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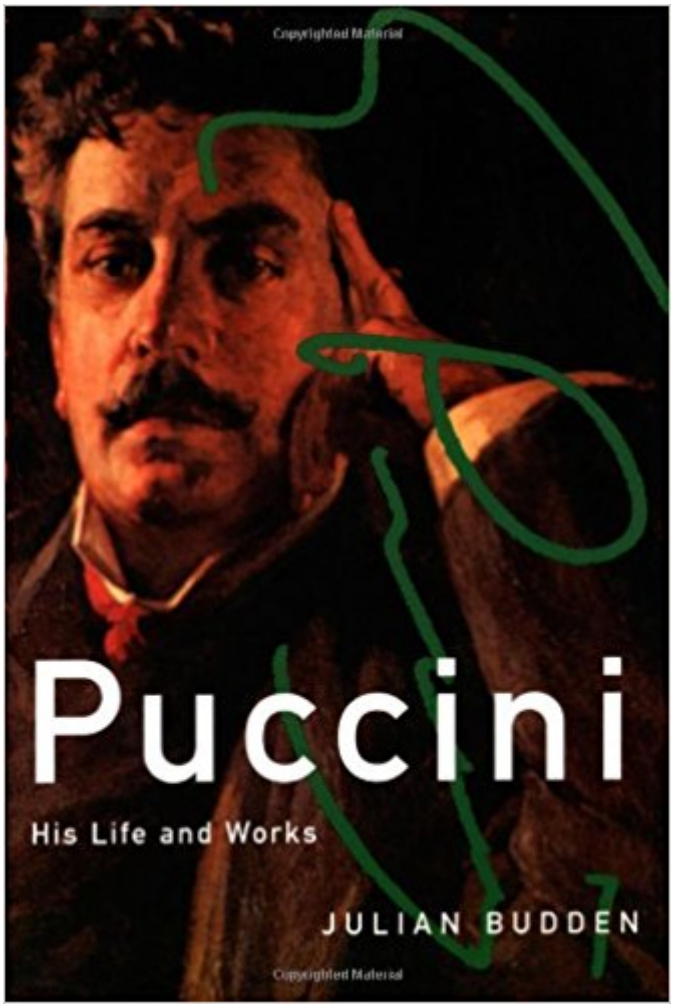
Puccini: His Life And Works (Master Musicians Series)



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Synopsis

Julian Budden, one of the world’s foremost scholars of Italian opera and author of a monumental three-volume study of Verdi’s works, now offers music lovers a major new biography of one of the giants of Italian opera, Giacomo Puccini.Blending astute musical analysis with a colorful account of Puccini’s life, here is an illuminating look at some of the most popular operas in the repertoire, including Manon Lescaut, La Boheme, Tosca, Madama Butterfly, and Turandot. Budden provides an illuminating look at the process of putting an opera together, the cut-and-slash of nineteenth-century Italian opera--the struggle to find the right performers for the debut of La Boheme, Puccini’s anxiety about completing Turandot (he in fact died of cancer before he did so), his animosity toward his rival Leoncavallo (whom he called Leonasino or "lion-ass"). Budden provides an informative analysis of the operas themselves, examining the music act by act. He highlights, among other things, the influence of Wagner on Puccini--alone among his Italian contemporaries, Puccini followed Wagner’s example in bringing the motif into the forefront of his narrative, sometimes voicing the singer’s unexpressed thoughts, sometimes sending out a signal to the audience of which the character is unaware. And Budden also paints an intriguing portrait of Puccini the man--talented but modest, a man who had friends from every walk of life: shopkeepers, priests, wealthy landowners, fellow artists. Affable, well mannered, gifted with a broad sense of fun, he rarely failed to charm all who met him. A new volume in the esteemed Master Musicians series, Puccini offers a masterful portrait of this beloved Italian composer.

Book Information

Series: Master Musicians Series
Paperback: 552 pages
Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (September 22, 2005)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0195179749
ISBN-13: 978-0195179743
Product Dimensions: 9.1 x 1.5 x 6 inches
Shipping Weight: 2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)
Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews
Best Sellers Rank: #613,462 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #158 inÂ Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Italy #680 inÂ Books > History > Europe > Italy #1402 inÂ Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Opera

Customer Reviews

The literature on Puccini continues to grow with these two books. Italian-born Budden (The Operas of Verdi) here synthesizes Puccini’s musical endeavors with his life. Using a straightforward, chronological approach, giving exact dates when possible, he treats each opera in a separate chapter, devoting much space to character and plot and citing contemporary reviews and subsequent reception. He also mentions Puccini’s other instrumental and vocal compositions. Informed lay readers will gain insight while theoreticians will appreciate Budden’s deeper musical analysis. His elegant turns of phrase ("rhythmic scaffolding") and obvious expertise combine in an exceptional whole, though a few Britishisms may confuse American readers. A list of works, useful biographical information on personalities mentioned in the text, and a strong bibliography round out the volume. Michele Girardi’s recently translated Puccini: His International Art is similar, with even more specific treatment of musical passages. Highly recommended for academic and music collections, as well as sophisticated clients at public libraries. Phillips-Matz (Verdi: A Biography) discusses Puccini as if she were telling the life story of a valued friend. She remarks on premieres, casts, and critical reception of the works but says little about the music itself. However, she does expand upon the personal issues touched on by Budden (e.g., the Doria Manfredi incident). She also sets a cultural context with historical descriptions of the Tuscan region and extensive information on Puccini’s forebears. Her style is stimulating and, for the most part, more entertaining than merely informative. In a rather old-fashioned way, she talks about her own meetings with characters like Puccini’s granddaughter, Biki, and singer Gilda Dalla Rizza. Her method of including "footnotes" within the text and abbreviations is helpful; however, one wishes that she had indicated in the introduction the groupings of relevant materials rather than repeating them each time they occurred. She also includes a works list, six major contemporary opera composers and their works, and an up-to-date bibliography. Conrad Wilson’s Giacomo Puccini in Phaidon Press’s "20th-Century Composers" series makes a good complement, although Phillips-Matz’s approach is more genteel and positive. Recommended for all collections. (Indexes and illustrations not seen in either.) Barry Zaslow, Miami Univ. Libs., Oxford, OH Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) stood at the end of fivegenerations of composers. A generous man who helped others when theyneeded a boost, he loved motorcars and boats for excitement butretreated to his beloved Tuscany’s lakes to escape urban hubbub. Muchto his jealous wife Elvira’s distress, he had many paramours andconfidantes. His sense of drama drove him to demand

