, with the result that all purely human features had effectively disappeared. Now he was dealing for the first time with characters which, while not individuals in the modern sense, were none the less firmly rooted in a particular area of human culture. But this meant a different concept of dramatic action inasmuch as the plot was no longer derived from a particular moral idea but from the interplay between the characters. With *Iphigénie en Aulide* Gluck immediately found himself confronted by his most

30. • See Herbert Schneider, 'Gluck and Lully'.

difficult challenge: the character of Agamemnon, torn between his love as a father and his duty as a king or, as Gluck himself put it, between nature and religion.

Yet even when faced by these new challenges, Gluck did not waver from his principles. In the first place, he adopted exactly the same attitude to French verse as he had done towards Metastasio's: everything had to go that was still bound up with the old conventions and with the views and moral concepts of the age of Louis XIV. At the same time, however, he retained the old rationalistic creative principle that was aimed at clarity and order, except that in this case too he based it on inner experience. As a result he gave back to the French a purified image of their own temperament and it was not long before he was able to unite both enemy camps under his banner. The adherents of the older type of opera were suborned by the force of his thinking, while the champions of the new were won over by his weight of experience.

In this way Gluck developed a new and distinctive art of characterization. The characters' conventional masks were removed, and although these masks were not replaced with individual features in the sense understood by modern psychology, still less did he attempt to portray them as capable of development in the sense in which we understand this term today, even so he strove to reduce them to the simplest possible stereotypical formulas. Although Achilles and Iphigenia were no longer 'prince Achille' and 'princesse Iphigénie', as Jahn believed,[31] he was not interested, either, in depicting the psychological development of their relationship. For him, Achilles remains the murderous son of Peleus of the *Iliad*, Iphigenia the tender, maidenly young woman who suffers patiently till the end. Likewise in depicting the character of Agamemnon, Gluck's main concern remained his two basic motifs, nature and religion, with other characteristics such as anger and the desire for vengeance receiving his attention only to the extent that they served to deepen the underlying conflict. Everything that might be construed as unique or fortuitous was strenuously removed, and only what was typical remained. This explains why the action proceeds in a series of broad and simple sweeps. The characters never change, and so there are no unexpected complications in terms of the plot. Everything is reduced to the simplest concepts with implacable acuteness of vision, yet there is none of the sense of cold calculation that one often finds with the older rationalist dramaturgy: the whole of this splendid system is not merely the product of deep thought but is genuinely lived. Gluck's characters are as far removed from Mozart's as is humanly possible, yet the impression that they create is no less profound, thereby offering clear proof that there are different ways of experiencing the life of the soul and, hence, of creating dramatic characters. Only the philistine succeeds in forcing these different possibilities into the straitjacket of a particular system.

That Gluck aligned himself with French opera on a formal level, too, was only natural, not least as a result of the French language, whose peculiarities he studied with wonted resolve. But what finally emerged, in spite of all his readily identifiable models, was none the less something new, something specifically Gluckian, as is clear, not least, from his recitatives. Gluck brought with him from Vienna his ideally steely and dramatic declamatory style, which needed only to be slightly modified to suit the spirit of the French language. At the same time, however, he welded together all his existing achievements to create a new style that ranges from the *secco* and *accompagnato* recitatives of the Italians[32] and the *récitatif mesuré* of the French to fully developed arioso akin to the melodic line of an aria. Conversely, the declamatory nature of his melodic writing is perceptibly increased in the arias, with the words gaining an increasing influence on Gluck's vocal style – hence,

31. Jahn, *W. A. Mozart*, i.523.
32. Highly significant in this context is the gradual disappearance of the typical Italian cadence with descending fourth.

too, his emphatic rejection of the old coloratura principle whose 'unnaturalness' he had already attacked, of course, in *Orfeo ed Euridice*. The choruses, by contrast, are the least progressive aspect of the new work, although here, of course, it was difficult to improve on *Alceste* and *Paride ed Elena*. Likewise, the ballet increased in size rather than in kind: in spite of Gluck's attempt to incorporate this element into an organic whole, he was obliged to make certain concessions to French taste. Significantly, the number of such movements reverts to more modest proportions in *Iphigénie en Tauride*.

