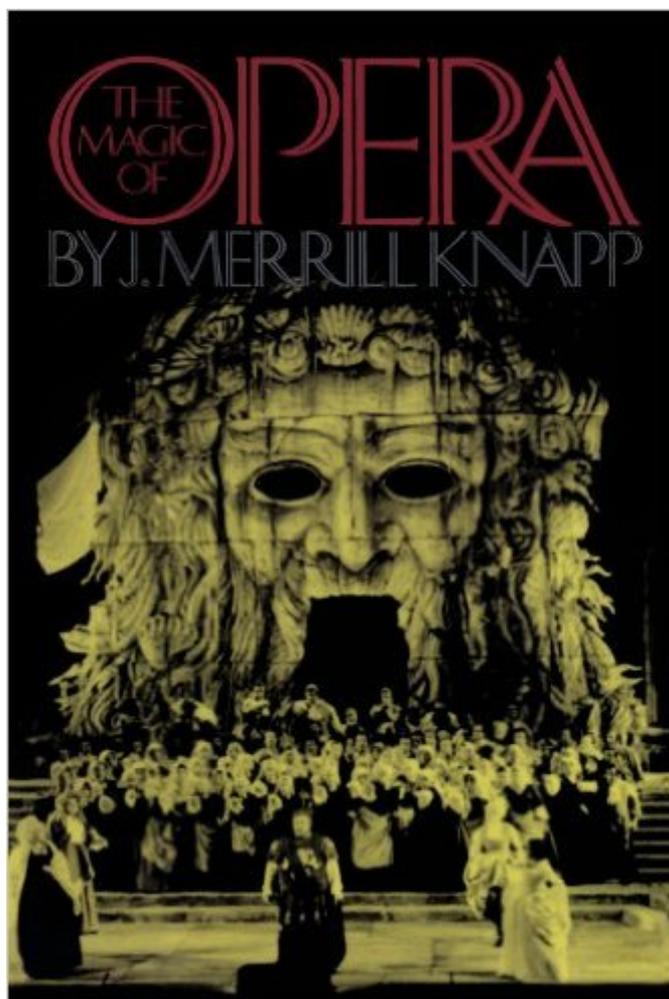


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The Magic Of Opera (A Da Capo Paperback)



Synopsis

Among the many introductions to opera, this is perhaps the best. J. Merrill Knapp, Professor Emeritus at Princeton University, divides his subject into two parts: In the first, he discusses the structure, production, theatrical conventions, and esthetics of opera; in the second, he features biographies of the major composers and cogent analyses of exemplary qualities in their works. "Opera should have a wide appeal," says Knapp in his Preface. "In the past too many sensible people have associated it with diamond tiaras, exclusive theater boxes, opening night social snobbery, and haughty prima donnas. For more understanding and knowledge are needed to get rid of these past impressions and to prove that opera is both within the comprehension of the ordinary person and worthy of high aspiration and serious study." This book will open ears and change minds. It is the ideal foundation for anyone curious about—or already in love with—the magical world of opera.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is one of the best introductions to opera that I have ever seen or read. Rather than a history of opera or a list of synopses of well known operas, this book attempts to define what opera is, what sets it apart from other art forms, what its component parts are, and what makes it magical. The author neither speaks down to nor over the heads of the novice but manages to simultaneously speak to the uninitiated and the learned amateur. He provides an incredible amount of food for thought without being overwhelming. The book is divided into two parts, Part I is titled "Structure"

and contains 8 chapters. This is the most valuable part of the book in my opinion, certainly the most unique. He discusses "The Nature of Opera," "The Conventions of Opera," "The Libretto," "The Music," "The Components of Music," "The Singers," "The Orchestra," and "Production of Opera." I have never before seen an introduction to opera that included any discussion, much less an intelligent informative discussion, of the libretto (its importance, how it differs from a stage play, etc.) or production values (sets, the role of opera theatre architecture, stage direction, etc.). In the chapter on "The Singers," he discusses the various voice types by range as well as the quality of voices, i.e., lyric, dramatic, coloratura. In the chapter "The Components of Music," he discusses the musical structure of the opera by identifying the differences between recitatives, arias (including the various types of solo arias), ensembles, and choruses. The second half of the book is a brief history of opera.

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