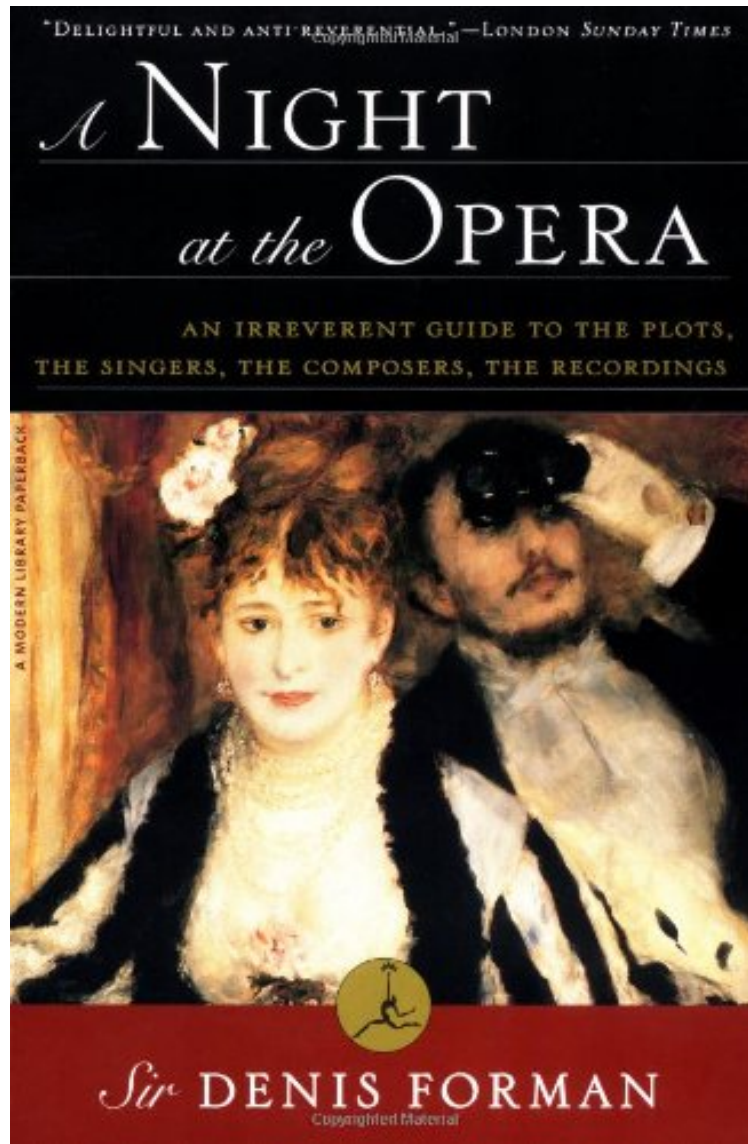


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## A Night at the Opera: An Irreverent Guide to The Plots, The Singers, The Composers, The Recordings (Modern Library Paperbacks)

*Sir Denis Forman*

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Sir Denis Forman : A Night at the Opera: An Irreverent Guide to The Plots, The Singers, The Composers, The Recordings (Modern Library Paperbacks) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth

my time, and all praised *A Night at the Opera: An Irreverent Guide to The Plots, The Singers, The Composers, The Recordings* (Modern Library Paperbacks):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. His aim is to present the great and most popular works of opera in a humorous ...By Chad Helms  
Sir Denis Forman's overview of the masterpieces of world opera is a lively and witty book. His aim is to present the great and most popular works of opera in a humorous and entertaining way and I believe he succeeds brilliantly in this effort. He gives a brief synopsis of each opera, followed by what- in his opinion- are the most significant and important arias in each act of the opera, finishing with his personal opinion and a rating of the importance of each opera. While some may object that his style is overly irreverent and heavy-laden with British slang that may be difficult for some non-Brits to comprehend, all in all I think this is a wonderful introduction to opera for the novice from an expert in the field who knows his stuff.  
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.  
Interesting book  
By SLB3031 appreciate that Forman is trying to make the works accessible to beginners, but when he refers to Ed or Lucy instead of Edgardo or Luciano, I'm having a hard time connecting it back to the CD or program credits I'm referring to.  
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A "Must" Book for Anyone Who Wants to Learn More About Opera  
By chowda  
At my retirement at the end of 2012, I polled a few of my colleagues to find if any in my Retired Mens Association of about 200 men, would like to learn more about grand opera. We limited the group to the first dozen men, to accommodate the DVD viewing rooms in the homes of our host members. So far we've viewed with great pleasure Donizetti's "L'Elisir d'Amore", Bizet's "Carmen", Mozart's "The Magic Flute", Verdi's "Rigoletto", Puccini's "La Boheme", and Verdi's "Il Travatore". Next month it will be Puccini's "Turandot".. The volunteer host of the month gets to select he opera from a list of operas I've e-mailed that are at our local library. All have English subtitles, so are easily understood. Your book has enabled me in advance to publish a synopsis of each upcoming opera, plus some important facts about its composition, its premiere performance and the audience's reception of it. We e-mail this to each member in advance of the showing, and they bring them with them to enhance our viewings.

