



The Toughest Show on Earth: My Rise and Reign at the Metropolitan Opera

Joseph Volpe

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A fascinating, anecdote-filled behind-the-scenes look at more than forty years of the highlights, successes, and day-to-day inner workings—all about productions, the divas, and backstage dramas—of New York's Metropolitan Opera House, by Joseph Volpe, the only general manager to have risen through the ranks.

This book is the story of Volpe's years leading up to those at the Met, from his first job as a stagehand at the Morosco Theater to the odd jobs he picked up moonlighting: setting up a searchlight or laying down a red carpet for a movie premiere, changing titles on the marquee at the Astor, Victor, and Paramount theaters. It is his Met years—from apprentice carpenter to general manager—that give us a story about New York and the business of culture. Volpe looks at the Met today, an institution full of vast egos and complicated politics, as well as its glittering past—the old Met at Thirty-ninth and Broadway, and the political and artistic intrigues that exploded around its move to Lincoln Center. With stunning candor, he writes about the general managers he worked under, including Rudolf Bing and Anthony Bliss; his own embattled rise to the top; the maneuverings of the blue-chip board; his bad-cop, good-cop collaboration with the conductor James Levine; and his masterful approach to making a family of such highly charged artist-stars as Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo, Teresa Stratas, and Renée Fleming, and such visionary directors as Franco Zeffirelli, Robert Wilson, and Julie Taymor.

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