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Landscape And Gender In Italian Opera: The Alpine Virgin From Bellini To Puccini (Cambridge Studies In Opera)



Synopsis

In this unusual study, Emanuele Senici explores the connection between landscape and gender in Italian opera through the emblematic figure of the Alpine virgin. In the nineteenth century, operas portraying an emphatically virginal heroine, a woman defined by her virginity, were often set in the mountains, most frequently the Alps. The clarity of the sky, the whiteness of the snow and the purity of the air were associated with the 'innocence' of the female protagonist. Senici discusses a number of works particularly relevant to the origins, transformations and meanings of this conventional association including Bellini's *La sonnambula* (1831), Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix* (1842), Verdi's *Luisa Miller* (1849), and Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* (1910). This convention presents an unusual point of view - a theme rather than a composer, a librettist, a singer or a genre - from which to observe Italian opera 'at work' over a century.

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"Whether one ultimately agrees with the interpretations offered in this book seems less important than following the author through his rich web of literary, philosophical, psychological, political, and feminist contextualization. A review cannot recreate the experience, but it can encourage readers to venture into the web and undertake their own journey. Although this may on occasion be strenuous, it will also be thought-provoking, sophisticated, and engaging." --Andreas Giger, Journal of the American Musicological Society

Emanuele Senici offers a new and unusual look at Italian opera in the nineteenth century, focusing on operas which present Alpine virgins as the female protagonist. The book explores the connection between landscape and gender in opera, from Bellini's *La sonnambula* (1831) to Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* (1910).

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