



# From the Score to the Stage: An Illustrated History of Continental Opera Production and Staging

*Evan Baker*

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Without scenery, costumes, and stage action, an opera would be little more than a concert. But in the audience, we know little (and think less) about the enormous efforts of those involved in bringing an opera to life—by the stagehands who shift scenery, the scenic artists who create beautiful backdrops, the electricians who focus the spotlights, and the stage manager who calls them and the singers to their places during the performance. The first comprehensive history of the behind-the-scenes world of opera production and staging, *From the Score to the Stage* follows the evolution of visual style and set design in continental Europe from its birth in the seventeenth century up to today.

In clear, witty prose, Evan Baker covers all the major players and pieces involved in getting an opera onto the stage, from the stage director who creates the artistic concept for the production and guides the singers' interpretation of their roles to the blocking of singers and placement of scenery. He concentrates on the people—composers, librettists, designers, and technicians—as well as the theaters and events that generated developments in opera production. Additional topics include the many difficulties in performing an opera, the functions of impresarios, and the business of music publishing. Delving into the absorbing and often neglected history of stage directing, theater architecture and technology, and scenic and lighting design, Baker nimbly links these technical aspects of opera to actual performances and performers, and the social context in which they appeared. Out of these details arise illuminating discussions of individual productions that cast new light on the operas of Wagner, Verdi, and others.

Packed with nearly two hundred color illustrations, *From the Score to the Stage* is a revealing, always entertaining look at what happens before the curtain goes up on opening night at the opera house.

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