

Literary Analysis of Opera: Three Recent Publications

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With the appearance of Joseph Kerman's *Opera as Drama* in 1956, the manner in which literary scholars regarded opera and the opera libretto was radically and persuasively altered. Deploring the prevailing attitude which dismissed opera as an art form demanding of its audience sensibility but not thought, Kerman pointed out that in opera a 'specific conceptual reference is continuously supplied — by the libretto'.¹ Although Kerman went on to maintain that in opera 'the dramatist is the composer' (p. 267), the implications suggested by his work for the literary analysis of opera and the libretto were clear, and in 1970 Patrick J. Smith responded with *The Tenth Muse*, the first historical survey of the libretto as a musico-literary genre in its own right. By now, a remarkable development has taken place. Within the past several years, there have appeared a considerable number of notable critical studies which deal with opera and the libretto from the literary perspective and many of which are indebted to a significant extent to the pioneering work of both Kerman and Smith. In this context, three recent works are of particular interest: Gloria Flaherty's *Opera in the Development of German Critical Thought* (1978), Gary Schmidgall's *Literature as Opera* (1977) and Peter Conrad's *Romantic Opera and Literary Form* (1977).² Given the scope of the subject and the paucity of works hitherto produced in this field, it is not surprising to find that within the general framework of studies of the relationships between opera and literature, these authors have examined their material from different points of view and have accomplished their tasks with varying degrees of success.

1 Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* (New York: Vintage 1956) 15. All subsequent page references to this work will be cited in the body of the text.

2 Gloria Flaherty, *Opera in the Development of German Critical Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1978), pp. 382, \$18.50; Gary Schmidgall, *Literature as Opera* (New York: Oxford University Press 1977), pp. 431, \$18.25; Peter Conrad, *Romantic Opera and Literary Form* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press 1977), pp. 185, \$11.00. All subsequent page references to these three works will be cited in the body of the text.

Gloria Flaherty's *Opera in the Development of German Critical Thought* is a comprehensive survey of the critical theories both for and against opera current in German literary and theatrical circles during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is Flaherty's contention that 'the ideas advanced, supported, and perpetuated by opera's exponents had lasting effects on theatrical practices and far-ranging implications for critical thought' (p. 5), so that 'by the end of the eighteenth century, the premises and principles contained in operatic writings had permeated all branches of criticism and aesthetic theory' (p. 9).

Beginning with the writings of Martin Opitz, author of the first German-language libretto (1627), Flaherty supports her view with an outline of the development of operatic ideals in the work of writers as diverse as Postel, Mattheson, Gottsched, Klopstock and the Schlegels. She concludes her discussion with an examination of the extent to which Lessing's, Wieland's and Schiller's defences of opera were indebted to the critical arguments developed by these predecessors. Such a survey necessarily represents a wide range of critical opinion. There were those, notably Gottsched, who echoed the theories of French critics such as Saint-Evremond and dismissed opera out of hand for having disregarded the neoclassical rules of propriety, *vraisemblance* and the three unities. There were those who defended opera as a valid form of popular entertainment, appealing to the senses with varied and spectacular theatrical displays. Then there were those who condemned opera for this very same reason, deploring the absence in opera of serious moral lessons and denouncing it as the work of the devil (*Opera Diabolica*). But by far the largest group consisted of the philosophers, poets and playwrights who defended opera as a distinctly modern theatrical invention, representative not only of the freedom of art to be unrestrained by the dicta of another nation or of the past, but also of the freedom of art to be, in the words of Mattheson, '*eine kleine Kunst-Welt*' (p. 88), an imaginative world freed from the constraints of mimetic theory. As Flaherty points out, Goethe later echoed Mattheson's precise words when he, too, called opera '*eine kleine Kunstwelt*' (p. 88). It is evident that for Flaherty this concept of 'a little art-world' was one of the most significant contributions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century German operatic criticism to the development of modern literary theory:

The particular style of acting and the particular techniques of production that he [Schiller] and Goethe introduced at the Weimar theater were logical extensions of their nonmimetic theory. They represent the triumph of conscious artistry over naturalism. That triumph was one for which German defenders of opera had helped lay the foundation. (p. 300)

