



# Phèdre

*Jean Racine*

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## **Phèdre** Jean Racine

Phèdre (originally Phèdre et Hippolyte) is a dramatic tragedy in five acts written in alexandrine verse by Jean Racine, first performed in 1677.

With Phèdre, Racine chose once more a subject from Greek mythology, already treated by Greek and Roman tragic poets, notably by Euripides in Hippolytus and Seneca in Phaedra. In the absence of her royal husband Thésée, Phèdre ends by declaring her love to Hippolyte, Thésée's son from a previous marriage.

As a result of an intrigue by the Duchess of Bouillon and other friends of the aging Pierre Corneille, the play was not a success at its première on 1 January 1677 at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, home of the royal troupe of actors in Paris. Indeed, a rival group staged a play by the now forgotten playwright Nicolas Pradon on an almost identical theme. After Phèdre, Racine ceased writing plays on secular themes and devoted himself to the service of religion and the king until 1689, when he was commissioned to write Esther by Madame de Maintenon, the morganatic second wife of Louis XIV.

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