

VERDI'S THIRD CENTURY

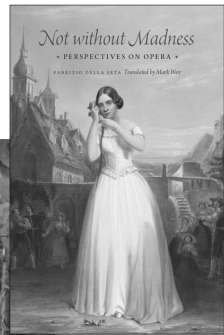
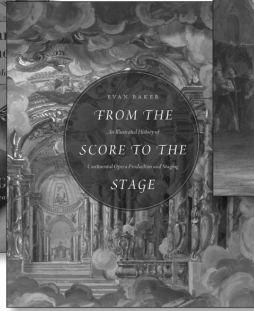
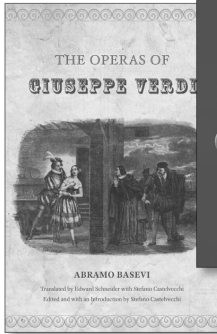
---



ITALIAN OPERA TODAY

A Bicentennial Conference  
New York University  
October 9-13, 2013

# From Chicago



Forthcoming Spring 2014

## The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi

**Abramo Basevi**

Edited and with an Introduction by Stefano Castelvocchi

Translated by Edward Schneider with Stefano Castelvocchi

Cloth \$55.00

## Richard Wagner

*A Life in Music*

**Martin Geck**

Translated by Stewart Spencer

Cloth \$35.00

## From the Score to the Stage

*An Illustrated History of Continental Opera Production and Staging*

**Evan Baker**

Cloth \$65.00

## Not without Madness

*Perspectives on Opera*

**Fabrizio Della Seta**

Translated by Mark Witt

Cloth \$55.00

## CRITICAL EDITIONS OF THE WORKS OF GIUSEPPE VERDI

### Attila

*Dramma lirico in a Prologue and Three Acts*

**Edited by Helen Greenwald**

Cloth \$275.00

### Giovanna d'Arco

*Dramma lirico in Four Acts by Temistocle Solera*

**Edited by Alberto Rizzuti**

Cloth \$299.00

### Chamber Music

**Edited by Gundula Kreuzer**

Cloth \$115.00

### Hymns / Inni

**Edited by Roberta Montemorra Marvin**

Cloth \$135.00



The University of Chicago Press  
[www.press.uchicago.edu](http://www.press.uchicago.edu)



**Program**

and

**Abstracts of Papers Read**

at

***Verdi's Third Century: Italian Opera Today***  
**A Bicentennial Conference**

**New York University**  
**American Institute for Verdi Studies**  
**October 9-13, 2013**

Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò  
Humanities Initiative

# ***Verdi's Third Century: Italian Opera Today***

## **Program Committee**

Suzanne Cusick (New York University)

Francesco Izzo (University of Southampton and American Institute for Verdi Studies)

Roberta Montemorra Marvin (University of Iowa)

Hilary Poriss (Northeastern University)

Emilio Sala (University of Milan and Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani)

Mary Ann Smart (University of California, Berkeley)

## **The American Institute for Verdi Studies gratefully acknowledges the support of the following organizations and individuals:**

Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, NYU

Center for European and Mediterranean Studies, NYU

Department of Music, NYU

Department of Music, University of Southampton

Humanities Initiative, NYU

Office of the Dean for the Humanities, NYU

Stefano Albertini

Asya Berger

Cecilia Gobbi

Kostja Kostic

Pauline Lum

Gwynneth C. Malin

Julian Sachs

Alberto Schileo

Nancy Smith-Amer

Jane Tylus

Larry Wolff

Lawren Young

Baronessa Mariuccia Zerilli-Marimò

# CONTENTS

- 1 **Program**
- 5 **Paper Abstracts**
  - Wednesday afternoon, October 9*
  - 5 "27": A Documentary Film-in-Progress by August Ventura –  
Screening and Round Table
  - Thursday morning, October 10*
  - 5 Visual Aspects in the Opera House and Beyond
  - 6 Staging Verdi Today
  - Thursday afternoon, October 10*
  - 8 Verdi in Production
  - Friday morning, October 11*
  - 9 Singers
  - 10 Analyzing Verdi
  - Friday afternoon, October 11*
  - 11 Round Table – Framing Verdi: Opera and Twenty-First-Century  
Popular Culture
  - Saturday morning, October 12*
  - 14 Musical Traditions and Italian Opera
  - Saturday afternoon, October 12*
  - 15 Reception, National Identity, and Monuments
  - 18 *Un ballo in maschera*



# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

**WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 9, 2013**

**Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò (24 West 12th Street)**

**5pm • Registration**

**6pm • "27": A Documentary Film-in-Progress by August Ventura - Screening and Round Table**

Participants: Stefano Albertini (New York University), Suzanne Cusick (New York University), Francesco Izzo (University of Southampton), Jane Tylus (New York University), August Ventura (New York)

**8pm • Welcome Reception**

**THURSDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10, 2013**

**Humanities Initiative (20 Cooper Square, 5th Floor)**

**9:15-10:45 • Visual Aspects in the Opera House and Beyond**

Mary Ann Smart (University of California, Berkeley), Chair

Marco Targa (University of Turin), "Verdi and Silent Cinema"

Claudio Vellutini (University of Chicago), "Macbeth and Google Maps: Staging Verdi in the Twenty-First Century"

Respondent: Alessandra Campana (Tufts University)

**10:45-11:15 • Coffee Break**

**11:15-12:45 • Staging Verdi Today**

Helen M. Greenwald (New England Conservatory), Chair

Olga Jesurum (Rome, Italy) and Vincenza Busseti (Rome, Italy), "Staging Verdi Today: A Practical Case Study of Props, Costumes, and Other Visual Elements for a Mise en Scène of *Rigoletto*"

Melanie Gudesblatt (University of California, Berkeley), "Riots, Revision, and Rupture: Insurrection in Luc Bondy's Production of *Don Carlos*"

Respondent: Susan Hilferty (New York University)

**THURSDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 10, 2013**

**Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò (24 West 12th Street)**

**2:30-4:00 • Verdi in Production**

Suzanne Cusick (New York University), Chair

Alessandra Jones (Hunter College, City University of New York), "An Artifact on Display: The Case for a Politicized *Aida*"

Micaela Baranello (Princeton University), "Verdi, Ritual, and Contemporary Operatic Production"

## **FRIDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 11, 2013**

### **Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò (24 West 12th Street)**

#### **9:30-11:30 • Singers**

Hilary Poriss (Northeastern University), Chair

Flora Willson (King's College, Cambridge), "London, Paris, New York: Verdi's global networks c. 1890"

Andrew Moravcsik (Princeton University), "The End of Late Romantic Opera? Explaining the Scarcity of Great Verdi Singers"

Pierpaolo Polzonetti (University of Notre Dame), "Callas's Diet / Violetta's Meal"

Respondent: Cori Ellison (Glyndebourne Festival Opera)

#### **11:30-12:00 • Coffee break**

#### **12:00-1:00 • Analyzing Verdi**

William Rothstein (CUNY Graduate Center), Chair

David Rosen (Cornell University), "How Verdi's Minor-Mode Solo Set Pieces End—i, l, or X?—and Why"

Liza Sobel (Rutgers University), "Verdi's 'Ave Maria sulla scala enigmatica' "

## **FRIDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 11, 2013**

### **Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò (24 West 12th Street)**

#### **3:00-5:00 • Round Table - Framing Verdi: Opera and Twenty-First-Century Popular Culture**

Carlo Cenciarelli (Royal Holloway, University of London), Convenor and Chair

Carlo Cenciarelli (Royal Holloway, University of London), "At the Margins of the Televisual: Picture Frames, Loops and Cinematics in *Don Carlo*"

Marco Andreetti (University of Rome "La Sapienza"), "*La traviata Strips*"

Katherine Williams (Leeds College of Music), " 'Complete with frock coat and beard': Rufus Wainwright's Opera"

Marina Romani (University of California, Berkeley), "Verdi's Forgetful Consumers: Lega Nord's 'Va pensiero' "

William Cheng (Harvard University), "Gaming Opera"

#### **5:00-5:45 • Coffee break**

#### **5:45-6:00 • Martin Chusid Award Announcement**

#### **6:00-7:15 • Keynote Lecture**

Garry Wills (Northwestern University), "The Anticlerical Verdi"



## **SATURDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 12, 2013**

### **Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò (24 West 12th Street)**

#### **9:30-10:30 • Musical Traditions and Italian Opera**

Andreas Giger (Louisiana State University), Chair

Marco Pollaci (University of Nottingham), "Pedagogic Tradition in Verdi's Early Works: Innovation, Culture, and Politics"

Marcelo Campos Hazan (University of South Carolina), "Nabucco's Band"

#### **10:30-11:00 • Coffee Break**

#### **11:00-12:30 • Position Paper and Round Table: Scores and Editions in Today's Opera House**

Cori Ellison, Chair

Philip Gossett (University of Chicago), "Scores and Editions in Today's Opera House"

