



PERFORMING ARTS

Seeing Through: A Chronicle of Sex, Drugs, and Opera

by Ricky Ian Gordon

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In his honest and complex memoir, Gordon digs deep into his background—youth, family, coming-of-age, and beyond—to analyze his life, obstacles, and creative direction. After receiving a childhood giftbook of opera stories, his passion for this art form took hold. It blossomed with recordings, live performances, studies, and compositions. He grew to embrace an eclectic range of other musical forms. Concurrently, his life progressed with personal turmoil, including a substance use condition, grief over losing friends and a beloved partner to AIDS, distress over family issues, and the challenging quest to secure a place in the mercurial world of music. He emerges as a gifted creator; his acclaimed compositional output—operas, such as *The Grapes of Wrath*, art songs and instrumental and theatrical works—has been presented by leading artists and performing groups. The memoir's reflections on music, Gordon's creative process, and anecdotes from the artistic arena are especially captivating.

VERDICT A unique and detailed self-portrait that will prompt readers to seek recordings of Gordon's innovative works. The discography and lists of compositions and publications are thorough and helpful.

Reviewed by Carol J. Binkowski , May 01, 2024