

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910787648103321
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Titolo	Verdi, opera, women // Susan Rutherford [[electronic resource]]
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cambridge : , : Cambridge University Press, , 2013
ISBN	1-107-46196-0 1-139-89368-8 1-107-45980-X 1-107-47262-8 1-107-46545-1 1-107-46901-5 1-107-34064-0
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (xii, 293 pages) : digital, PDF file(s)
Collana	Cambridge studies in opera
Disciplina	782.1092
Soggetti	Women in opera Opera - 19th century
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Title from publisher's bibliographic system (viewed on 05 Oct 2015).
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Prologue : Verdi and his audience -- War -- Prayer -- Romance -- Sexuality -- Marriage -- Death -- Laughter.
Sommario/riassunto	Verdi's operas - composed between 1839 and 1893 - portray a striking diversity of female protagonists: warrior women and peacemakers, virgins and courtesans, princesses and slaves, witches and gypsies, mothers and daughters, erring and idealised wives, and, last of all, a feisty quartet of Tudor townswomen in Verdi's final opera, Falstaff. Yet what meanings did the impassioned crises and dilemmas of these characters hold for the nineteenth-century female spectator, especially during such a turbulent span in the history of the Italian peninsula? How was opera shaped by society - and was society similarly influenced by opera? Contextualising Verdi's female roles within aspects of women's social, cultural and political history, Susan Rutherford explores the interface between the reality of the spectators' lives and the imaginary of the fictional world before them on the operatic stage.