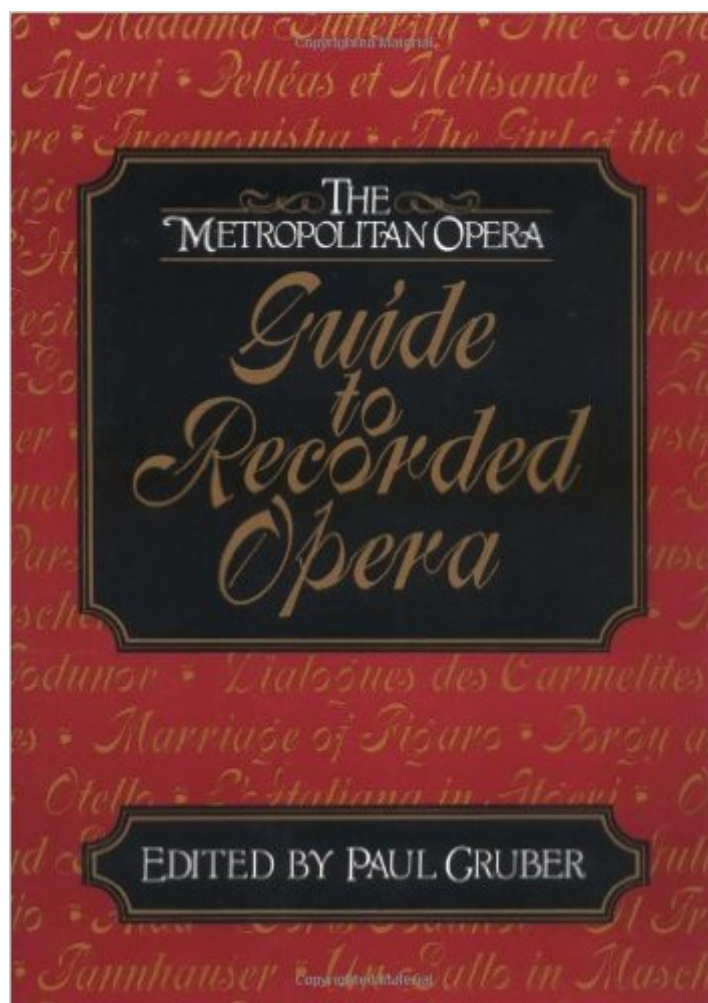


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The Metropolitan Opera Guide To Recorded Opera



Synopsis

This practical and up-to-date Guide to Recorded Opera, the only such volume authorized by the Metropolitan Opera Guild, offers a wealth of invaluable information for the opera lover. Whether it is used for recommendations on which recording to buy, or for a bird's-eye view of the recording history of a specific opera, the Guide to Recorded Opera will prove an indispensable addition to the opera lover's library. Casts, dates, and compact disc availability for all the complete recordings of 150 different operas. Critical evaluation by an outstanding authority of each complete recording of each opera. Recommendations for the best recordings of every work. Access to the reviews facilitated by two tables of contents: one organized alphabetically by composer, the other by title. A detailed index by artist.

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Customer Reviews

This book is an older sister of the "Metropolitan Opera Guide to Opera on Video". Both are edited by P. Gruber, which at least partly explains their similar design, but feature different teams of reviewers (only few names overlap) and maybe this is the reason why this guide reads so much better than its video sequel. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to imagine that the main reason for this discrepancy is the medium itself: recordings play much greater a role in our musical lives than video (or DVD) and that's probably why it is easier to write about them with fondness. The reviews collected here are very human and it is clear that their authors not only lived with the reviewed recordings for quite a

while, but were quite eager to share their comments with the broader public - I didn't have that impression while reading the MET team's generally sour video guide. This is a very likeable book! Most of the reviews are written with sympathy and warmth, not very common in this kind of critical writings. There is also a tendency to emphasize the good even in seriously flawed recordings. These are highly subjective reviews and there is no attempt at concealing it: the language is always very personal and leaves no doubt that in many cases some high emotions were involved - again a feature that I found missing in the video guide. To make the book even more "human", the editors thought about including some dozen charts presenting favorite opera recordings of some celebrities (for whatever it is worth to know Joan Rivers's tastes in operatic matters; other choices are less problematic since most of the people are to some degree professionally involved with opera or theater).

Opera is a costly art. Producing recordings of operas is a costly business. Opera enthusiasts who wish to own recorded versions of their favorite operas, must thus expect to have credit cards that can call up large funds. Hence, the usefulness and value of another art form, one that developed in the C20th. This new art form is the guide to recorded opera, a collection of critical assessments and recommendations intended to help readers avoid wasting their money. Of all such publications - and they can provide endless hours of absorbing reading even if the aim is not necessarily to get a well-informed recommendation - an outstanding example is *The Metropolitan Opera Guide to Recorded Opera*. Developed from an idea by Roland Gellat, and edited by Paul Gruber, it surveys and assesses virtually all opera sets on record up to 1993, the year of its publication. The roster of reviewers is impressive, comprising a team of twenty highly qualified contributors working in the USA and England. Something I always look for in books of this type is a detailed index. The one here meets all my requirements. It enables me to find all references in the book to, for example, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, a singer you might think is represented in recorded opera sets more than anybody else. It is Placido Domingo, however, whose index entries occupy more space here than those of any other singer. An alphabetical order of composers dictates where the recorded opera reviews are found. Once you have found "M" near the center of the book, for example, you can locate Mozart, and find his operas discussed in chronological order. There is also an index of opera titles, if you prefer that means of finding what you want.

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