Round-table: participants include Linda B. Fairtile (University of Richmond) and John Mauceri (New York)

## **SATURDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 12, 2013**

### **Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò (24 West 12th Street)**

#### **2:30-4:30 • Reception, National Identity, and Monuments**

Pierpaolo Polzonetti (University of Notre Dame), Chair

Francesca Vella (King's College London), "*Simon Boccanegra* and the 1881 Milan Exposition"

Davide Ceriani (Rowan University), "Asserting Identity, Defying Stereotypes: The Reception of Verdi's Operas in New York at the Height of Italian Migration to America (1908-1915)"

Harriet Boyd (University of Oxford), "1951 Verdi and the Cult of Posterity"

Emily Richmond Pollock (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), "Life Cycle: Celebrating Verdi at the Sarasota Opera"

#### **4:30-5:00 • Coffee Break**

#### **5:00-6:00 • Un ballo in maschera**

David Rosen (Cornell University), Chair

Andreas Giger (Louisiana State University), "Verdi's *Gustavo III* and the Critical Edition"

Maria Beatrice Giorio (University of Trieste), "Verdi's *Un Ballo in maschera* through the Eyes of Two Artists: Oskar Kokoschka and Arnaldo Pomodoro"

**SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 13, 2013**

**Humanities Initiative (20 Cooper Square, 5th Floor)**

**9:30-11:00 • Round Table: Verdi and the (New) Media**

Participants include Micaela Baranello (Princeton University) and Marion Lignana Rosenberg (New York)

**11:00-11:30 • Coffee Break**

**11:30-12:30 • Round Table: The Publishing Industry: Books, Scores, Recordings for Verdi's Third Century**

Participants include David Foil (New York) and Marta Tonegutti (University of Chicago Press)

## PAPER ABSTRACTS

**WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 9, 2013**

**"27": A Documentary Film-in-Progress by August Ventura – Screening and Round Table**

Welcome to Parma, Italy. Parma's magnificent Teatro Regio enjoys worldwide fame—and sometimes infamy—as the world's "toughest" opera house. At a time when Italy's opera culture is in apparent decline, this small city maintains a fierce connection to the art form, but above all to the 27 works of Giuseppe Verdi, who was born nearby, 199 years ago. Parma's legendary "loggionisti" can still stop a performance cold with their shouts of disapproval. And Verdi-themed social clubs like *Le Verdissime* and the Club of 27 (whose members each take on the name of one of Verdi's operas and carry 27 red roses to the composer's birthplace every October 10th) speak of this uniquely vibrant opera culture. "27" will look in on Parma's Festival Verdi in October when the Maestro's works are performed before excitable and demanding audiences.

Meet the people of Parma for whom Verdi's operas transcend art and entertainment to become something of a life-force, a moral compass found not just in the composer's sublime music but also in the example of his extraordinary actions. "27" looks backward to a time when opera was a populist art form and an agent for social and political change, and explores how Verdi's operas were an indispensable part of Italy's struggle for independence from foreign colonizing powers. To do so is to discover how Verdi speaks to our world today with astonishing relevance. The memorable personalities in "27" seem to know this intuitively, and express their passion for Verdi with deep insight, warmth and humor. For them, passing this identity on to the next generation is a cultural imperative, essential for defining and preserving what it means to be "Italian" in a globalized world.

**THURSDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10, 2013**

**Visual Aspects in the Opera House and Beyond**

Mary Ann Smart (University of California, Berkeley), Chair

**Verdi and Silent Cinema**

Marco Targa (University of Turin)

Cinema is one of the most important media through which opera has experienced new modes of circulation and perception. In my paper, I would like to concentrate on the period of silent cinema, in particular in the Italian context, outlining how it has narrated Verdi's myth, and how Verdi's operas were represented on the screen. Since its very beginning, silent cinema has borrowed stories, dramaturgy, music, and mimic gestures, from opera, giving it new forms of expression. Not only was Verdi one of the first composers to which a biographical-celebratory movie was devoted (*Giuseppe Verdi nella vita e nella gloria*, directed by Giuseppe de' Liguoro in 1913), but his operas were put on the screen in very different forms: films of staged operas with synchronized musical recordings, narrative films based on operatic plots, scenes of staged operas inserted within narrative films. Analyzing how opera,

and in particular Verdi's opera, was absorbed by the newborn cinematographic industry, can help to delineate the contours of Verdi's image in the public of the first decades of the century.