In her concluding remarks, Flaherty goes on to say that 'it is a pity that the musical and operatic aspects of Schiller's and Goethe's late dramatic works are not more widely acknowledged' (p. 300). It is a pity indeed that Flaherty herself did not take the theories which she has so carefully outlined and relate them not only to the dramatic works of Schiller and Goethe, but also to those of several of the other writers who figure prominently in her deliberations. Admittedly, hers is a work whose main emphasis is upon literary theory, but to quote Wolfgang Iser, 'a theory, if it is to carry any weight at all, must have its foundations in actual texts.'³

Flaherty's decision not to accord attention to the actual operas and operatic texts upon which the theories she examines were based is regrettable on several counts. First of all, many, if not all, of the operatic works which inspired the theories are as unfamiliar to most readers as the defences and polemics to which they gave rise. More importantly, however, her omission is an ironic one in that it is this very antagonism between theory based upon philosophical abstractions (French neoclassicism) and theory based upon actual literary texts (German pragmatism) which Flaherty has used as the foundation of her own argument. According to Flaherty, the French critical attitude, founded upon rules and regulations about what theatre ought to be — what she calls 'rule by code' — rejected opera as incompatible with already-established critical precepts. But on the other hand, the 'ancient Germanic idea' (p. 65) of basing critical theory upon actual theatrical practice — what Flaherty calls 'rule by precedent' — led many German critics to defend opera as a legitimate new theatrical form and eventually led to the major critical developments of the Goethean age. How contrary, then, to the spirit of this 'Germanic' theory, which Flaherty herself so enthusiastically endorses, is her decision not to discuss at least a representative selection of those works which played so indivisible a part in this theory's development. The chapter in which she does provide an extended examination of an actual dramatic text, Lessing's fragmentary libretto *Tarantula, Eine Possenoper* (1749), is among her most interesting, not simply because she discusses a work which has been generally neglected, but because the theories which she has outlined suddenly come vividly to life within a particular context.

Flaherty's study suffers as a result of the absence of an extensive analysis of operatic texts in other ways as well. She pays scant attention to the operas of Mozart, mentioning him only briefly in passing and then

3 Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1978)

merely in reference to the operas of someone else. Surely, this is a major omission in a work which purports to cover the period of eighteenth century German opera. Moreover, Flaherty is frequently inaccurate in her use of operatic terminology, often employing the term 'grand opera' where it is evident that it is 'baroque opera' to which she refers. In operatic criticism, 'grand opera' has two meanings. Originally, it was a technical term referring specifically to operas with a fully composed text, as opposed to operas containing spoken dialogue (*opéra comique*). Then, during the nineteenth century, 'grand opera' acquired the additional sense in which it is most readily understood today, as the obvious connotations of the word 'grand' led to an association with the grandiose and extravagant 'romantic' operas which flourished in France during the 1830s and 1840s.⁴ In the history of German opera, the term in its original technical sense probably cannot be applied to operas preceding Weber's *Euryanthe* (1823).⁵ Thus, Flaherty's comment about 'German grand opera's disappearance' during the 1740s (p. 98), almost a full century before German grand opera could properly be said to have begun, is an evident historical inaccuracy. It is most likely that the operas of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to which Flaherty refers did in fact contain spoken dialogue, although Flaherty does not describe their precise nature. Therefore, no matter how 'grand' in effect these operas may have been at the time, they do not technically qualify to be so called. Such occasional inaccuracies as these distract from Flaherty's main arguments and point to her being more conversant with the field of German literary theory than with the field of opera. This is a reasonable consequence of her background: the present work appears to be an expansion of the doctoral thesis Flaherty wrote in the German department at Johns Hopkins, 'In Defense of Opera: A Survey of German Critical Writings on Opera from 1678 to 1770 (1965).'

