

SJSU
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Information Sources Survey: Opera Enthusiast Community

Research-Based Information Sources

Balthazar, S. L. (Ed). (2013). *Historical Dictionary of Opera*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.

- Position within the Information Cycle. The *Historical Dictionary of Opera* is a summary of established knowledge, which makes it a tertiary, or reference source of information.
- Scope and Content. The dictionary, which covers opera from the sixteenth century to modern times, contains around 350 entries. The main focus is on opera composers, but also included are performers, impresarios, venues, works, and terminology. Entries are well written, but necessarily limited in detail, and no attempt is made for comprehensiveness (Adam, 2014).
- Credentials and Authority. Editor Scott L. Balthazar is a writer and professor of music theory, history and composition.
- Purpose and Intended Audience. This work is recommended for all music collections. It unites information on composers, terms, and works. It is an excellent access point for students, teachers, professionals, and fans of opera (Adam, 2014).
- Design and Currency. The dictionary section has cross-referenced entries, as well as an introductory essay, a chronology, and an extensive bibliography.

Information covered is current up to 2013.

- Biases and Value. Coverage is heaviest for the eras ranging from the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. It is a moderately priced dictionary, which would be useful for libraries (Adam, 2014).

Fellers, F. P. (Ed.). (2010). *The Metropolitan Opera on Record: A Discography of the Commercial Recordings*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.

- Position within the Information Cycle. *The Metropolitan Opera on Record: A Discography of the Commercial Recordings* is a publication of authoritative information. This catalog of opera recordings is a reference-based resource, which is in the tertiary stage of the information cycle.
- Scope and Content. This discography contains 925 entries of Metropolitan Opera sound recordings from 1906 through 1998. Each entry includes the date and location of the recording, composer, selection title, artist/s, and other recording information (Gillespie, 2011).
- Credentials and Authority. Frederick P. Fellers is a former librarian, an author, and an opera fan.
- Purpose and Intended Audience. The author states that his purpose is to list "all the commercial sound recordings made by the Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra with and without soloists, from 1906 through 1998." Its intended audience encompasses scholars and opera fans (Gillespie, 2011).
- Design and Currency. The work begins with an introduction by the author, chronologically arranged entries, a bibliography, and three detailed indexes. The catalog is comprehensive for 1906- 1998, after which most recordings have been in video format (Gillespie, 2011).

- Biases and Value. This work is of a high level of erudition and scholarship, and would be a valuable asset to any public, academic, or private music library (Gillespie, 2011).

Kuhn, L. (Ed.). (2000). *Baker's Dictionary of Opera*. New York, NY: Schirmer Books/Gale Group.

- Position within the Information Cycle. *Baker's Dictionary of Opera* is a summary of established knowledge, which falls in the tertiary, or reference source category. The book contains information about singers, conductors, and composers associated with opera.
- Scope and Content. With 900 pages of 1,000 entries, this dictionary covers bibliographical information on the most famous singers, conductors and composers of opera from its beginnings in the sixteenth century to the present. It also contains a timeline of famous operas, as well as a glossary of opera terms and synopses of operas (Powell, 2001).
- Credentials and Authority. Baker, the originator of this series, died in 1934. Editor Laura Kuhn, Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles, is a professor of performance art, arts administrator, writer, director, and performer.
- Purpose and Intended Audience. This book is recommended for opera fans as a complement to *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (1992) or as a one-volume reference for libraries not owning *The New Grove* (Amazon).
- Design and Currency. Anecdotal style entries on important opera singers, conductors, and composers are arranged alphabetically. Bibliographic information for each person is followed by a description of his or her contribution to opera,

and a list of works. A series of appendixes, a timeline, a glossary, and opera synopses follow the dictionary portion. Entries are current up to 2000 (Powell, 2001).

- Biases and Value. The treatment of musicals and operetta is haphazard. Inclusions of lesser-known composers and exclusions of well-known singers are questionable. Some photographs are outdated. The information is generally helpful and accurate at a modest price (Amazon).

Sadie, S. (Ed.). (2004). *The Billboard Illustrated Encyclopedia of Opera*. New York: Billboard Books.

- Position within the Information Cycle. *The Billboard Illustrated Encyclopedia of Opera* is a reference, or tertiary source of information. It provides an authoritative summary of established knowledge about opera.
- Scope and Content. This encyclopedia of opera history covers six themes: opera houses, stage and scene, the voice, techniques, performances, and popular melody. All major periods of opera, from the sixteenth century to the present, are included, with historical, social and cultural backgrounds for each (Amazon).
- Credentials and Authority. Editor Stanley Sadie, an influential musicologist and music critic, draws on a variety of expertise from professional writers, educators and musicians (Amazon).
- Purpose and Intended Audience. This is a serious reference tool, as well as a beautiful coffee-table book, intended for all levels of sophistication (Herring, 2006).

