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978-0-521-85688-1 - The Puccini Problem: Opera, Nationalism and Modernity

Alexandra Wilson

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THE PUCCINI PROBLEM

The first detailed investigation of the reception and cultural contexts of Puccini's music, this book offers a fresh view of this historically important but frequently overlooked composer. Alexandra Wilson's study explores the ways in which Puccini's music and persona were help up as both the antidote to and the embodiment of the decadence widely felt to be afflicting late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Italy, a nation which although politically unified remained culturally divided. The book focuses upon two central, related questions which were debated throughout Puccini's career: his status as a national or international composer, and his status as a traditionalist or modernist. In addition, Wilson examines how Puccini's operas became caught up in a wide range of extra-musical controversies concerning such issues as gender and class. This book makes a major contribution to our understanding of both the history of opera and of the wider artistic and intellectual life of turn-of-the-century Italy.

ALEXANDRA WILSON is Lecturer in Musicology at Oxford Brookes University. Her work has appeared in *Cambridge Opera Journal* and *Music & Letters*, and she is a regular contributor to BBC radio programmes. This is her first book.

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Translations from Italian into English are my own unless otherwise stated. Because of the extensive amount of cited journalistic material, I have not, as a rule, reproduced the original Italian texts. However, in cases where the original is particularly striking or ambiguous, it is given in the notes.