These objections aside, however, it must be acknowledged that Flaherty's work is a valuable scholarly and theoretical study. One of the most outstanding features of her work from the operatic point of view is that she has chronicled how generations of German critics and theoreticians argued in defence of the librettist's prerogative to alter his source in ac-

4 Donald Jay Grout, *A Short History of Opera*, 2nd ed. (New York, London: Columbia University Press 1965) 315

5 *Ibid.*, 387-8. Thus, the distinction of being the first German 'grand opera' does not belong to *Die Zauberflöte* (1791), as is generally believed. Even though *Die Zauberflöte* is called a 'große Oper' in manuscript, it does not qualify to be technically so called because, like the other operas of its period, it contains spoken dialogue. See Grout, 291.

cordance with the particular demands of his own work or the demands of opera as an independent art form. She quotes, for instance, Barthold Joachim Zinck who, restating the arguments of Johann Elias Schlegel, wrote in defence of Voltaire's opera *Samson* (1732), a work which had particularly incurred the ire of the German neoclassical critic Gottsched. As quoted by Flaherty, Zinck thought that it was 'completely absurd of Gottsched to criticize Voltaire for failing to make his hero speak and act more like a real person,' because in an opera 'a librettist wants to present to his audience not Samson in nature but Samson in a musical play' (p. 144). 'I do not know,' Zinck also wrote, '... where the law is written that a dramatic poet not be permitted to invent something for his plot' (p. 142). To this, Flaherty has remarked:

Zinck saw absolutely no value in comparing a work with its model, whether nature or a literary source. He considered the artist free not only to select his source but also to alter it consciously for the particular needs of his work. (p. 142)

In contrast to Flaherty's work, Gary Schmidgall's *Literature as Opera* is concerned precisely with comparing an opera with its model, 'whether nature or a literary source.' Dealing with twelve operatic adaptations ranging in style and period from Handel's *Ariosto* operas to Britten's *Death in Venice*, Schmidgall's study so consistently upholds the idea that opera should be based upon what he calls 'real emotions' and 'characters from life' (p. 55) who should 'behave with a distinctly human credibility' (p. 69), that it may be said that the critical principles underlying his book are the antithesis of the idea of '*eine kleine Kunstwelt*' underlying Flaherty's work. Indeed, Schmidgall rests his opening analysis of the relationship between Handel's three *Ariosto* operas, *Orlando* (1733), *Ariodante* (1735) and *Alcina* (1735), and their source text, *Ariosto's Orlando Furioso*, upon an observation which both sets the tone for the remainder of his study of the relationships between literary source texts and opera libretti, and reveals the basis upon which he founds his critical criteria:

The most important shared quality [between Handel's operas and their literary source] is simply their human dimensions. For all the formulaic poetic and musical machinery and spectacular events, the characters inhabiting the poem and the operas are real people feeling themselves in situations not retched far from everyday experience. (p. 49)

Schmidgall uses this same principle as the foundation for the analyses of most of the operas discussed in his book. He praises Mozart because the characters in his operas 'act as human beings' (p. 69); he lauds the *bel*

canto opera because it 'is extraordinarily humane — no seria gods or goddesses here, few aberrant or heterodox emotions either' (p. 117); and he makes the remarkable statement that Britten's *Death in Venice* (1973) is valid because its focus is upon a 'universal level and does not merely communicate a moral tale for pederasts' (p. 338).

To illustrate that operas are expressive of so-called 'real' human emotions, Schmidgall frequently employs the method of biographical criticism. He states this point of view in his first chapter where he declares that an operatic 'masterpiece may result' when a composer's 'musical personality blends naturally with the source' (p. 5). Schmidgall repeats the 'commonplace that Figaro was an autobiographical shadow of Beaumarchais himself' (p. 101) and cannot resist the temptation 'to add another, biographical similarity between Verdi and Shakespeare' (p. 215). Similarly, he bases his examination of Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* (1838) upon 'the composer's personal identification with his source,' Cellini's *Autobiography* (p. 155), and maintains that 'it is equally certain that Berlioz ... looked upon his enemies with the same defiance Cellini expresses ... in the Finale' (p. 165). Schmidgall is not quite so certain how to explain Richard Strauss's creation of *Salome* (1905). He goes only so far as to suggest that there must have been some "'darker, wilder world'" inside the 'domesticated' Strauss, but that in composing *Salome* he had 'to mine for it' (p. 251).

