

on musical practices. Many chapters rely on narrative description, while others provide close readings and analyses of sources (musical or otherwise) or question long-standing assumptions. The latter are among the most successful; two particularly fascinating examples are chapter 3, by Gozzi, in which he draws upon a wide array of sources to reconstruct the experience of hearing plainchant in the liturgy, and chapter 14, by historical ethnomusicologist Ignazio Macchiarella, who uses the contemporary singing practices of Southern Italian confraternities to read between the lines of early modern sources on *falsobordone*. Both chapters include audio examples accessible on the internet.

With an overwhelming focus on musical practice and supposedly minor musical genres and styles, this book sheds important light on scholarly methods that go beyond the traditional emphasis on great composers and works. Because it contains little original research, it sits somewhere between a secondary and tertiary source. As its primary purpose is to encourage new research, its main value will be to graduate students and others just embarking on early modern Catholic studies (it is ideal for seminars), though scholars of all ranks and disciplines will find much to consider in this wide-ranging and authoritative resource.

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*The Politics of Opera: A History from Monteverdi to Mozart.* Mitchell Cohen.  
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Opera and politics have been inextricably intertwined since the emergence of the genre. From Peri's *Euridice* to Britten's *Gloriana*, opera's display, at times lavish, of visual effects, music, singing, and dancing, has always seemed like the ideal means to celebrate weddings, alliances, diplomatic visits, coronations, and royal births. But also, beyond courts and royal theaters, the stories that opera has been telling during the four hundred and odd years of its history have proved some of the most powerful vehicles to articulate the political thought of those involved in its commission, creation, and consumption. During the early stages of its development, opera was mostly a prerogative of the ruling classes. Examining the collections of books of the most enthusiastic patrons of opera of the early modern period gives us an idea of the extent to which the same men and women who commissioned so many sublime operas based on ancient myths and history were also avid readers and collectors of highly influential and often controversial books on society, politics, and how to rule the people. To what extent can librettos and scores tell us the stories of those ruling classes and illuminate the ways in which philosophy and political thought shaped their ambitions? And how did performances of opera serve as means of political propaganda or attempts to shake the status quo?

Mitchell Cohen's *The Politics of Opera* provides an overview of the political thought that informed the conception of some of the most well-known works produced during the ancien régime. Like others before him, including Anthony Arlbaster and John Bokina, whose studies on opera and politics were quite influential in the 1990s, Cohen approaches these questions from the perspective of a political scientist, offering his expert insights into centuries of reflections by philosophers and political thinkers on the relationship between art, history, and political thought.

*The Politics of Opera* takes the reader from the origins of the genre to the age of the French Revolution, through a well-known narrative. As one would expect, this journey begins in Florence, with the *intermedi* and the first experimental operas produced under Medici rule (part 1), and then follows the composer Claudio Monteverdi during his years at the court of Mantua and later in Venice in the 1640s, when opera enters a much more public arena and establishes itself as a popular commercial form of entertainment (part 2). As in many opera surveys, we leave Italy at this point and move to the court of Louis XIV and the use of opera to serve the purposes of absolutist power (part 3). Pietro Metastasio and his Viennese librettos are our entry points into the world of opera seria (part 4), before we cross the gate of the Enlightenment to reach Mozart's subversive operas and conclude with his *The Magic Flute* (part 5).

One might wish a book of this breadth would take into account less-well-known works and venture toward geographic areas that are traditionally excluded from such surveys—even though the author acknowledges that “this regionalization allows for focus in the transmission of various ideas and is not intended as devaluation of a plethora of engaging questions about politics and opera in, say, Britain, Prussia or Russia” (xxx). But one could also wish for a narrative that would offer some fresh approaches to opera and reflect the major methodological shifts that have been informing musicological studies for at least the past three decades. It is regrettable, for example, that so many women—rulers, intellectuals, artists, and patrons—are still being neglected today in a book of this scope.

Cohen's ability to summarize the complex pages of music history is remarkable. He does so always with a breezy tone and fluid prose that make the sections on operas informative and easy to read. His discussion of his chosen works, however, is based mostly on librettos and analysis of plots and characters, so that those in search of insights on the composers' contributions to this narrative might be left wanting more. Equally, he does not engage with questions of production, performance, and staging, nor of reception, which might give the reader a partial view of the nuanced and complex nature of the operatic spectacle and certainly of the political messages that the nonverbal element of operas conveyed.

One of the strengths of *The Politics of Opera* lies in the author's profound knowledge of the political thought that accompanied and shaped the emergence of the modern state, a moment that, he notes, coincided with the birth of opera. Between Monteverdi's *Orfeo* and Mozart's *Tamino*, “there were variations on kinds of ‘state’

as there were of types of ‘opera.’” This overarching idea is one of the most original contributions of the book, and Cohen develops it by bringing together in an engaging dialogue a number of authors, ancients and moderns, rulers and poets.

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*Lyric in the Renaissance: From Petrarch to Montaigne.* Ullrich Langer.  
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Ullrich Langer’s *Lyric in the Renaissance* is at once a remarkably erudite, affectively powerful, and intellectually courageous study of the well-traveled terrain of early modern poetry, so exquisitely tied to the Florentine master’s vernacular verse. Indeed, to break genuinely new ground in this terrain is a challenge that Langer meets not only with an enlightening discussion of classical versus early modern conceptions of the lyric, but also with a series of brilliant close readings of Petrarch, Charles d’Orleans, Ronsard, Du Bellay, and Montaigne. He develops throughout the notion of what he terms a radical “effect of singularity,” as distinguished from classical notions of commonplace and universal experience, as well as from more traditional notions of first-person subjectivity often viewed as having their roots in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*. Rather than centering on broader semantics, thematics, and rhetorical forms in these texts, Langer teases out specific linguistic elements that consistently point to the distinctiveness of the particular human being, the particular instant, the particular locus, the particular event—which, in eschewing the very notion of substitutability, augments the existential intensity of the verse and gestures toward an ethics in which the experience of the radically individual human being cannot be subsumed into a shared commonality.

Langer first establishes the key elements that heighten existential intensity in the *Canzoniere*. From an intertextual analysis (via Ovid and Horace) of the opening sonnet’s celebrated line 4 (“quand era in parte altr’uom da quel ch’i’ sono”) as the radical rupture between the poet’s past and present catalyzed by the *innamoramento*, he goes on to examine the following cluster of related features: an insistence on the *punto*, or penetrating instant, of his irrevocable transformation through love; iterative juxtapositions of the indeterminate (*mille*) versus the particular (*una/uno*); deictic indications of locus or of persons/objects through use of the demonstrative, along with varied locutions of exclusivity (*null’altra; solo ivi con voi*); and, finally, a “lexical minimalism” or redundancy (*bello; dolce*) that reduces the semantic richness of the adjective in favor of privileging its unique source (*Tu sola mi piaci*).

From this rich Petrarchan foundation, the book moves on to explore a continuum—with variations—of these singular effects among its highlighted writers. Although Charles d’Orleans is the only one among them who probably did not