



The Enchantress of Nations: Pauline Viardot: Soprano, Muse and Lover

Michael Steen

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This is a picturesque but painstakingly researched biography of the life - and the times - of the nineteenth century's Maria Callas. She was among 'the most brilliant dramatic stars of our time', according to Franz Liszt, and billed as 'the most talked of opera singer in Europe'. Dickens - reduced to tears by her singing - regarded her as 'one of the greatest actresses of any time'. Liszt also declared that, with Pauline Viardot, the world had finally found a woman composer of genius. "Enchantress of Nations" is a lavish biography of this amazing woman whose life spanned most of the nineteenth century; and it also weaves a rich tapestry of music and literature in France, England and Russia. Michael Steen recounts the back-stage bitchiness, robbery, duels and violence, life in Russia before the emancipation of the serfs, appalling disease and shocking poverty, and the unhappiness experienced by children of successful parents. Luxuriously produced with a color plate section, it opens a new vista on opera, nineteenth-century literature and history.



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