Unfortunately, today scholars must face the remarkable scarcity of surviving documents: the majority of films have been lost together with many secondary documents, rarely considered as being worthy of being preserved from destruction. An inquiry on various types of sources of information (newspapers, documents of production studios, stage photos), however, can contribute to reconstructing the context and modes of reception of this new form of fruition of Verdi's operas, in the very historical moment when theatrical fruition was passing the baton to the cinematic one.

### **Macbeth and Google Maps: Staging Verdi in the 21st Century**

Claudio Vellutini (University of Chicago)

To a greater extent than most 19th-century Italian operas, Verdi's works have proved a fertile testing ground for contemporary directors exploring unconventional approaches to staging. While scholars have investigated the historical and dramaturgical implications of "radical" directorial interpretations, issues of geography have rarely been considered. My paper discusses the 2009 Paris revival of Dmitri Tcherniakov's production of *Macbeth* by approaching it from a geographical standpoint. Originally conceived for the Novosibirsk Opera, Tcherniakov's work was co-produced by the Opéra Bastille, where it was eventually filmed. Its journey from a provincial Russian city to a front-ranking opera house is dramatized—indeed almost reversed—on stage. The setting of each scene is introduced by a Google Map Street View close-up, a web function that Tcherniakov's ideal non-Russian spectator is supposed to have used to locate Novosibirsk. The pervasive use of fictional Google Map searches contributes to blurring the chronological perception of the staged events. On one hand, their spatial and temporal co-ordinates are merged in order to create a dramatic short circuit that makes the Macbeths' raise and fall the result more of random than historical circumstances. On the other, the close-ups function as a reference to the production's migration from Russia to France. By combining a close reading of selected scenes from Tcherniakov's production with a discussion of how of new technologies and media affect the perception and consumption of opera in contemporary culture, I reconsider the extent to which geography shapes our understanding of contemporary opera staging.

### **Staging Verdi Today**

Helen M. Greenwald (New England Conservatory), Chair

#### **Staging Verdi Today: A Practical Case Study of Props, Costumes, and Other Visual Elements for a *Mise en Scène* of *Rigoletto***

Olga Jesurum (Rome, Italy) and Vincenza Busseti (Rome, Italy)

In contemporary *mise en scène* of 19th-century operas, visual aspects such as costumes, props and setting reflect how during the 20th and 21st century modern visual culture impacted on the art of staging opera. Set design received particular attention as an effective vehicle for a distinctly

modernistic or post-modern reading of 19th-century operas, while costume design took on a new prominence as part of a form of material culture particularly able to catch the audience's interest and attention. While these visual elements became more and more important for the interpretation of an opera and to audiences more immersed than ever in visual culture, not enough work is being done to put together new productions of past operas taking into account all the necessary documentary evidence that allow opera directors to take original but responsible decisions.

Our contribution is a proposal for a *mise en scène* of *Rigoletto*, originally conceived for the contest "Creatività all'Opera': Ideation, Stage Direction, Scenography, and Costumes for *Rigoletto*," sponsored by Teatro Regio in Turin. Through this presentation we intend to show how and why musicologists can offer a positive contribution to the art of staging opera today.

During the presentation we will show and discuss stage directions conceived by Olga Jesurum based on Verdi's indications included in libretti as well as in his letters, or implicit in the music, costumes designed by Vincenza Busseti, by taking into account the historical reconstruction of theatrical costumes, and finally props realized by the set designer Daniela Bonetti.

### **Riots, Revision, and Rupture: Insurrection in Luc Bondy's Production of *Don Carlos***

Melanie Gudesblatt (University of California, Berkeley)

The multiple extant versions of Verdi's *Don Carlos* have received much scholarly attention. Verdi continually revised the opera for nearly two decades after its 1867 premiere, and the resulting versions are more divergent than their shared name and chronological proximity would suggest. In this paper, I examine Luc Bondy's production of *Don Carlos*, recorded in 1996 at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. Despite trumpeting faithfulness to the "original French version" and use of "original music," the creative team interpolated material from Verdi's 1884 version in a striking instance—to depict the Act 4 riot.

