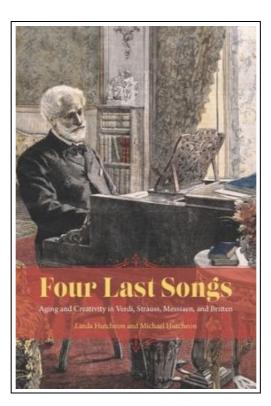
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The University of Chicago Press, United States, 2015. Hardback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. Aging and creativity can seem a particularly fraught relationship for artists, who often face age-related difficulties at a time when their audience s expectations of their talents are at a peak. In Four Last Songs, Linda and Michael Hutcheon explore this issue through close looks at those who created some of the world s most important and influential operas. Giuseppe Verdi (1813 - 1901), Richard Strauss (1864 - 1949), Olivier Messiaen (1908 - 92), and Benjamin Britten (1913 - 76) all wrote operas late in life, pieces that reveal radically individual responses to the challenges of growing older. Verdi s Falstaff, his only comedic success, combated the influence of Richard Wagner 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 musical legacy. Though it exhausted him physically and emotionally, Messiaen finished at the age of seventy-five his first and only opera, Saint Francois d Assise, which marked the religious and aesthetic pinnacle of his career. Britten, meanwhile, suffered from heart problems at the end of his career and raced against time, refusing to undergo surgery until he had completed his masterpiece, Death in Venice. For all four composers, age, far from sapping the power of creativity, provided impetus for some of their most impressive accomplishments. The diverse stories presented here provide unique insight into the attitudes and cultural discourse surrounding creativity, aging, and late style. 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...

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