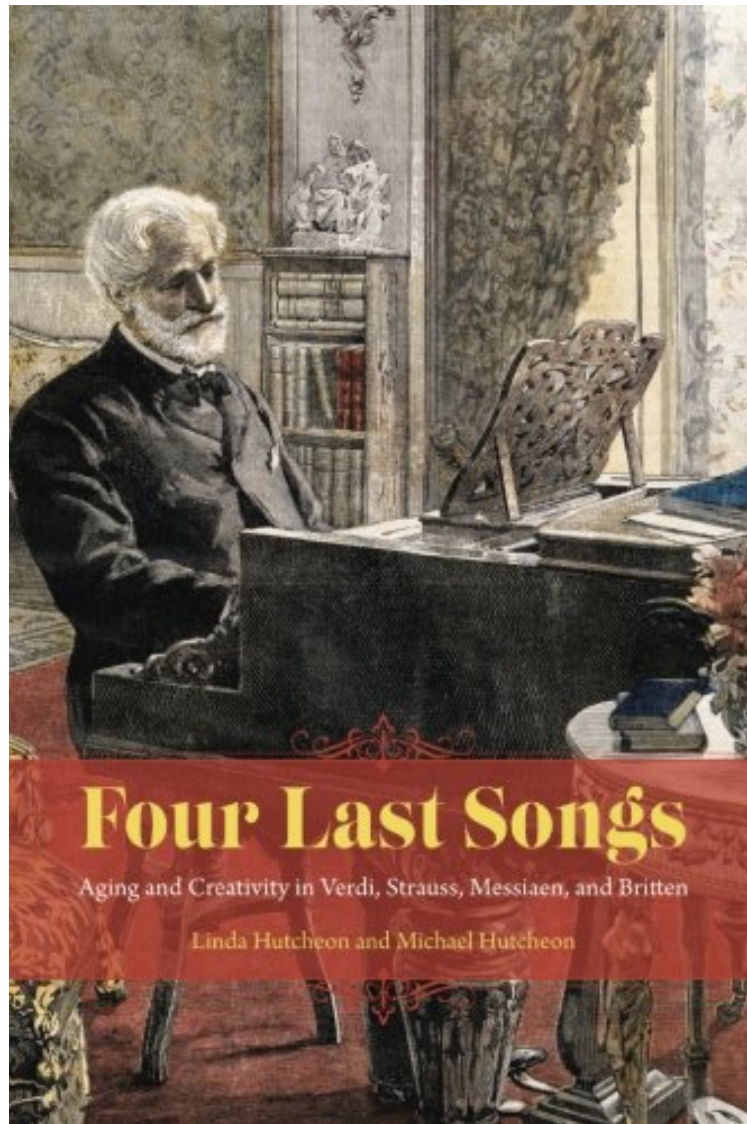


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## Four Last Songs: Aging and Creativity in Verdi, Strauss, Messiaen, and Britten

*Linda Hutcheon, Michael Hutcheon*

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**Linda Hutcheon, Michael Hutcheon : Four Last Songs: Aging and Creativity in Verdi, Strauss, Messiaen, and Britten** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Four Last Songs: Aging and Creativity in Verdi, Strauss, Messiaen, and Britten:

Aging and creativity can seem a particularly fraught relationship for artists, who often face age-related difficulties as their audiences expectations are at a peak. In *Four Last Songs*, Linda and Michael Hutcheon explore this issue via the late works of some of the worlds greatest composers. Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), Richard Strauss (1864-1949), Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992), and Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) all wrote operas late in life, pieces that reveal unique responses to the challenges of growing older. Verdis *Falstaff*, his only comedic success, combated Richard Wagners influence by introducing young Italian composers to a new model of national music. Strauss, on the other hand, struggling with personal and political problems in Nazi Germany, composed the self-reflexive *Capriccio*, a life review of opera and his own legacy. Though it exhausted him physically and emotionally, Messiaen at the age of seventy-five finished his only opera, *Saint Francois dAssise*, which marked the pinnacle of his career. Britten, meanwhile, suffering from heart problems, refused surgery until he had completed his masterpiece, *Death in Venice*. For all four composers, age, far from sapping their creative power, provided impetus for some of their best accomplishments. With its deft treatment of these composers final years and works, *Four Last Songs* provides a valuable look at the challenges and opportunities that present themselves as artists grow older.