While the 1867 version of the scene thoroughly reflects the tradition of French grand opera, with its musical echoes of Meyerbeer's Catholic mob in *Les Huguenots*, the 1884 version reflects a significant aesthetic departure given its shortened scenario and entirely recomposed music. Perhaps most crucial, however, is the shift in the mob's depiction. Compared to the monolithic and faceless totality of 1867, the 1884 crowd is a mass comprised of individuals, a gesture that complicates the relationship between the individual and collective, and raises questions about the nature of the individual subject. This framework can be profitably applied to explore why Bondy's team elected to adapt rather than restage *Don Carlos*, where their decision to stage the 1884 riot nested within the 1867 dramatic context comes as a shock: following a tableaux-like staging for Philip and Carlos's exchange, the riot disrupts the French grand opera aesthetic faithfully maintained until this point.

**THURSDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 10, 2013**

**Verdi in Production**

Suzanne Cusick (New York University), Chair

**An Artifact on Display: The Case for a Politicized *Aida***

Alessandra Jones (Hunter College, City University of New York)

Edward Said's assertion that *Aida* "embodies... the authority of Europe's version of Egypt at a moment in its 19th-century history" prompted a thorough reassessment of the work. But while academia engaged with a range of concepts—such as imperialism or racism—productions of *Aida* have largely avoided any controversy. Indeed, the performance history of the opera reinforces Said's idea that *Aida* is an artifact, one that viewers admire without questioning its provenance. Most productions attempt, much like a museum, to recreate the spectacle of Ancient Egypt rather than presenting any alternative readings of the work.

In this paper I highlight newsworthy production premieres in three major (Western) cities: Paris (Palais Garnier, 1880), New York (The Metropolitan Opera, 1908) and finally Milan (La Scala, 2006). My aim is to show to what extent these opera houses went in order to preserve the opera's original setting as well as the likely reasons behind it. I argue that academic debates have still had little effect on the work's public consumption, thanks in large part to the performance tradition established in my three examples. These productions are perpetuating the same mindsets that surrounded the work during its premiere over a century ago. This displaying of the artifact has shown that Said was correct in his analysis of the work as an imperialist one, and Western cultures are still not prepared to grapple with that complicated history. Until that happens, we still await a major production of a politicized *Aida*.

**Verdi, Ritual, and Contemporary Operatic Production**

Micaela Baranello (Princeton University)

To see a Verdi opera is to partake in a multitude of interlocking rituals, conventions, and habits: the social experience of the modern opera house with all its accrued traditions and cultural capital, a repertoire that has often been accused of being overly conventional in its composition, and even the diegetic ceremonies portrayed onstage. In this paper, I locate these repeated, sanctified events as defining and particularly charged elements of the modern operatic experience, and a key site for many productions' ideological and aesthetic reinventions of opera.

Two recent productions provide contrasting examples: Peter Konwitschny's *La traviata* (Graz, 2011) excised or ironized portions of the score deemed by the director to be formulaic (such as the brindisi and the matadors), and elsewhere created a tight integration of music and gesture. In his avoidance of stock movement and purportedly insincerely composed music, Konwitschny claimed to create a narrative of greater emotional authenticity that was cleansed of the commercially contingent. (This paper includes insights from a workshop Konwitschny led on this production at the University of Vienna, in which I participated.) In *Aida* (Basel, 2010), Calixto

Bieito crafted a political message, setting the opera in contemporary Switzerland and reversing the work's ambiguous Orientalism. The setting of a stadium presented the audience with a mirror of their own spectatorship, and the gruesome series of onstage rites of religion, athletics, and consumerism—all at the expense of migrant workers—upended the work's traditional celebration of opera's extravagance and might.

## **FRIDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 11, 2013**

### **Singers**

Hilary Poriss (Northeastern University), Chair

### **London, Paris, New York: Verdi's Global Networks c. 1890**

Flora Willson

During the later 19th century, Verdi became a global phenomenon. Following the dissemination of Rossini's unprecedentedly popular works in the 1820s, Italian opera—with Verdi increasingly at its head—had spread from its strongholds in major European cities to new urban markets on other continents. By the 1890s, this worldwide transit had become essential to the performance traditions of Verdi's operas, as it had to operatic culture as a whole. In this paper I seek to explore this operatic mobility by focusing on one particular instance of Verdian performance on the move: the paradigmatic international path of soprano Nellie Melba, whose most prominent roles included *Gilda*, *Violetta*, and *Aida* and who prided herself on having been coached by the maestro himself one Milanese afternoon in 1893. Born in Australia, Melba moved to Paris in 1886 to complete her training. Following her European debut in Brussels as *Gilda* in 1887, she spent much of the next half-decade travelling between London and Paris, performing a largely Italian repertoire in which *Gilda* vied only with *Lucia* as her most popular role. Melba's peregrinations around Europe's major cities in the early 1890s followed long-established routes; but in 1893—having befriended Verdi—she crossed the Atlantic to make her debut at New York's newly rebuilt Metropolitan Opera. My paper examines the consequences of Melba's operatic travels for the Italian tradition she espoused, placing her international triumphs in dialogue with Verdi's position in a changing operatic order.

