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The National Trust Guide To Great Opera Houses In America



Synopsis

The first and only guide to the history and architecture of America's famous opera houses. The American opera scene has grown with the country, spawning a proliferation of beautiful and enchanting opera houses. This unique guided tour covers almost 100 historical and contemporary opera houses dating from 1765 up to the present--halls such as the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, the San Francisco Opera House, and the Cullen Theater in Houston. America's opera houses present an eclectic collection of buildings, from converted warehouses to ornate vaudevillian venues and modern concrete and glass structures. The National Trust Guide to Great Opera Houses in America celebrates this dynamic range of architectural types and styles, revealing how European elements were transformed into a distinctly authentic and vital part of America's architectural and musical heritage. Grouped by geographic region, this easy-to-use resource contains important historical information on structures--some destroyed as well as those still standing--including dates, name changes, seating capacity, and more. Many of the buildings featured are National Historic Landmarks or are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Almost 140 vintage and recent photographs bring to life these magnificent buildings and the operatic scenes enacted on their stages. Whether used as a travel planner or an armchair reference, this definitive book is a must for music and theater enthusiasts, architects, designers, and preservationists--the perfect front row seat to the dramatic history of opera in America.

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Customer Reviews

Those with an interest in opera, in architecture, in public spaces and in our cultural history should find much of interest in this slender volume. It offers breadth of information rather than depth, but makes a good starting point for a more intense investigation -- or enough to answer a basic question. The book is well-organized and easy to use.

Operas were first performed in early-18th-century America in "court rooms, warehouses, and makeshift halls." These were "ballad operas-comedies or farces interspersed with simple folk songs whose themes were borrowed from everyday life," says Karyl Lynn Zietz in *The National Trust Guide to Great Opera Houses in America*. By the early 19th century, audiences enjoyed opera buffa sung in English in the "first grand opera houses" constructed. Then, in New York, Boston and Philadelphia, works were produced in their original languages. As operas grew more spectacular, so did the houses. Although most of these original buildings have been destroyed, a few remain, such as the 1857 Academy of Music in Philadelphia. Zietz lists these early houses; the historic houses, by region; the latest additions; lost opera houses; and ends with an epilogue about preservation. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I originally bought this book so that I could research the many opera houses that singer Johnny Mathis has played, since nine times out of ten, he performs with an orchestra in these venues when not at the casinos. Some of them, like the Orpheum Theater in Memphis, and the Seattle Center Opera House and the Broward Center in Fort Lauderdale, Florida are places he's played that are in this book, yet some of them, like the Morton Meyerson in Dallas, the Davies Symphony Center in San Francisco, and the great Carnegie Hall in New York City aren't mentioned, possibly because although similar, they weren't built expressly for opera. I don't know. But they are all wonderful venues for vocal entertainment. But these beauties aren't just pretty façades! Their form has a function, as well. Being a physics major, I've always had an interest in how these special arenas are constructed. For me, where Mrs. Zietz succeeds is her thorough descriptions of some of the finer examples. Her pictures are wonderful and plentiful...I just wish a few could have been in color. The author makes a plea of sorts to save the older opera houses rather than razing them to build new ones. Because of possible asbestos worries, I'm not sure how feasible that is, but I will agree that these architectural wonders do deserve at least a little consideration of their cultural past.

This type of book was long overdue. America has a rich history of opera houses and of opera, that until this book was terribly neglected. It is a well organized, thoughtfully written book, that covers

opera houses from the first ones built in the 1700s to the most recent. There is also a plea to preserve our heritage instead of destroying it, using as an example the razing of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, instead of converting it to another function, like the Opera Garnier in Paris, which was converted into a ballet theater. But now opera is again gracing the stage. There are many very interesting photos of the the opera houses, but it is a pity they could not have been in color, or at least some of them. Nevertheless, it is a wonderful resource for the opera houses in this country. And the short outline of history of opera in America is also very useful. I would highly recommend this book for anyone with an interest in opera or architecture.

This book is interesting enough in the fact that it features some of the historic opera houses from around the country. However, I believe that the book is overpriced. There are only black and white photos in this paperback book. The paper used is that of average paperback book quality. If you looked at this book not knowing the retail price, I guarantee that anyone would not guess the selling price to be over ... I'd be interested in knowing how a paperback book of this print quality could retail for ... Again, the book is interesting for anyone interested in historic theatres and opera houses but the price is a little steep.

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