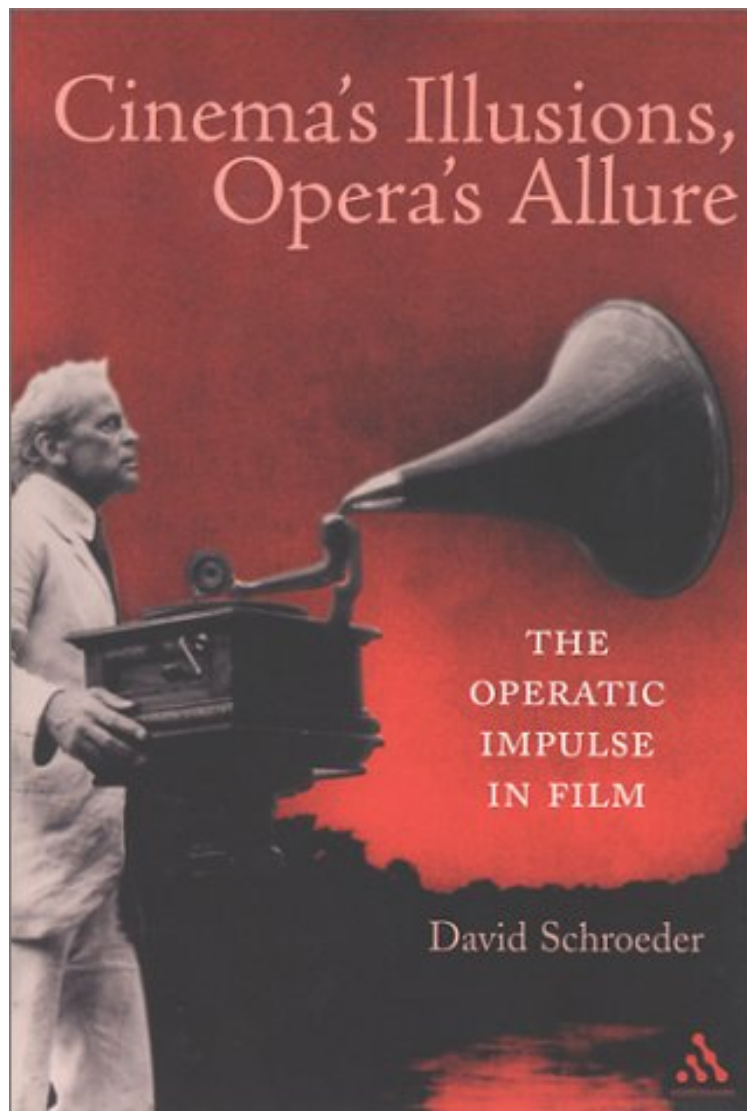


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Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure: The Operatic Impulse in Film (Film Studies: Bloomsbury Academic Collections)

David P. Schroeder

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David P. Schroeder : Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure: The Operatic Impulse in Film (Film Studies: Bloomsbury Academic Collections) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure: The Operatic Impulse in Film (Film Studies: Bloomsbury Academic Collections):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Offers some history, but little insight. By N. McCall
When I was in college, my popular yet vacuous film professor made an unsupported claim that silent film was operatic. This claim pops up in writing for all types of film in addition to silents, so I eagerly picked up this book in search of some evidence and arguments. After reading this book, the argument amounts to little more than 'opera is used frequently in film and they are related.' The supporting evidence offers scant analysis, as the author frequently falls back on the idea, without evidence, that the film directors he invokes instinctively "knew" the importance of putting opera and film together, and that they are inherently linked. As often in film writing, there is heavy reliance on summary and production history, but little analysis as to how cinema is operatic. I was puzzled by what seem like obvious subjects this book ignored: "Porgy and Bess" (1959), "The Tales of Hoffman" (1951), "Life is Beautiful" (1997), Deanna Durbin, Jeanette MacDonald, even "Pretty Woman" (1990)! Sure, there are too many examples for one 350-page book to hold, but the lack of breadth and depth is truly glaring when the author goes on unrelated tangents. A particularly frustrating example of this is when he devotes the seven-page chapter on "Apocalypse, Now!" to Wagner's antisemitism, a worthy subject, but one that has no place in this book. Skip this book. I still scratch my head when people say that film is operatic.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wonderfully engaging and wide-ranging book
By Bruce Vogt
I am amazed that this book has had so little publicity. It should be read and read widely. It is not really an academic study - though much scholarly learning is clearly behind it. Instead it wears its learning lightly and delights the reader with its wit and passion. Anyone interested in film will be engaged and grateful for this book and they will never see the world of cinema in quite the same way afterwards.

