



Sarah Caldwell: The First Woman of Opera

Daniel Kessler

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Sarah Caldwell: The First Woman of Opera is the first biography of this significant musician, conductor, and director and documents Ms. Caldwell's genius as an indomitable force for opera in America. Caldwell mounted many U.S. premieres and brought rare editions of standard works to her audiences. At the height of her career, she raised her baton over four of the top five orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and conducted orchestras in such cities as Pittsburgh, St. Louis, San Antonio, Atlanta, Mexico City, and Puerto Rico. She conducted ensembles in Canada, Sweden, South Africa, and Russia; was a musical director for Wolf Trap; and was the first woman to conduct at the Metropolitan Opera. She founded the renowned Opera Company of Boston, as well as the outreach effort Opera New England and a nation-wide touring enterprise, the American National Opera Company. Caldwell's undeniable zeal was evident in whatever she undertook, and her accomplishments invite reflection, showing what an opera company could and should be in America. Daniel Kessler presents Ms. Caldwell's life in flashbacks and explores her 1978 landmark production of Gaetano Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, which serves as a prime example of how she engaged with her creative Muse. He describes her personal and professional life, including her experience with the impresario Boris Goldovsky, her ability to create her own brand of 'stage wizardry,' and her moments of overreaching and hubris, such as her unorthodox fundraising methods and her experience with Imelda Marcos. Complete with several illustrations, a bibliography, an index, and the comprehensive annals of her three opera companies, Sarah Caldwell demonstrates what one person of genius, imagination, and passion can accomplish single-handedly.

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