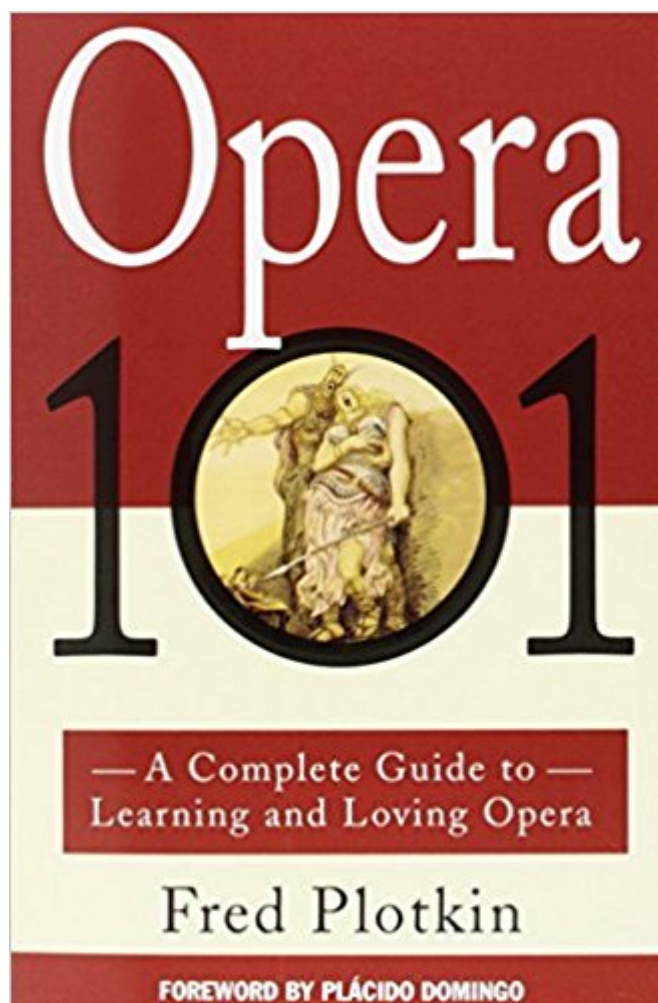




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Opera 101: A Complete Guide To Learning And Loving Opera



Synopsis

Opera is the fastest growing of all the performing arts, attracting audiences of all ages who are enthralled by the gorgeous music, vivid drama, and magnificent production values. If you've decided that the time has finally come to learn about opera and discover for yourself what it is about opera that sends your normally reserved friends into states of ecstatic abandon, this is the book for you. Opera 101 is recognized as the standard text in English for anyone who wants to become an opera lover--a clear, friendly, and truly complete handbook to learning how to listen to opera, whether on the radio, on recordings, or live at the opera house. Fred Plotkin, an internationally respected writer and teacher about opera who for many years was performance manager of the Metropolitan Opera, introduces the reader (whatever his or her level of musical knowledge) to all the elements that make up opera, including: A brief, entertaining history of opera; An explanation of key operatic concepts, from vocal types to musical conventions; Hints on the best way to approach the first opera you attend and how to best understand what is happening both offstage and on; Lists of recommended books and recordings, and the most complete traveler's guide to opera houses around the world. The major part of Opera 101 is devoted to an almost minute-by-minute analysis of eleven key operas, ranging from Verdi's thunderous masterpiece Rigoletto and Puccini's electrifying Tosca through works by Mozart, Donizetti, Rossini, Offenbach, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner, to the psychological complexities of Richard Strauss's Elektra. Once you have completed Opera 101, you will be prepared to see and hear any opera you encounter, thanks to this book's unprecedentedly detailed and enjoyable method of revealing the riches of opera.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Just as the title says, this is a basic primer on what opera is, what to look for and what to listen to. There is nothing stuffy in Plotkin's style, which is clear and idiomatic. The book also boasts a foreword by supertenor Placido Domingo.

Newcomers to opera receive a fine guide to learning about opera appreciation, written by a performance manager for the Metropolitan Opera. Eleven famous operas are reviewed in a step-by-step listener's guide which covers the basics of learning about the opera's form, style, and scene challenges. -- Midwest Book Review

The most user-friendly and accessible book about opera I've read so far. Fred Plotkin is impressive not only for his knowledge of opera but for his urbane, positive underlying philosophy: his tolerance, love for the arts and for life in general - the sort of person it would be good to know and to have as a friend. The book begins with some general comments (the most enjoyable is on page 146, the 'essential secret that opera lovers know and those on the outside never suspect'), and then goes on to explore eleven operas in more detail. The point of view is of a genial mentor, guiding newcomers to the opera world through some of the world's most loved operas, using methods that will allow them to grow in confidence and knowledge. I have only one suggestion - the book, published in 1994, needs an update. The advent of Youtube, live streaming and opera in HD has given beginners an economical way to learn about opera. It would be good to have Plotkin's thoughts on how this could be done, and whether he thinks the new technology will threaten or enhance the development of opera in the future.

This is a simple, well-written book, designed for anyone who has ever been interested in opera but never really been able to "get it". Plotkin explains everything you need to know -- the different voices, the history, the basics -- in a way that is entertaining and informative. After listening to opera (with a lot of frustration at what I knew I was missing) for many years, I really heard and enjoyed my first opera, thanks to Plotkin. After reading less than half the book, you will find yourself listening to recordings of great operas and loving them. I have already booked tickets to the next local performances. If you have ever wondered what all the fuss is about opera, read this book. You will be glad you did. It opens a beautiful world that, for me at least, had always been mysterious.

I am very excited to finally have a book that will gently guide me through the nuances of opera. I've had a love/hate relationship with Opera for years, mostly due to my own ignorance, but recently I listened to an interview on NPR with Mr Plotkin. I so enjoyed listening to him talk about opera and learned so much just from the interview, that I decided to get this book. I am so happy with it. Mr Plotkin makes it easy for the uninformed lay person, like myself, to understand opera as a genre as well as the very specific operas he discusses. His love and passion for the art is apparent. I have just begun the book, but am enjoying it and looking forward to reading the rest as well as going to my 'first' opera with new understanding. If you are looking for an introduction to Opera to help you understand and enjoy this amazing format, this is the book for you.

Informative with both composer bios and period info and opera summaries. A worthwhile investment lacking only material on singers and productions of the last 30 years. That's a loss, but you still have the prior 400.

Good, in depth information for when one wants more than the basic info provided in Opera for Dummies.

Lovely book! I am a longtime opera lover and this book added to my enjoyment. Well done Mr. Plotkin!

This is a great book full of very interesting and useful information. I would definitely buy it again. (I bought a used copy and it is very well loved. Perhaps one day I'll buy it again.)

This master work provides a history and understanding of the art form. It's both the perfect starting point and a valuable supplement for the more experienced opera enthusiast. I have gifted it to several people, who all loved it!

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