perfection fromhis librettists. With his third opera, Manon Lescaut, heestablished himself as a leading composer for the stage. GiulioRicordi, scion of the music-publishing house, was impresario forproductions of his operas, and Toscanini conducted most of theirpremiers. Budden, president of the Centro Studi Giacomo Puccini in thecomposer's ancestral hometown, Lucca, Italy, looks closely atPuccini's music per se. He highlights events in the life but leavesout much in the way of conflict and incident, instead covering theoperas' scenarios and music in detail. Because Puccini also wrotepieces for orchestra, band, piano, and chorus, Budden analyzes some ofthose as well. Puccini's operatic music embraces the use of leitmotifsand some of the harmonies that Wagner pioneered, and it demonstrateshis ability to match dramatic and musical structures. His feeling forthe stage picture is fundamental to his art, and the variety ofmusical shades he exploited with the orchestra served the pictures hesought to realize. For the amateur musicologist, Budden fills thebill. Alan HirschCopyright Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is a must for all Puccini scholars and any Music Composition student. Budden's impressive knowledge covers the musical aspect of the Puccini operas in depth as well as his extensive musical innovations. Being a great fan of Puccini's operas, I wished to deepen my appreciation of his genius by continuing to read more about him and Julian Budden does not disappoint. The major events of Puccini's life are covered, and the chapters are divided according to the chronological order of his operas. The interesting aspects of the background of each opera has been well researched and discussed in a refreshing manner. The backgrounds are then followed by technical observations of Puccini's innovations demonstrating with examples of his written music. These technical discussions are clearly designed for scholars of music composition and often difficult for the layman to grasp, but Budden has organized each chapter so that the layman may easily skim these technical sections. Having created a fully illustrated libretto of Madama Butterfly in graphic novel form available exclusively at The Metropolitan Opera Gift Shop and here on ,Â The Fully Illustrated Libretto of Puccini's Madama ButterflyÂ I found it appropriate to delve more deeply into Puccini's great accomplishments. This book was very helpful to achieve this end and I highly recommend it. Other fully illustrated librettos include:Â The Fully Illustrated Libretto of Ravel's L'Enfant et Les Sortileges (Librettos)Â The Fully Illustrated Libretto of Gian Carlo Menotti's the Medium

The book offers a thorough biography, a thorough plot synopsis of each opera, and a thorough

technical analysis.It is enlightening to read the book while following along with the score of each opera.In his technical analysis, however, he sometimes misses the forest for the trees. He neglects to tell us that the prelude to Manon Lescaut is in the rondo form, the prelude to Madama Butterfly is in the sonatina form, or that the waltz in Il Tabarro is in the rondo form.Also, there is one question which the author leaves unanswered: What is the purpose of the mock funeral in Edgar? If you happen to know the answer to this question, please write back.

Julian Budden has already written an indispensible three volume work on the operas of Verdi. He has now done opera lovers a huge favor by writing about Puccini. Unfortunately Puccini died too young leaving far too few operas , however these are some of the most beloved & often performed works in the repertoire. (Manon Lescaut, La Boheme, Tosca, Madama Butterfly, Turandot to name the most popular.) Budden was able to write about all of Puccini's operas and also about Puccini's life in just one volume. This book is EXCELLENT. Budden is a gifted writer who gives technical information but does not present it in a way that is off-putting to non-music scholars. The book is thoroughly enjoyable and extremely informative. I strongly recommend it to anyone interested in learning more about Puccini, the man, and his music. Anyone who loves Verdi should also not hesitate to purchase the three volume Verdi books.

Having read nearly all of the books on Puccini, I feel at least competent to evaluate them. The one that moved Puccini to the level of "worth a book" was Mosco Carner's 1959 book, Puccini, a Critical Biography. The information given was fairly accurate for what was known then. The main fault was the continuing"character analyisis" of the composer. In the 60's Wm. Ashbrook wrote a book on the operas. It too is accurate in presenting many new and interesting facts as well as fasitnating interpretations.In addition it is very well written. Since then there have been a number of other books on the composer and his operas. Of the latest two; Budden and Matz, I must choose Budden. Before discussing Budden's merits, I should say that Matz's book is an excellent chronicle of Puccini's life and filled with anecdotes and interesting facts.It is an entertaining read. The basic problem,for me, is it pretty well leaves the music alone. While Puccini's life is certainly interesting, his music is what is most important, at least for me. Budden's book does a fine job of combining Puccini's life and discussing the music. He writes most effectively about the operas. Their creation struggles. Their multipule revisions. The facts are accurate and presented clearly. He writes with a clarity about music that is both refreshing and rare. There is one other book on Puccini I would like to mention and that is a very expensive one [why??] published by Chicago University and written by

Michael Girardi. It presents a most original view of the operas but it is not easy to read. It is stimulating. I hope this helps you decide.Thanks;Paul Zappa

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