



The Opera Fanatic: Ethnography of an Obsession

Claudio E. Benzecry

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Though some dismiss opera as old-fashioned, it shows no sign of disappearing from the world's stage. So why do audiences continue to flock to it? Given its association with wealth, one might imagine that opera tickets function as a status symbol. But while a desire to hobnob with the upper crust might motivate the occasional operagoer, for hardcore fans the real answer, according to *The Opera Fanatic*, is passion—they do it for love.

Opera lovers are an intense lot, Claudio E. Benzecry discovers in his look at the fanatics who haunt the legendary Colón Opera House in Buenos Aires, a key site for opera's globalization. Listening to the fans and their stories, Benzecry hears of two-hundred-mile trips for performances and nightlong camp-outs for tickets, while others testify to a particular opera's power to move them—whether to song or to tears—no matter how many times they have seen it before. Drawing on his insightful analysis of these acts of love, Benzecry proposes new ways of thinking about people's relationship to art and shows how, far from merely enhancing aspects of everyday life, art allows us to transcend it.

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