



The Magic of Beverly Sills (Music in American Life)

Nancy Guy

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A superb coloratura soprano and down-to-earth personality transformed opera singer Beverly Sills into an unlikely pop culture phenomenon. Seemingly as at home on talk shows as on the stage, Sills personified high art for millions of Americans from the time of her meteoric rise to stardom in 1966 until her death in 2007.

Merging archival research with her own love of Sills's music, Nancy Guy examines the singer-actress's artistry alongside the ineffable aspects of performance that earned Sills a passionate fandom. Guy mines the memories of colleagues, critics, and aficionados to recover something of the spell Sills wove for people on both sides of the footlights during the hot moment of onstage performance. At the same time, she analyzes essential questions raised by Sills's art and celebrity. How did Sills challenge the divide between elite and mass culture? What allowed her to find fans across socio-economic lines? Above all, how did Sills capture the unnameable magic that joins the members of an audience to a performer--and to one-another?

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