The inadequacy of biographical criticism is most clearly indicated when Schmidgall endeavours to compare the Russian composer Tchaikovskij to the character Lenskij in Pushkin's *Eugenij Onegin*:

The attraction to Lensky was natural. Whether he was consciously aware or not, there is much of the composer's own life in the naïveté and virginal eagerness of Pushkin's young poetaster. (p. 229)

Schmidgall apparently wanted to find some circumstance which would support his mimetic theory that operatic art imitates the emotions of 'real' life and which could be used to justify Tchaikovskij's having said that 'he was moved by characters whose experience was most like his own' (p. 229). It would have suited the purposes of Schmidgall's argument far better if he had mentioned that at the time when Tchaikovskij was contemplating writing *Eugenij Onegin* (1879), he was himself engaged in a painful and embarrassing exchange of letters with a young woman who expressed her overwhelming love for him and whom, as a result, Tchaikovskij felt honour-bound to marry. Predictably, the alliance proved to be disastrous. This anecdote could have been used more convincingly to draw a parallel between Tchaikovskij and Onegin,

the central character of the opera and the man who is so embarrassed by Tatjana's unsolicited love letter. It also would have gone much farther to 'explain' why Tchaikovskij devoted so disproportionately large a part of his opera to Tatjana's famous letter-writing scene. But ultimately, it is of little importance which character a critic chooses to identify with the composer. Such biographical details do little more than provide some background material relevant more to the process of the opera's genesis than to the essential nature of the opera itself. Moreover, to suggest that only that which is known from personal experience can be convincingly portrayed is to deny the power of the creative imagination and the integrity of a work of art as '*eine kleine Kunstwelt*.'

The same objections which apply to biographical criticism also apply to the implication running throughout Schmidgall's book that an opera should remain as faithful as possible to its literary source. To suggest this is to deny the unique nature of opera as a musico-literary genre, for it is not opera which must comply with the demands of the literary source, but the literary source which must be altered in order to comply with the demands of opera. In all fairness, in his 'Opening Perspective' Schmidgall does state that 'the beauty of radical departures may often be defense enough' (p. 9). However, this is not always the position he assumes when actually undertaking specific analyses, where he consistently has high praise for those operas which remain most like their sources. He commends Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro* because 'both in small and in large, *Le Nozze* is loyal to its source' (p. 96) and cites the third act of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* as 'one of the happiest instances of the parallel between literary and musical forms' (p. 123).

By the same token, he calls librettist Myfanwy Piper's addition of the Games of Apollo to the first act of Britten's *Death in Venice* a 'vulgarity' in 'an otherwise splendid libretto' (p. 351), apparently because it is an element not found in Mann's original novella but 'inserted in the action' (p. 351). What Schmidgall fails to acknowledge is that in the context of the opera, the Apollonian Games function as a visual and theatrical metaphor for a vital element of the original work, the Apollonian ideal which Aschenbach sees in the boy Tadzio. What is more, by realizing this ideal in the form of a ballet, a form in which the actors are necessarily silent, the librettist has found a way of conveying in purely theatrical terms the personality and attractiveness of a character who, in Mann's original novella, never actually speaks. In other words, the problem which the librettist had to solve here was to find a theatrical equivalent for a mute character, obviously a difficult task in opera. The librettist and composer working together had evidently decided that Tadzio could not be left simply to walk about the stage, and it is also difficult to im-

agine what words they could have given him to sing where Mann himself did not provide any. Ballet, in this case, was an innovative and eminently theatrical solution. Although ballet has traditionally been used in opera only as a *divertissement*, here in *Death in Venice* it is to the librettist's credit that the Games of Apollo have also succeeded in adding to this general function an important new dramatic and symbolic dimension.⁶

By dismissing that which differentiates an opera from its original, Schmidgall is refusing to discuss precisely that which is most interesting and revealing in an operatic adaptation. The additions, innovations and omissions which operas force upon their literary sources are precisely the features which most clearly distinguish the operas from them. Concurrently, it is essential to judge these operatic adaptations in theatrical and not purely literary terms, for opera is, after all, first and foremost *dramma per musica*, drama set to music. Or, as Kerman wrote almost thirty years ago, 'opera is excellently its own form' (p. 21). It is Schmidgall's failure to recognize the full implications of this statement, axiomatic to Kerman's work, which disqualifies *Literature as Opera* from being a 'sequel and counterpart to Kerman's book' which Schmidgall claims it to be (p. 24).

