

Opera on Screen

Professor Marcia J. Citron, Marcia J. Citron
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Professor Marcia J. Citron, Marcia J. Citron : Opera on Screen before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Opera on Screen:

3 of 7 people found the following review helpful. "Must" reading for opera fans and film buffs.By Midwest Book ReviewHow does an opera change when it becomes a movie or a video? Opera on Screen examination is the first to explore how opera is treated on the screen, blending musical with film analysis and including ideas from gender studies and other disciplines to examine connections between art and its reproduction and depiction in other media.

What happens to opera when it's presented on the screen? How does an opera change when it becomes a movie, a television presentation, or a video? This book is the first to explore opera and its treatment on the screen from a musicologist's perspective. Marcia Citron provides a fascinating history of the nearly 100-year-old genre, examines landmark works of opera on screen from a variety of viewpoints, and shows how different electronic media shape the conception of this art form. The book begins with a comprehensive survey of the origins and development of screen opera. Citron then focuses on such significant works as Franco Zeffirelli's *Otello*, Francesco Rosi's Bizet's *Carmen*, Joseph Losey's *Don Giovanni*, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *Tales of Hoffmann*, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's *Parsifal*, Peter Sellars's four opera productions for television, and the celebrated relay telecast of *Otello* from the Royal Opera House in London. The author draws on ideas from diverse fields, including media studies and gender studies, to examine issues ranging from the relationship between sound and image to the place of the viewer in relation to the spectacle. As she raises questions about divisions between high art and popular art and about the tensions between live and reproduced art forms, Citron reveals how screen treatments reinforce opera's vitality in a media-intensive age.

For many opera fans, a live performance is a rare luxury. Film and television are infinitely more accessible, with new productions out on video all the time. How do we square a long, slow art form with the agitated media of the 21st century? Marcia J. Citron, a musicologist at Rice University, finds a richly varied field. Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's *Parsifal* exploits film's ability to produce cognitive gaps, such as a man's voice emerging from a woman's mouth. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *Tales of Hoffmann* uses a cast of dancers while unseen singers carry the vocal line; the split between sound and image gives it a silent movie's abstractness. Looking at Peter Sellars's productions of *Don Giovanni* on video, Citron shows how the camera enhances these contemporary settings of 18th-century works. Sellars rethinks Mozartian ensemble numbers--which normally function to bring characters onto common ground--by trapping his performers in isolated close-ups. A good deal of Citron's analysis of Sellars, though, pertains to his original staging, not the video treatments as such, begging the question of exactly when a screen version can be considered a distinct work. The blurry line between a screen opera and the mere opera it originated from is one she crosses repeatedly. Citron, whose prose is marred by academic jargon, is at her best when she's enthusiastic. Discussing Francesco Rosi's Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, she documents the way the nonnaturalistic conventions of opera fit into an "everyday" film context: the layer of nonmusical sounds that grounds the story in a recognizable world; the score that at times recedes from the foreground, like a soundtrack; the dusty palette that undercuts the "idealizing travelogue" effect of the Andalusian settings. Rosi's movie may not be part of a separate discipline but simply an interpretation that draws on the techniques at its disposal. Still, if film and video offer new ways of conceiving opera, of bringing it to more people in an evening than fit into La Scala in a year, who can complain? --David Olivenbaum

From *Library Journal* Beginning with a chronological introduction to opera-media interaction, Citron (Rice Univ.; *Gender and the Musical Canon*) analyzes several filmed or videotaped operas using elements of contemporary academic discourse: gender roles, class divisions, sexual identity, etc. She addresses both familiar targets such as Peter Sellars's Mozart series and Franco Zeffirelli's productions as well as films that are less well known (to American audiences) such as Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's *Parsifal* and Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *Tales of Hoffmann*. Her cogent statements and fluid language make the reader eager to (re)view the operas, although the overuse of the term *diegetic* (in film criticism and theory, the totality of the physical world experienced by the characters) is off-putting. Extensive up-to-date research is evident, though the author does draw a few far-fetched conclusions (e.g., that Prince Charles and Princess Diana's appearance in the audience of Brian Large's *Otello* video foreshadows their relationship difficulties). A valuable resource for opera and film scholars, this volume is recommended for specialized collections and academic and larger public libraries. DBarry Zaslow, Miami Univ. Libs., Oxford, OH Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Citron's book makes a real contribution to and helps define the new and important field of opera on film and video." Mary Hunter, Bowdoin College