- Design and Currency. An introduction by the editor is followed by eight chapters, which are arranged chronologically. The book also includes opera synopses, a glossary, an index to operas, and a general index. Each chapter is dedicated to a historical period of opera, from the baroque until the modern era up to 2004. The book includes pictures, illustrations, and diagrams (Herring, 2006).
- Biases and Value. This is an excellent, comprehensive and accessible opera resource for a reasonable price (Amazon).

Wlaschin, K. (Ed.). (2006). *Encyclopedia of American Opera*. Jefferson, N.C.:

McFarland & Co.

- Position within the Information Cycle. The *Encyclopedia of American Opera* is a reference, or tertiary source of information. It provides an authoritative summary of established knowledge about American opera.
- Scope and Content. This book provides essential and peripheral information on American opera and musical theater from the eighteenth century to the present. It contains approximately 1,700 entries dealing with composers and their works. Included are important premieres and opera companies, significant arias, plot summaries, performance histories, cast lists, details on recordings, and composer, librettist, administrator, designer, and singer biographies (Gillespie, 2007).
- Credentials and Authority. Author Ken Wlaschin was a respected theater director, film festival organizer, arts columnist, author, film historian, and critic.
- Purpose and Intended Audience. This encyclopedia is suitable for public, academic, and secondary school libraries (Gillespie, 2007).

- Design and Currency. An introduction provides an overview of American opera. Entries are alphabetically arranged and cross-referenced. The work is fully indexed with a bibliography and photographs. This volume is current up until the time of publication in 2006 (Gillespie, 2007).
- Biases and Value. The American focus, currency, and the state-by-state entries make this a unique and valuable source of information pertaining to opera (Gillespie, 2007).

Community-Based Information Sources

Classical Singer. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.classicalsinger.com>

- Position within the Information Cycle. *Classical Singer* is an online magazine, which falls within the category of primary resources in the information cycle. Articles give opinions and analyses, and are written by journalists and experts in the field of opera.
- Scope and Content. *Classical Singer* publishes a monthly magazine with news and articles that pertain to professional, amateur, and student singers of opera and classical music. There are sections for information concerning auditions, competitions, and study programs. The website provides links to directories and other resources. Additionally, *Classical Singer* offers a platform and hosting service for singers to create and present personal artist websites.
- Credentials and Authority. The magazine contains articles written by a variety of experts, and is endorsed by professional singers, teachers, and accompanists.

- Purpose and Intended Audience. According to the website, *Classical Singer* is "dedicated to helping singers find opportunities and to providing resources for singers of all ages and levels."
- Design and Currency. Each issue contains special feature articles and regular columns. The magazine is issued monthly, while audition and competition notices are continually updated. The website is clear, attractive, and easy to navigate.
- Biases and Value. *Classical Singer* is an essential resource for opera enthusiasts who are also singers. The online magazine is free, but print versions require a subscription. Limited audition information is free, but details require a subscription.

Intermezzo. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://intermezzo.typepad.com>

- Position within the Information Cycle. *Intermezzo* is a daily blog that provides a commentary on news in the world of opera. It represents the first stage of the information cycle, where reports are immediate and superficial. It is a typical community-based information source.
- Scope and Content. Daily posts reflect current worldwide news pertaining to opera, but since the author is based in London, the emphasis is on events occurring in the UK. *Intermezzo* readers are allowed to post comments, but few do.
- Credentials and Authority. The author is a former soprano and ex-pianist based in London, who frequently attends opera performances. Views presented are not intended to be scholarly or authoritative.

- Purpose and Intended Audience. The purpose of the blog is to share information and opinions with other opera enthusiasts.
- Design and Currency. This blog, updated frequently during the opera season in London, has a very basic design, featuring daily posts in the main section, with links to other resources and archives in the sidebar. There is also an unwieldy and unhelpful list of categories.
- Biases and Value. The author provides a valuable perspective on the opera scene in Britain, as viewed by an opera fan and former professional. It also offers to readers a platform for discussion and other contributions.

Opera Chic. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://operachic.typepad.com/opera_chic/

- Position within the Information Cycle. *Opera Chic*, a blog that comments on opera news and events, is a typical community-based information source. It represents the first stage of the information cycle, where reports are immediate and superficial.
- Scope and Content. The author of *Opera Chic* is based in Milan, and focuses mainly on operatic news in that area. She reviews La Scala productions and other performances and recitals in the Milan area. Her posts are chatty and informal, giving her own perspectives and opinions. She often comments on the personal lives or conduct of opera celebrities in a gossip column style. Comments are allowed, but they are infrequent.
- Credentials and Authority. This blogger is anonymous, but describes herself as a "young, American, classically trained musician" living in Milan. Her views are not scholarly or authoritative.

