



# Not without Madness: Perspectives on Opera

*Fabrizio Della Seta*

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Opera often seems to arouse either irrational enthusiasm or visceral dislike. Such madness, as Goethe wrote, is indispensable in all theater, and yet in practice, sentiment and passion must be balanced by sense and reason. Exploring this tension between madness and reason, *Not without Madness* presents new analytical approaches to thinking about eighteenth- and nineteenth-century opera through the lenses of its historical and cultural contexts.

In these twelve essays, Fabrizio Della Seta explores the concept of opera as a dramatic event and an essential moment in the history of theater. Examining the meaning of opera and the devices that produce and transmit this meaning, he looks at the complex verbal, musical, and scenic mechanisms in parts of *La sonnambula*, *Ernani*, *Aida*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Macbeth*, and *Il trovatore*. He argues that approaches to the study of opera must address performance, interpretation, composition, reception, and cultural ramifications. Purely musical analysis does not make sense unless we take into account music's dramatic function. Containing many essays available for the first time in English, *Not without Madness* bridges recent divisions in opera studies and will attract musicologists, musicians, and opera lovers alike.

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