Beginning from the unlikely vantage point of Venice in the aftermath of Fascism and World War II, this book explores operatic production in the city’s nascent postwar culture as a lens onto the relationship between opera and politics in the twentieth century. Both opera and Venice in the middle of the century are often talked about in strikingly similar terms: as museums locked in the past and blind to the future. These clichés are here overturned: perceptions of crisis were in fact remarkably productive for opera, and despite being physically locked in the past, Venice was undergoing a flourishing of avant-garde activity. Focusing on a local musical culture, Harriet Boyd-Bennett recasts some of the major composers, works, stylistic categories and narratives of twentieth-century music. The study provides fresh understandings of works by composers as diverse as Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Verdi, Britten and Nono.

Harriet Boyd-Bennett is Assistant Professor at the University of Nottingham. Prior to this she was Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at Nottingham and Junior Research Fellow at Christ Church, Oxford. She has published widely on music, culture and politics in Italy, modern opera performance and the musical avant-garde.
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Cultural Politics and the Avant-Garde

Harriet Boyd-Bennett
University of Nottingham
for Penny and Doug
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All translations are mine unless otherwise stated. For primary source material I have retained the original Italian whereas, when quoting from secondary literature, I have included only the English translation.