The invention of cinema was ingenious, so much so that virtually no one quite knew what to do with it. In its earliest stages, especially with the advent of the feature film, it needed models, and opera proved to be especially useful in this regard. The allure of opera to cinema early in the century held up through the silent era, into sound films, through the golden age of movies and into the most recent approaches to cinema. This book explores the numerous ways - some predictable, some unexpected, and some bizarre - that this has happened. The influence of Richard Wagner on filmmakers has been especially striking, and some have even devised visual images that seem to emerge from a kind of non-verbal Wagnerian essence - a formative, musical urge that can underlie a cinematic idea, defying explanation and remaining purely sensory. A number of directors have intuited this possibility, including Griffith, DeMille, Eisenstein, Chaplin, Lang, Wells, Bunuel and Hitchcock. This book provides an account of the influence of one medium on another, arguing that opera can often be found lurking in the background of a wide range of films.

"Provocative reading." -- The Dallas Morning News, August 21, 2002
"Schroeders passion for both art forms is invigorating, and he writes in a clear, approachable style..." -- Opera News, January 2003
"an enormously engaging dialogue with that long-gone still-here time ... exhaustively researched detail ... exuberantly engaging riff-style." -- Los Angeles Times, December 29, 2002
From the Publisher
During my childhood in the 1950s, curbed by a strict religious upbringing, I did not go to movies. No edict, though, prevented me from attending opera, and it so happened that I saw Verdi's Aida, Mozart's Don Giovanni, and Johann Strauss's Die Fledermaus before I ever went to a movie. In fact, nothing stopped me from seeing Carmen, Salome (a solid piece on a biblical subject, one could surmise), Don Giovanni and even Lulu, but on the other hand Heidi, Bambi and Quo vadis? remained taboo. I grew up with a delightfully distorted view of things, and when I first rebelled and went to a movie, not finding the waywardness I had been sheltered from disappointed me. In the blockbusters which initiated me to the movies in the late 1950s and early 60s, I discovered something not very different in scope from the operas I already knew so well. The old principle of prohibition inducing unbridled desire worked in my case in the extreme: deprived in my youth of cinema, I have indulged movie going since my late adolescence with unrestrained passion. Entering a movie house has never lost its attraction because, even after being thrown out of the church in my youth, it still seems slightly transgressive. At the same time my enthusiasm for opera remains undiminished, fueled at one time by an aspiration to be a singer, and then by a life as a writer and lecturer on music. My vocal training did not result in a career in opera, but it opened some alluring possibilities for comparing opera and cinema that would not otherwise have occurred to me. I am very happy to acknowledge a number of people whose unswerving or in some cases indirect assistance deserves my thanks. Since 1994 I have taught a class on film and music, open to students of all disciplines, and they take this class because they love movies. Through lively discussions inside and outside of class, I have learned much from these avid filmgoers. Some of the ideas for this book emerged during the seconds before attempting to answer dismayed questions or sharp comments, as well as during the congenial moments of shared enthusiasm. While I acknowledge the work of numerous authors throughout the book, one stands out especially, and that is Ken Wlaschin, whose encyclopedic Opera on Screen (Los Angeles: Beachwood Press, 1997) has proved extremely useful to me with its wealth of information on the numerous ways that opera has touched cinema. I often needed exactly the kinds of lists and details that Wlaschin provides, and I am much indebted to him for compiling this type of guide. My visits to the Film Stills Archive at the Museum of Modern Art in New York were very pleasant thanks to assistance from Terry Geesken. In facilitating the reproduction of illustrations she went well beyond the call of duty, and I am most grateful to her for

doing this so graciously. The experiences of cinema and opera should be shared with someone equally addicted to both, and since 1977 my accomplice has been my wife Linda Schroeder. She frequently sees things that I miss, and, as a musician of the highest order, she also has an uncanny ability to hear. I would find it difficult to imagine writing a book without her active interest in the subject, lively discussion, reading and rereading of the drafts, and I cannot thank her enough. About the Author David Schroeder is Professor of Music and Film Studies and the Associate Dean of Arts and Social Sciences at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada.