



The Magic of Beverly Sills (Music in American Life)

Nancy Guy

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With her superb coloratura soprano, passion for the world of opera, and down-to-earth personality, Beverly Sills made high art accessible to millions from the time of her meteoric rise to stardom in 1966 until her death in 2007. An unlikely pop culture phenomenon, Sills was equally at ease on talk shows, on the stage, and in the role of arts advocate and administrator. 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 moments 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 and build a fan base that crossed generations and 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? Intimate and revealing, *The Magic of Beverly Sills* explores the alchemy of art, magnetism, community, and emotion that produced an American icon.

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