

“Linda and Michael Hutcheon’s *Opera: The Art of Dying* is a learned, absorbing, and (if one dare use this adjective for a study of death) enjoyable book. Building upon recent studies of death emanating from medicine and the social sciences, the Hutcheons demonstrate the ways that opera audiences experience the various deaths they witness onstage as a means of confronting their own mortality.”

—HERBERT S. LINDENBERGER, author of *Opera in History*
and *Opera, the Extravagant Art*

From the introduction:

Our working hypothesis is that when people go to the theater . . . they find themselves participating in a ritual of grieving or experiencing their own mortality by proxy through an operatic narrative . . . They can feel both identification and distance as they—safely—rehearse their own (or a loved one’s) demise through the highly artificial, conventionalized form of opera . . . In the operas treated here . . . the stories give death meaning and allow it to give meaning to life. Death is made to feel logical or somehow right—morally, psychologically, and aesthetically . . . In short, these operas, with their open dramatization of the issues around death and dying, challenge some of our most basic contemporary assumptions about the end of life.