



Rosa Ponselle: American Diva

Mary Jane Phillips-Matz

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Rosa Ponselle (1897--1981) was one of the greatest American opera singers of the twentieth century. This definitive biography, published on the centenary of her birth, provides a compelling, in-depth, and balanced portrait of the brilliant soprano. It is a captivating Cinderella story of the spirited diva's rise from modest beginnings in Meriden, Connecticut, to star of the Metropolitan Opera. Drawing on interviews and extensive documentary research, Mary Jane Phillips-Matz charts the course of Ponselle's incredible career, from demonstrating sheet music in dime stores, to singing in motion picture houses and restaurants, to performing on the vaudeville stage with her beloved and talented sister Carmela, to her pivotal audition for Enrico Caruso. With Caruso's backing, the twenty-one-year-old soprano, with no previous experience in opera, made a sensational debut at the Metropolitan Opera and became an overnight celebrity. The extraordinarily successful operatic and concert career that followed the diva's debut is chronicled in this vibrant account. Also included are Ponselle's headstrong disputes with the Metropolitan, her troubled marriage and divorce, and her productive retirement years as Artistic Director of the Baltimore Civic Opera and teacher of such future opera stars as Placido Domingo, Beverly Sills, William Warfield, James Morris, and Sherill Milnes.

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