### **The End of Romantic Opera? Explaining the Current Scarcity of Great Verdi Singers**

Andrew Moravcsik (Princeton University)

Nearly half of operatic roles performed today—including those in most mature works of Verdi, Wagner, and Puccini—require *spinto* or dramatic singers. Over the past 150 years, great artists have succeeded one another in these parts. Recently, however, opera insiders complained of a global shortage of artists able to perform to historical standards. This paper reports results from the first scholarly study of this phenomenon, focusing on two questions. First, does a decline really exist? Both qualitative analysis (approx. 130 transcribed, confidential interviews in nine countries) and quantitative analysis (content analysis of reviews of seven operas over 85 years) reveal a consensus that performance standards have declined—and more steeply with Verdi than

any other composer. Second, what explains this trend? Little evidence points to a causal role for new acoustical conditions, a shift in operatic taste, the decline of traditional culture, the effects of recording technology, or insufficient economic remuneration. Slightly more evidence can be found pointing to recent concern about dramatic appearance and verisimilitude, and training/managerial practices that discourage singers from attempting or sustaining heavier roles. The strongest evidence points to deeper sociological factors: a smaller pool of singers in society, shifts in alternative employment opportunities, and the unique chronological structure of *spinto* and dramatic careers. If this is correct, avoiding a terminal decline in great Verdi singing likely may require a radical reorganization of opera's position in modern life, and an equally radical reimagining of how it is presented and performed.

### **“Singing with Your Mouth Full’: Staging Eating and Drinking in Verdi’s Operas”**

Pierpaolo Polzonetti (University of Notre Dame)

In the performance history of Verdi's *La Traviata*, the premiere at Venice's La Fenice in 1853 is often remembered as a fiasco, while Luchino Visconti's production at Milan's La Scala in 1955, casting Maria Callas as Violetta, was an unparalleled success. The singer's rapid and prodigious weight loss of nearly 80 pounds during the few years preceding this legendary performance contributed to shocking the public and created the image of a prima donna endowed with superhuman powers. Maria Callas's diet caused a profound metamorphosis in her body and artistic persona. In an uncanny way, her diet also corresponds in *Traviata* to the dramatic shift from the centrality of the act of feasting (the banquet and brindisi at Violetta's) to the final fasting scene (the death of the heroine by consumption with only medicines and water represented on stage), which Verdi dramatizes musically through a radical thinning out of the orchestral texture. A comparison of original sources and modern production history, including documentary evidence from the Museo La Scala in Milan and the Visconti Archive in Rome, shows the resilience in Verdi's theatrical culture of traditional food values and gastronomic signs, but also raises questions about the dangerous conflation, in modern visual culture, of the actor's persona and her actual body.

## **Analyzing Verdi**

William Rothstein (CUNY Graduate Center), Chair

### **How Verdi's Minor-mode Slow Movements End—i, I, or X?—and Why**

David Rosen (Cornell University)

“Ah fors'è lui” (*La traviata*, Act 1) begins in i (the tonic minor) and moves to I (the parallel major) for the reprise of the “Di quell'amor” theme, but in early textless sketches the movement had progressed to III, returned to i, and concluded there. In Verdi's operas through *Un ballo in maschera* there are about fifty independent movements for solo singer that begin in the minor mode, including *romanze* and slow movements and cabalette from numbers labeled “aria” or “cavatina,” but also some set pieces embedded within larger structures. This, the one documented case of an altered tonal plan in these movements, suggests questions about the entire group. The most



common arrangement, the unmarked “standard operating procedure,” is to move to and conclude in I—thirty-one instances (63%). Five examples (10%) conclude in a different major-mode key (X), whether III, VI, V, or N. Given the dread of the “abuso dei minori” in the *primo ottocento*, it is surprising that as many as thirteen examples (27%) return to and conclude in i, though only five date from before 1853. The paper will attempt to account for Verdi’s departures from his standard operating procedure (i→I), asking such questions as do they map onto features of the libretto text (e.g., a despair—hopes raised—hopes dashed trajectory with the group concluding with i)? Do any characteristics of the texts suggest why Verdi might move to X rather than I, or should we seek an explanation in tonal relations beyond the movement?