The ground was prepared for the new piece by two open letters in the *Mercure de France*, the first, in October 1772, from Du Roullet to the director of the Académie Royale, Antoine Dauvergne, and the second, in February 1773, from Gluck himself. Thanks to his connections with the Viennese court, Gluck finally managed to win over the dauphine, Marie Antoinette, to his side. The first performance took place on 19 April 1774 at the end of a six-month rehearsal period during which Gluck's strength of purpose had been tested to its limits by the obstinate resistance on the part of the singers and orchestra.[33] Although this first performance was less than wholly successful, the second found greater favour. There was, of course, resistance to the work from the outset, and it was not long before arguments were raging on both sides.

This is not the place to trace the various stages in this dispute. The initial reaction in both the French and Italian camps was one of bemusement, but they soon roused themselves and offered concerted resistance. Gluck, too, found a number of enthusiastic admirers, foremost among whom were the Abbé Arnaud, the editor of the *Gazette littéraire de l'Europe*, and Rousseau himself. They were later joined by Jean-Baptiste Suard, who styled himself 'L'Anonyme de Vaugirard'.[34] Gluck himself consolidated his position with a French reworking of *Orfeo*, which was unveiled on 2 August 1774 but which was, of course, no more successful from a dramatic point of view than its predecessor had been.[35] This in turn was followed by adaptations of two older and less important works, *L'arbre enchantée* (27 February 1775) and *Cythère assiégée* (1 August 1775), both of which proved deeply disappointing to Gluck. *Alceste* followed on 23 April 1776 in a reworking by Du Roullet, a version which, while making a number of decisive improvements to Calzabigi's libretto, introduced the character of Hercules, a change of distinctly doubtful dramatic value.[36] This version, too, was initially unsuccessful, and it was not until later that audiences began to take an interest it. But Gluck now decided to offer Parisian audiences two new works, rather than recycling his older ones, and with his customary resolve chose two texts by old Quinault himself: *Roland* and *Armide*.

While he was still working on these two operas in Vienna, the supporters of Italian opera were inspired by his example to implement a plan which, although long cherished, had invariably come to nothing in the past: they invited one of the most respected Neapolitan composers, Niccolò Piccinni, to Paris. His invitation was the work of Madame Du Barry; Jean-François de La Harpe; the influential Neapolitan ambassador to Paris, the Marchese Domenico Caracciolo; and ultimately

33. Cramer, *Magazin der Musik*, i (1783), 561; Genlis, *Mémoires inédits pour servir à l'histoire des dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles*, ii.248–9; Desnoiresterres, *Gluck et Piccinni*, 85ff.
34. ◆ See Vendrix, *Aux origines d'une discipline historique: La musique et son histoire en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*; and Alfred C. Hunter, *J.-B.-A. Suard, un introducteur de la littérature anglaise en France*.
35. The aria 'L'espoir renaît' is not by Bertoni, as was formerly assumed, but by Gluck himself; see Julien Tiersot's introduction to the Pelletan edition of *Orphée et Eurydice*, LIXff. ◆ The current view is that although the arias have some resemblances, both composers were writing for the same singer, who demanded that they customize their writing to his preferences; hence their similarities. The original accusation stems from Coquéau's 1776 *Entretiens sur l'état de l'Opéra de Paris* (see Lesure, *Querelle des Gluckistes et des Piccinnistes*, for a facsimile of Coquéau; and Howard, *Gluck: An Eighteenth-Century Portrait in Letters and Documents*, 202).
36. Hercules's first-act aria is not by Gossec, but comes from Gluck's own *Ezio* of 1750.

Queen Marie Antoinette herself, whose Italian sympathies were now newly revived. Marmontel declared his willingness to revise Quinault's *Roland* for Piccinni, resulting in a strongly worded letter from Gluck to Du Roullet that the latter proceeded to publish.[37] This was the letter that sparked the famous quarrel between the Gluckistes and the Piccinnistes that soon inflamed the whole of Paris but that was effectively no more than a latter-day version of the old antagonism between the French and Italian operatic ideals, except that thanks to Gluck's towering personality the French ideal had now acquired a purity that ensured its spiritual and intellectual ascendancy from the outset.[38]

Gluck was not the man to allow himself to be intimidated by this turn of events and he never saw any serious danger for his music drama in the sort of Italian opera that he himself had long since routed. The attacks of the Italian faction were a cause of considerable annoyance, of course, but like all determined individuals he drew renewed strength from the struggle. He even enjoyed entering the arena from time to time and joining in the general feud with his usual reckless causticity. Piccinni, by contrast, was not in the least belligerent by nature. He arrived in Paris on the last day of 1776, his hopes of a brilliant future fired by the city's patrons of the arts. But it did not take him long to realize that he had entered a lions' den, and the longer he was exposed to these squabbles, the less this kind, inoffensive and, above all, peace-loving man felt equal to the struggle. He had neither the inclination nor the talent to be a party leader. Added to this was his ignorance of the French language, which seriously impaired his abilities to deal with the outside world and also caused him great difficulties in composing *Roland*.[39] It was with mounting anxiety, therefore, that he watched events unfold, especially when Gluck angrily abandoned his own plans to set Quinault's libretto and started rehearsing *Armide* in July 1777. The first night followed on 23 September. Although Gluck had proudly predicted that the work would be a success, informing even the queen herself of this fact,[40] it was again slow to make an impression, drawing full houses only after La Harpe had lambasted it and Gluck had called for help on L'Anonyme de Vaugirard. Its initially cool reception was no surprise, of course, as its Romantic character and pronounced sensuality seemed to set it apart from the 'classical' Gluck of the earlier works. Not every listener noticed right away that, with his customary resolve, Gluck had sought and found the most suitable forms of expression for these completely different characters. Meanwhile, the rehearsals for *Roland* were proceeding apace. The controversy raged with particular fury at this time, but Gluck, who was well aware of the need to draw a distinction between the man and the work,[41] insisted on strict discipline from singers and musicians alike. Piccinni, meanwhile, grew more and more pessimistic and was already resolved to return to Naples on the day after the first performance on 27 January 1778. Contrary to his expectations, however, it proved a total triumph.[42] Its success was certainly

37. *Année littéraire* 1776, viii.322. The letter dates from the end of the year; see Tiersot, *Gluck*, 178. ◆ It is not clear which letter Abert refers to here; Gluck wrote to Du Roulett twice, on 2 and 13 December 1775; see Mueller von Asow, *The Collected Correspondence and Papers of Christoph Willibald Gluck*, 75–9.
38. See Desnoiresterres, *Gluck et Piccinni*, and Thoinan, *Notes bibliographiques sur la guerre musicale des Gluckistes et Piccinnistes*. A collection of the most important essays and pamphlets was published by Le Blond, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la révolution opérée dans la musique par M. le Chevalier Gluck*. ◆ Concerning the quarrel of the *Gluckistes* and *Piccinnistes* and its importance, see Lesure, 'Querelle des Gluckistes et des Piccinnistes' (facsimiles of original documents); Rushton, 'Music and Drama at the Académie Royale de Musique (Paris), 1774–1789' and 'Iphigénie en Tauride: The operas of Gluck and Piccinni'; and Schmierer, 'Die deutsche Rezeption der Querelle des Gluckistes et Piccinnistes'.
39. Marmontel, who also taught him French, each day had to translate the libretto for him, section by section; see Marmontel, *Œuvres complètes*, ii.15; see also Ginguené, *Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Nicolas Piccinni*, 25ff.
40. Campan, *Mémoires sur la vie privée de Marie Antoinette*, 7 and 131.
41. See Genlis, *Mémoires inédits*, ii.248 and Ginguene, *Notice*, 45–6.
42. Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire*, ix.500 and x.23.

merited, as the work teems with beauties all of its own and attests to the surprising ease with which Piccinni was able to adapt and assimilate the new style. Yet this very fact spelt the defeat of the Italian faction in Paris, for the work that the composer of their choice had offered them was anything but the Neapolitan opera that they had expected him to write: with its choruses and dances, its orchestral recitatives and earnest sense of drama, it resembled nothing so much as a work by the hated Gluck, except that the Italian delight in making music and, above all, Piccinni's tender-hearted and dreamy inwardness found greater expression here. Although the arguments continued to rage for some time, the dispute effectively ended in 1778, when the elderly, world-famous Italian composer showed exceptional magnanimity and resolve in bowing before Gluck's greatness and becoming his pupil instead of his enemy. His response was imitated not only by other Italians in Paris, including Sacchini, for example, but it also brought new blood to the old Italian opera by offering powerful support to the minority of composers who had already been won over to the idea of reintroducing the chorus into their works.

21

Mozart in Paris

Thanks to the unprecedented success of *Roland*, Piccinni was still the hero of the hour when Mozart and his mother arrived in Paris on 23 March.[1] But the Gluckistes had not been idle and were busily giving their adversary a piece of their mind in a whole series of different forms ranging from serious polemic to light-hearted parody.[2] On 27 April 1778, a month after his arrival in the city, Mozart could have attended a performance of *Les trois âges de l'opéra*, an opera by Grétry to words by Alphonse de Vismes,[3] in which the characters of Lully, Rameau and Gluck appeared in a succession of scenes depicting the whole history of the genre, including Italian *opera buffa*.[4] In this way Mozart would have been able to see this most topical of operatic controversies treated in theatrical guise. But wherever he turned, there was no escaping it, whether in the theatre or the concert hall, in newspapers or the salons of the aristocracy and even in the street. And his whole future depended on his own particular reaction to it.[5]

That it was exceptionally difficult for a newcomer to make any impression in these circumstances must have been clear to him from the outset, and even if it was not, advisers such as Grimm made no secret of the difficulties. To remain neutral in the general debate was tantamount to renouncing success from the outset. But to assert himself alongside Gluck and Piccinni, as Leopold hoped,[6] would have required far greater artistic prestige than Mozart currently enjoyed in the world and especially in Paris. Only by acting clear-headedly and energetically could he achieve his ends; anyone who in the present mayhem did not know exactly what he or she wanted and who did not join one or other of the two parties ran the risk of falling beneath the bandwagon's wheels.

There were various ways in which a young artist could catch the public eye. Mozart himself was temperamentally disinclined to take part in the literary feud. After all, he simply could not understand why men of letters should cudgel their brains over matters which, in his view, were of concern only to musicians. But nor could he understand why composers argued over rules before writing a note of music. The second possibility, to which Leopold had directed his son with some insistence, was to find influential patrons at court and among the nobility. Although his contacts in Vienna had been unable to provide him with a letter of recommendation to Queen Marie Antoinette, Leopold had already sent his son a long list of members of the aristocracy whom

1. The opera's takings totalled 60,000 livres for twelve performances. By 19 March it was being parodied in the form of Dorvigny's *La rage d'amour*; see Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets*, xi.185.
2. Marmontel was mockingly said to live in the 'rue des mauvais paroles', Piccinni in the 'rue des petits-champs', whereupon Gluck was banished to the 'rue du grand hurleur'; see Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets*, xi.108 and 115.
3. The brother of the director of the Académie Royale de Musique.
4. In his preface, the poet apologizes to Piccinni for not including him, too; see Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets*, xi.250.
5. ◆ Concerning musical life in Paris at this time, see Salinger, *Mozart à Paris*, and Mongrédien, 'Paris: The End of the Ancien Régime'.
6. *Briefe*, ii.442 (letter of 13 August 1778).