A work which can be said to represent a sequel in spirit to Kerman's study, even though *Opera as Drama* is not mentioned in its bibliography, is Peter Conrad's *Romantic Opera and Literary Form*. Whereas Flaherty concentrates excessively upon theory and insufficient-

6 The librettist, Myfanwy Piper, 'Writing for Britten,' in *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, ed. David Herbert (New York: Columbia University Press 1979) 17, has written on this subject:

The most difficult problem in planning was that set by Tadzio and his family. Aschenbach has no communication with his own kind and although we know everything that he thought about Tadzio we know nothing of Tadzio's thoughts about him. The implication is that, beyond a certain pleased self-consciousness at being the object of so much attention, he thought very little. The important thing from our point of view was that . . . what he thought or said would have been of no interest to us. Here what needed to be underlined was not communication, but the lack, indeed the impossibility, of it. The decision to formalize this separateness into dance was neither an arbitrary, nor yet entirely an aesthetic one. It arose out of the nature of theatrical performance. Only dancers find it natural to be on stage for any length of time in silence and only dancers can express the trivialities and pleasures of human behaviour without speech. By extending the number of dancers to include the children of the hotel guests and the beach attendants we were able to organize the childrens' games in the two beach scenes into ballets and so externalise Aschenbach's habit of poeticizing the events in which he could not partake.

ly upon examination of this theory in relation to particular works, and whereas Schmidgall concentrates excessively upon practical demonstrations without having given sufficient consideration to the necessary theoretical underpinnings, Conrad's study, like Kerman's, consists of a more equitable division between theory and practical application. Like Kerman's work, too, it concentrates upon the examination of formal values. Conrad's study may also be seen as a synthesis of the attitudes underlying Flaherty's and Schmidgall's work. For Flaherty, opera is unequivocally 'its own form.' In fact, according to Flaherty, opera can be regarded as an epitome of the formal uniqueness of all the arts. For Schmidgall, on the other hand, opera is a vehicle by which a previous literary source, presumably an 'important' literary source (p. 117), is transferred as fully and faithfully as possible to the musical stage with the minimum of alterations and permutations. He pays only perfunctory attention to the demands of opera as a unique formal structure. Conrad's work reconciles the positive elements of both these positions in that he discusses opera as a unique musico-literary genre, subject to its own conventions and traditions, but one which is at the same time able to avail itself of the resources of many other forms, both literary and artistic. Thus, he shares with Kerman and Flaherty a concern for opera's independent formal nature, and with Schmidgall an interest in the relationship between opera and its sources.

It is Conrad's contention that drama is not 'the only literary form to bear upon opera' (p. 1) and that opera is capable of 'employing a variety of literary forms — epic, romance, allegory, and the psychological novel' (pp. 1-2). Although this point is excellent and worthy of consideration by all scholars of opera, it is impossible not to quarrel with Conrad's extension of his argument, where he goes so far as to maintain 'that music and drama are dubious, even antagonistic, partners and that opera's actual literary analogue is the novel' (p. 1). This claim is based upon a rather facile distinction between drama which, he says, 'is limited to the exterior life of action,' and the novel which, he maintains, is 'naturally musical because mental' and therefore ideally suited to 'explore the interior life' (p. 1). But surely, there is no feature inherent in drama which renders it incapable of dealing with the inner workings of the spirit without surrendering theatricality, just as there are many varieties of the novel which successfully chronicle little more than the superficial progression of exterior events. It is also impossible not to quarrel with his idea that 'drama is perhaps the least significant' of the literary forms to bear upon opera (p. 2). Given that opera is first and foremost a form of theatre, there is certainly an element of the problematic in this notion, to say the least.