### **A Comparison and Analysis of Verdi’s “Ave Maria sulla scala enigmatica”**

Liza Sobel (Rutgers University)

The genesis of Verdi’s “Ave Maria sulla scala enigmatica” is well known: *La Gazzetta musicale di Milano* published a bizarre scale or “scala enigmatica” in its August 5, 1888 issue and invited readers to submit harmonizations of the enigmatic scale. The submissions were published in two installments in 1888. This type of compositional exercise, including with bizarre cantus firmi, was a common part of the training of composers in the 19th century and earlier. Along with the nationalistic revival of Palestrina cited by Basini, this long-standing compositional tradition also influenced pieces including Verdi’s “Ave Maria.”

The various settings published in *Gazzetta musicale* deserve more attention than they have previously received. Reviewing the others’ settings helps one fully appreciate Verdi’s setting. There are many similarities between the other submissions and Verdi’s setting; many of the submissions featured similar harmonies to Verdi’s as well as similar harmonic progressions.

Most set the bizarre scale as a simple harmonic exercise with either whole or half notes in all the voices. The majority also matched their phrasing to the shape of the scale, with a clear caesura between the ascending and descending scales, and featured the enigmatic scale only in the bass voice. Only two submissions featured independent voices, and only one submission featured a transposed version of the scale in the tenor. As I will demonstrate, Verdi’s setting suggests tonal centers without actually establishing them, using a variety of procedures in the four settings of the cantus firmus. I will also refer to Verdi’s revisions to “Ave Maria.”

## **FRIDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 11, 2013**

### **Round Table - Framing Verdi: Opera and Twenty-First-Century Popular Culture**

Carlo Cenciarelli (Royal Holloway, University of London), Convenor and Chair

#### **Overview**

From *manga* to video games, pop concerts, political rallies and opera videos, this roundtable brings together a wide variety of ways in which Verdi’s music,

and Italian opera more broadly, is being re-contextualised in early-21<sup>st</sup>-century popular culture.

On the one hand, the roundtable will provide an opportunity to explore commonalities across these diverse phenomena, and to favor an exchange of approaches. One central focus will be that of narrative framing. The case studies in question (whether concerning myths of national identity, the self-fashioning of a popular musician, or the interpretative frameworks offered by video games, opera DVDs and comic books) involve the nesting of operatic narratives within others (national, personal, cinematic, virtual). Can the methodologies employed to engage with these different kinds of story usefully inform each other?

On the other hand, the roundtable will take the heterogeneity of these phenomena as a point of discussion. How can we start theorizing Verdi's popular reception in the face of its seemingly disparate, dispersed nature? What does it mean for Verdi to be the common denominator between Japanese comic books and the political rallies of the Italian Northern League? Do these contexts put forward contrasting images of Verdi's music, or do they rehearse recurring tropes and stereotypes? Is it more productive to think of Verdi's 21<sup>st</sup>-century image as a network, the total sum of many, connected, readings, or to think of the music's meanings as negotiated within specific interpretative communities?

### **At the Margins of the Televisual: Picture Frames, Loops and Cinematics in *Don Carlo*.**

Carlo Cenciarelli (Royal Holloway, University of London)

The Digital Versatile Disc, a once cutting-edge format, offers extended opportunities for studying Verdi's place in early 21<sup>st</sup>-century visual culture. The DVD's paratexts, in particular, seem to offer an interesting route into the status and cultural placement of opera videos. My contribution will focus on the picture covers, menus, and openings credits of four DVD productions of *Don Carlo*. I will suggest that, while the videos fall within the broader discourse of the "televisual" (one that encourages the viewer to conceive the image as a transparent document recording the performance on stage), these paratexts put forward alternative ways of conceiving the relationship between medium and subject matter, presenting opera's materials, however briefly, in terms of narrative cinema and music video, video games and computer loops. Exposed to the demands of marketing, and relatively free from pragmatic limitations and the more abstract pressures set by performing traditions, the margins of the video become a privileged space for imagining opera's media future.

### ***La traviata* Strips**

Marco Andreotti (La Sapienza, Roma)

In my contribution I will discuss comics based on Verdi's operas. Obviously, comics communicate in radically different ways compared to operas: I will focus in particular on the issue of narrative strategies. Relying on the theories of Umberto Eco (*Experiences in Translation*, 2001) and Linda Hutcheon (*A Theory of Adaptation*, 2006), I will examine in some detail two comics of *La*

*traviata*, comparing them with the “original” from which they draw inspiration. In particular, I will ponder the aesthetic and narratological differences between a manga (Yumi Enomoto, 2006) and a version published by the Teatro Comunale, Modena, as part of a series of comics based on operas (Alberto Pagliaro, 2012). I will concentrate on act 2 scene 5, the duet between Violetta and Germont, that is to say, the pivotal moment of the opera. In conclusion, I will suggest how radically different attitudes to the act of translation from opera to comics may have an impact on comics' place in the cultural imagination.

