



# A Guide to Opera Recordings

*Ethan Mordden*

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## **A Guide to Opera Recordings** Ethan Mordden

This book is a consumer guide, an opera appreciation course, and a history of recording techniques and lore, all rolled into one. With the same wit and verve that he brought to *Opera Anecdotes* and *Demented: The World of the Opera Diva*, Ethan Mordden reviews opera's legacy of recordings, from Monteverdi to Stephen Sondheim, from Nellie Melba to Luciano Pavarotti, from cylinders and 78s to lps and compact discs.

There have been guides to opera's discography before, but no single-volume work as wide-ranging and up-to-date as this one: not only the major composers, but also many "minor" ones are represented; and both live performances and studio recordings are featured. Not a mere listing of recordings, but a narrative history of opera since its earliest days, the book provides chapters on the First Operas, Mozart, German Romanticism, Grand Opera, Rossini, Verdi, Russian Opera, Puccini, Stravinsky, Modern French Opera, Strauss, Weill, Britten, Gerswin, American Opera and much more. Even the most recent productions, like *Les Miserables*, and such newly hailed opera stars as Kathleen Battle and Ghenă Dimitrova are discussed. Recording information, including cast and label, is contained in the text while a helpful index enables the reader to locate composers, their works, and the recordings of favourite singers quickly and easily.

Every opera lover, whether newcomer or veteran buff, will find the answers they have been looking for in this entertaining new handbook. What is the best *Rigoletto*? The most complete *Lohengrin*? The most avoidable *Carmen*? How does Maria Callas sound singing Wagner? What of the great *Ring* recordings -- how does Georg Solti's measure up against Herbert von Karajan's? Has sonic technology improved Callas' classic, thirty-five-year-old *Tosca*, or has it damaged it? Are "bargain boxes" of records actually a good buy or just shoddy merchandise? Do we really get anything out of ancient recordings that we can't get in digital sound from CDs? Ethan Mordden's latest work is the perfect companion to steer the reader through the marvels of opera.

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