Part of Conrad's thesis may be open to question, but there is no denying that he has nevertheless performed an invaluable service by bringing to the attention of scholars an impressive array of unusual and usually neglected operatic sources. Among the works to which Conrad refers in support of his arguments are Berlioz's monodrama *Lélio*, Verdi's *Falstaff*, Goethe's continuation and Auden's translation of Mozart's *Zauberflöte*, Hofmannsthal's revision of his own libretto, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, into a narrative and Richard Strauss's late opera *Capriccio*, an operatic debate about the relative merits of text and score. In addition, Conrad draws upon the operatic criticism of a distinguished group of major writers — Heine, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Pater, Shaw, Rolland, Hofmannsthal, D'Annunzio, Auden — relating their comments to many of the operatic texts under consideration. Many of these are works which are particularly intriguing to literary critics of opera, but which have never before been incorporated into a consistent critical scheme. And this is precisely where Conrad displays his greatest skill: interweaving the connections between the several strands of a complex argument. Not all readers will agree with his conclusions, but the manner in which Conrad arrives at them is thought-provoking and indicative of a thorough familiarity with his primary material.

Ultimately, what is important about Conrad's study is not whether or not he is correct in asserting that the tendency of music to 'inundate its text' is necessarily 'novelistic' (p. 113). What is important is that he has discussed opera not from the standpoint of content, but from the standpoint of form. Unlike Schmidgall, Conrad is not concerned with whether or not a particular character or situation has been transferred wholesale from literary source to operatic adaptation; rather, he places his emphasis upon the formal and structural innovations such a transformation necessarily entails. Conrad understands, as Schmidgall does not, that an opera based upon, for instance, a play by Shakespeare will not be identical to that Shakespeare play, nor indeed should it even try to be. On the contrary, the process of transference will depend upon what librettist and composer conceive to be the elements of the original work which they wish to convey in their own operatic work, and also upon the skill with which they can find the formal equivalents for these elements.

It is in the light of this attention to formal values that Conrad's study must be read and where his most perceptive insights are to be found. In this regard, his analysis of Verdi's *Otello* is excellent. Here, he relates how the librettist Boito gave Verdi the opportunity both to represent his characters almost pictorially in music and to take advantage of the operatic convention of the chorus by transforming Shakespeare's Othello and Iago into personifications of conflicting natural elements:

The first scene of *Otello* is Verdi's most imaginative dramatization of a crowd, because it catches the elemental impersonality of its feelings. The Cypriots and soldiers ... are the voice of the tempest. The mob is itself an element ... The hurricane is the convulsive crowd at the quayside, and its outbursts do not so much describe as enact the battle ... As the stormily martial elements of air and water had assumed human form in the apparition of *Otello*, so now the ingenious, destructive element of fire materializes in Iago, whose temptation of Cassio insinuates itself in flickering vocal interjections, ... (p. 57)

Similarly, Conrad's examination of how 'as a compendium, the *Ring* contains in turn examples of the major forms through which modern literature has developed' (p. 36) is in itself an imaginative contribution to the critical literature about Wagner's *Ring* cycle, and his chapter entitled 'Opera, Dance and Painting' offers a more satisfactory reading of Strauss's *Salome* than Schmidgall's analysis does. Like Schmidgall, Conrad draws parallels between the Wilde-Strauss *Salome* and the paintings of Moreau and Klimt. But unlike Schmidgall, Conrad goes one crucial step further and relates this analysis to the essential fact that *Salome*, like Strauss's *Elektra* before her, reaches her apotheosis in the dance. In an argument of considerable subtlety, Conrad relates *Salome* to *Elektra*, and the forms of poetry, painting, music and dance to the theories of Pater, Shaw and Schopenhauer, making particular reference to Arthur Symonds's essay, 'Ballet, Pantomime, and Poetic Drama.'

Through his attention to formal values, to the internal structural dynamics between source, text and score and to the interrelationships between opera and the other arts, Conrad may be said to have written a study which is the true sequel to Kerman's pioneering work. Yet, it may also be claimed with justification that each of the three works discussed here owes its inception to *Opera as Drama*, for without the original impetus provided by Kerman, it is doubtful that any of them could have been conceived in their present form. But just as these three studies cannot be read without first acknowledging Kerman's contribution, so, too, will future literary studies of opera be required to come to terms with the contributions made by Flaherty, Schmidgall and Conrad in their respective works. Despite whatever one may perceive the limitations of their individual studies to be, these three scholars have each made a significant contribution to the burgeoning field of the literary study of opera and the opera libretto. It must also be a source of considerable satisfaction to all literary critics of opera to find three major critical studies in which, for all their differences in perspective and approach, opera is vigorously defended and restored to its rightful place in the mainstream of the evolution of European arts and letters.

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