- Purpose and Intended Audience. *Opera Chic* is a casual, entertaining blog aimed at opera fans.
- Design and Currency. Blog posts appear several times a week during the performance season at La Scala, and less frequently during the off-season. The basic design features a main section for posts and a side bar with archives and categories. The list of categories is too lengthy to be of use, but the site is otherwise easy to navigate.
- Biases and Value. The author makes no attempt to present all sides of the subjects she explores. Her views are based partly on her background as a musician, but are not meant to be scholarly or authoritative. Opera enthusiasts value this site for quick daily updates, and an entertaining perspective on people and events related to opera.

Opera Today. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.operatoday.com>

- Position within the Information Cycle. *Opera Today* is an online magazine, which falls within the category of primary resources in the information cycle. Articles give opinions and analyses, and are written by journalists and experts in the field of opera.
- Scope and Content. According to the site, *Opera Today* "provides reviews of current performances, recordings, and books, interviews of performers, commentary and links to recent news items." The site also contains a section with general historical information on various operas.
- Credentials and Authority. *Opera Today* recruits reviewers and commentators from its users all over the world. Reviewers must follow guidelines, and articles

are screened before they are published. The information provided by *Opera Today* is truly community-based, as its users are also its contributors.

- Purpose and Intended Audience. The site provides opera reviews and news to its intended audience of opera lovers.
- Design and Currency. Though the website is updated frequently, published reviews are often on productions that closed weeks ago. The website contains a confusing sidebar with many of the same entries as the main section. The category titles seem somewhat redundant. Navigation is unclear.
- Biases and Value. The emphasis of *Opera Today* is on opera reviews, authored by writers of unspecified credentials. The articles provide an interesting view on opera events all over the world, but are not necessarily authoritative.

Parterre. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://parterre.com>

- Position within the Information Cycle. *Parterre* is a daily blog that provides a commentary on news in the world of opera. It represents the first stage of the information cycle. Most reports are immediate and superficial, but the author also provides more substantial opera reviews. It is a typical community-based information source.
- Scope and Content. Daily posts reflect current events in worldwide events pertaining to opera, but emphasis is placed on those occurring in New York City, where the author is based. Posts are highly opinionated, often critical, and usually hilarious. The author also posts his own professional reviews of New York opera productions, which are of a more serious nature. Readers participate frequently by commenting on blog posts, contributing knowledge and sometimes linking to

other resources. Readers are usually intelligent and knowledgeable, and often given to biting sarcasm.

- Credentials and Authority. The author is known by the fictitious name of his drag persona, "La Cieca," but is actually James Jorden, professional opera director and reviewer for the New York Post.
- Purpose and Intended Audience. *Parterre* is aimed at all opera enthusiasts, particularly those with extensive knowledge in the field and an excellent sense of humor.
- Design and Currency. The blog, updated daily, is designed simply and is easy to navigate. In addition to the main section for blogs and comments, there is a sidebar with a chat room, links to other resources, archives, and a list of categories.
- Biases and Value. La Cieca's views are extremely opinionated, but are also witty and based on extensive knowledge. Most users comment under pseudonyms, but it is clear that they are authorities in the field. The discussions provide a valuable and entertaining insight into the unguarded opinions of opera buffs and experts.

References

- Adam, A. J. (2014). ARBA Online [Review of the book *Historical Dictionary of Opera*, edited by S. L. Balthazar]. Retrieved from http://arba.librariesunlimited.com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/review.asp?linkid=A2014_45377&docID=8&num=28&t=1&s=6&p=1&qID=298611
- Amazon. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.amazon.com>
- Gillespie, J. T. (2007). ARBA Online [Review of the book *Encyclopedia of American Opera*, edited by K. Wlaschin]. Retrieved from http://arba.librariesunlimited.com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/review.asp?linkid=A2007_3721&docID=4&num=28&t=1&s=6&p=1&qID=298611
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- Herring, M. (2006). ARBA Online [Review of the book *The Billboard Illustrated Encyclopedia of Opera*, edited by S. Sadie]. Retrieved from http://arba.librariesunlimited.com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/review.asp?linkid=A2006_30520&docID=2&num=28&t=1&s=6&p=1&qID=298611
- Powell, P. (2001). ARBA Online [Review of the book *Baker's Dictionary of Opera*, edited by L. Kuhn]. Retrieved from http://arba.librariesunlimited.com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/review.asp?linkid=A2001_17414&docID=1&num=28&t=1&s=6&p=1&qID=298611