

Century Culture (Routledge, 1982), in this two-volume set he includes entries on nineteenth-century figures, such as Darwin, Marx, and Lincoln, who have had a profound influence on today's culture. Entries range in length from a half-page to six pages and include a list of further reading.

New Makers of Modern Culture makes for fascinating reading. In the introduction to the 1981 edition, the editor states that he does not try to impose a uniformity of style on the contributors, as that would lead to "the crabbed and clipped prose style that, in many reference-books, only ossifies its subject matter" (xvi). This freedom of style persists in the new edition. Because the contributors are writing interpretively about their subjects, some entries contain an element of opinion as well as language that is far different from that of the average biographical compendium. The entry on Saul Bellow, for instance, uses the phrase "as the arteries hardened" to describe Bellow's attitudes in his later years, and the Monty Python entry is written tongue-in-cheek from start to finish.

Although reference librarians may find this set very readable and full of insights, they are undoubtedly going to have problems employing it in reference work. The contributors have been charged with interpreting their subject's influence on modern culture, so the entries include the most minimal biographical information. Also, the extraordinarily wide range of coverage and the rather amorphous nature of culture will make it a difficult source for reference staff to remember to consult. For instance, among the entries are excellent essays on Eldridge Cleaver and on post-modernist figures Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. When looking for information on Cleaver, however, a much more likely strategy would be to seek out a reference work focused on African Americans or on activists of the sixties. When helping a patron find background information on postmodernism, a busy reference librarian needing to quickly find the best print or online reference resource would most likely go to a title such as *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism* (Routledge, 2001), which is clearly focused on the subject.

New Makers of Modern Culture is a unique and fascinating work that analyzes the contributions of many disparate people to contemporary culture. Although it has drawbacks as a reference source, it is a worthy addition to any large academic or public library's collection.—*Peter Bliss, Reference Librarian, University of California–Riverside*

Opera: An Encyclopedia of World Premieres and Significant Performances, Singers, Composers, Librettists, Arias, and Conductors, 1597–2000. By Franklin Mesa. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2007. 474p. alkaline \$145 (ISBN 0-7864-0959-2).

Mesa's principal goal for this encyclopedia is to provide information on two opera topics that are not thoroughly covered in existing reference works: details of first and other significant performances, and information on forgotten and neglected works, including recent American operas. There are entries for 1,153 works. Each entry gives the composer; librettist; literary model for the libretto, where appropriate;

date, place, venue, and principal soloists of the first performance; setting; and list of characters. Many entries also include a select list of aria titles and brief information on subsequent performances. Fully one-third of the encyclopedia is devoted to a separate section of singer biographies. The single index covers personal names, cities, and opera houses.

Unfortunately, some of the editorial choices and many aspects of presentation make this encyclopedia both difficult to use and of limited utility. Rather than provide separate entries for composers, conductors, and librettists as he does for singers, Mesa incorporates this information into the individual opera entries—at times, it seems, randomly. With information spread across multiple entries, the result is considerable duplication, difficulty of retrieval, and inconsistency. For example, four of the five entries that reference conductor Thomas Schippers include lengthy but not identical biographical sketches, while the fifth entry has only a single sentence. As another example, fourteen entries must be consulted to extract all that the author has to say about conductor Arturo Toscanini. Each entry is presented as a single paragraph block, making it difficult to scan for specific details, especially when the information takes the form of lists (singers, arias, characters).

Also awkward and inconsistent is the presentation of names. Full names are always given in inverted order, regardless of context. If there is a corresponding entry in the singer biography section, the name is flagged with an asterisk. But many performers are identified only by last name, and none are marked with an asterisk, even when there is a corresponding biographical entry. Much other basic information is absent. Characters are not identified by their voice range, nor are performers matched with the roles they sang. Furthermore, the attempt to identify the leading female singer by invoking Italian terminology has resulted in a significant error: the term "primo soprano" (first soprano) is given incorrectly throughout as "prima soprano." Finally, despite the incorporation of numerous aria lists and the inclusion of arias in the encyclopedia's title, this work cannot be used to match an aria title to its parent opera as there is no aria index.

This attempt to fill a perceived gap in the reference literature on opera is largely unsuccessful and should be considered, with serious reservations, only by libraries that collect comprehensively in this area. Other libraries seeking an opera encyclopedia should consider instead the four-volume *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (Oxford Univ. Pr., 1992, reprinted in 2004), which also is available electronically as part of *Grove Music Online, International Dictionary of Opera* (Saint James Pr., 1993, 2 vols.) or *The New Penguin Opera Guide* (Penguin, 2001).—*Paul Cauthen, Assistant Music Librarian, University of Cincinnati, Ohio*

The Oxford Companion to World Exploration. Ed. by David Buisseret. New York: Oxford Univ. Pr., 2007. 2 vols. alkaline \$250 (ISBN 0-19-514922-X).

In the introduction, editor David Buisseret acknowledges the difficulty of understanding exactly what a "companion"