

# London Opera Observed, 1711–1844

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Handel's *Rinaldo*, first performed in 1711, was the first Italian opera to be written specifically for London, and established the popularity of the all-sung, Italian opera amongst eighteenth-century London audiences. This did not meet with universal approval; the strong tradition of spoken drama, coupled with a distrust of a 'foreign' form and language made opera both a controversial topic and a vehicle for controversy.

The rare material in this primary resource collection examines opera not simply as a genre, but illuminates a range of contemporary British attitudes towards topics such as dance, performance, sexuality and national identity.

The collection will be of interest not only to historians of theatre and musicologists, but to all scholars of the long eighteenth century. It includes a wide range of documents such as the introductions to the opera texts themselves, biographical material on performers, commentary by London audiences, proposals for aesthetic and managerial reforms, and reviews both enlightening and controversial.



Plate from [Anon.], 'Fitz-giggo; A, new English uproar' (1763)

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[Douce Prints a.49 Plate 34]

- Contains almost a hundred reset documents
- Prefatory material from eleven operas is included in full
- Material comes from the archives at the Bodleian Library, the British Library, the Houghton Library and the Huntington Library
- Documents are set in the context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London life
- Editorial apparatus includes a general introduction, volume introductions, headnotes, endnotes and a large bibliography
- An index appears in the final volume



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