With an encyclopedic knowledge of opera and a delightful dash of irreverence, Sir Denis Forman throws open the world of opera--its structure, composers, conductors, and artists--in this hugely informative guide. *A Night at the Opera* dissects the eighty-three most popular operas recorded on compact disc, from Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur* to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. For each opera, Sir Denis details the plot and cast of characters, awarding stars to parts that are "worth looking out for," "really good," or, occasionally, "stunning." He goes on to tell the history of each opera and its early reception. Finally, each work is graded from alpha to gamma (although the Ring cycle gets an "X"), and Sir Denis has no qualms about voicing his opinion: the first act of *Fidelio* is "a bit of a mess," while the last scene of *Don Giovanni* "towers above the comic finales of *Figaro* and *Cos* and whether or not [it] is Mozart's greatest opera, it is certainly his most powerful finale." The guide also presents brief biographies of the great composers, conductors, and singers. A glossary of musical terms is included, as well as *Operatica*, or the essential elements of opera, from the proper place and style of the audience's applause (and boos) to the use of surtitles. *A Night at the Opera* is for connoisseurs and neophytes alike. It will entertain and inform, delight and (perhaps) infuriate, providing a subject for lively debate and ready reference for years to come.

.com As a nuts-and-bolts operagoer's guide, Denis Forman's book is richly incisive. It's equally satisfying as a tart, effervescent take on the solemn world of opera. The author--a British television executive and former deputy chairman of the Royal Opera House--covers most of the likely offerings of your local repertory company, with a few questionable omissions (Peter Grimes) and inclusions (The Threepenny Opera). For each he provides a synopsis, musical highlights, critical remarks, and historical information (the premiere of *Il Trovatore*: "stupendous"; that of *Norma*: "a flop"). Another section offers comments on everything from the craze for authenticity to the practice of booing. Forman's opinions sometimes run athwart of convention. Falstaff "has no sex appeal and no heart, and opera demands both these qualities"; *Tristan und Isolde* is the creation of "the Wagner that liked to spend time stroking velvet." His tone, especially in the synopses, is often evocative of Anna Russell's opera parodies: "It really is too bad of you Tristan to die on me like this. She passes out." The prose can be cute, but that fits Forman's approach of puncturing the inflated atmosphere of opera while glorying in it. Though he is most entertaining when he's daring to shout in church, his enthusiasms are as illuminating as his barbs. "*Traviata* is the first grown-up opera about contemporary life," he says, adroitly locating that work in operatic history. In *Don Giovanni*, "Mozart brought terror to the opera stage for the first time." It's the book's greatest pleasure that Forman's passion is matched by his knowledge. --David Olivenbaum  
From Booklist  
The author, a former deputy chairman of the Royal Opera House, may well become the Anna Russell of print with this irreverent guide to plots, singers, composers, and recordings of more than 80 operas. Forman's criteria for selection is that of recorded popularity--the opera must have had three or more versions listed in the Gramophone CD catalog of December 1992. Operas are alphabetically arranged from the backstage tragedy *Adriana Lecouvreur* to the psychiatric tragedy, *Wozzeck*. All are described in degrees of irreverence

and are also rated--from alpha-plus to gamma. Also included is a description of the cast, running time, and a unique commentary on the major arias, described as "Look Out For," with the maximum of a three-star rating awarded "at the whim of the author." The arias are listed in "minutes from start." Notes, news and gossip, and a comment section complete the entries. The book concludes with a dictionary of opera terms; brief biographies of composers, conductors, and singers; and an index. Although there is much in this volume that might be considered sacrilegious by the serious opera aficionado, Forman's style is humorous, entertaining, and insightful--Hansel and Gretel is said to be loved in Munich because of its "Grimm Teutonic nature." Originally published in Britain in 1994 as the Good Opera Guide, *A Night at the Opera* belongs in all music reference collections. It will balance the serious, weighty tomes and perhaps spark an interest in opera for those who think it dull and boring. From the Inside Flap: With an encyclopedic knowledge of opera and a delightful dash of irreverence, Sir Denis Forman throws open the world of opera--its structure, composers, conductors, and artists--in this hugely informative guide. *A Night at the Opera* dissects the eighty-three most popular operas recorded on compact disc, from Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur* to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. For each opera, Sir Denis details the plot and cast of characters, awarding stars to parts that are "worth looking out for," "really good," or, occasionally, "stunning." He goes on to tell the history of each opera and its early reception. Finally, each work is graded from alpha to gamma (although the Ring cycle gets an "X"), and Sir Denis has no qualms about voicing his opinion: the first act of *Fidelio* is "a bit of a mess," while the last scene of *Don Giovanni* "towers above the comic finales of *Figaro* and *Così* and whether or not [it] is Mozart's greatest opera, it is certainly his most powerful finale." The guide also presents brief biographies of the great composers, conductors, and singers. A glossary of musical terms is included, as well as *Operatica*, or the essential elements of opera, from the proper place and style of the audience's applause (and boos) to the use of surtitles. *A Night at the Opera* is for connoisseurs and neophytes alike. It will entertain and inform, delight and (perhaps) infuriate, providing a subject for lively debate and ready reference for years to come.