### **“Complete with Frock Coat and Beard”: Rufus Wainwright’s Opera**

Katherine Williams (Leeds College of Music)

In July 2009, Canadian-American singer-songwriter Rufus Wainwright attended the premiere of his opera *Prima Donna* dressed as Giuseppe Verdi. This was far from the first indication of Wainwright's infatuation with Verdi and, more broadly, with 19th-century opera. As an isolated homosexual teenager, he apparently found solace in his mother's recordings of Verdi's *Requiem*, and he frequently features operatic protagonists, allusions, and techniques in both his live performances and his recorded output and music videos. In this paper, I address the impact of these juxtapositions. Through discussion of his songs “Barcelona” (1998), “Greek Song” (2001) and “Vibrate” (2003), I suggest that Wainwright's incorporation of operatic devices offers an intricate, multi-faceted comment on contemporary themes of isolation, otherness and oppression.

### **Verdi's Forgetful Consumers: Lega Nord's “Va pensiero”**

Marina Romani (University of California, Berkeley)

From operatic Risorgimento fantasies to patriotic myths propagated by the fascist regime, the figure of Verdi and of one of his most popular choruses, “Va pensiero,” have become potent receptacles of Italian nationalistic sentiment. One of the most recent displays of cultural re-appropriation is peculiar: since the early 1990s, the right-leaning federalist (formerly secessionist) party Lega Nord has claimed “Va pensiero” as its anthem. Supplanting the official Italian anthem during the party's political gatherings, the chorus has also inspired the title of one of the Lega's local newspapers (*Va' pensiero... Libero* of Treviglio, Lombardy) as well as the name of a *leghista* political list for the 2001 general elections in Italy. In this paper, I will address the following questions. What are the imaginative aspects emphasized by Lega Nord in their use of the chorus? How has the figure of Verdi – which is mostly absent from *leghista* rhetoric – been displaced in the process? How are these new consumers channeling their sectarian identity through this chorus, considering that “Va pensiero” is still today anchored in the patriotic discourse of Italy's 19th-century unification?

## **Gaming Opera**

William Cheng (Harvard University)

When operatic singing occurs in video games, it rarely fails to take center stage, calling attention to the aesthetic conceits and playful dimensions of operas and games alike. Games, of course, don't tend to contain full-length operas: such extended presentations of lyric drama would be difficult to implement, potentially costly to license and impose extensive digressions from a game's main adventure. For the sake of practical design, embeddings of operas in games tend to be distilled into brief diversions, clichés, and soundbites—whether it's a synthesized aria in *Final Fantasy VI* (1994), a caricature of a diva (the corpulent Inge Wagner) in *No One Lives Forever* (2000), or the redundant rehearsal of the execution scene from *Tosca* in *Hitman: Blood Money* (2006).

Histories of early game music commonly stress the challenges that audio designers faced in their attempts to fashion salient sounds out of simple beeps and boops. My paper offers a variation on this narrative, with a view to how the three abovementioned games incorporate opera through strategies of reductive design. I enquire into methods of aesthetic distillation – specifically, the ways in which these games capture, in minimal fashion, opera's magisterial and monumental characteristics (with a reliance on, for example, parody, stereotypes, the repetition of musical material and other economizing schemes). At the core of my investigations are broader reflections on what embedded spectacles in games may teach us about intermediality, narrative frames, the real-virtual divide and the stakes of stylized violence.

## **SATURDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 12, 2013**

### **Musical Traditions and Italian Opera**

Andreas Giger (Louisiana State University), Chair

### **Pedagogic Tradition in Verdi's Early Works: Innovation, Culture, and Politics**

Marco Pollaci (University of Nottingham)

Recent research on 19th-century Italian pedagogical traditions has suggested that an understanding of Verdi's studies with Vincenzo Lavigna, together with his later activities as a teacher, has the potential to shed new light on his creative process and on the contemporary reception of his works. Verdi remained committed to these teachings throughout his life. They can be traced directly to Lavigna's own maestri in Naples, Fedele Fenaroli and Saverio Valente, and involved exercises in *contrappunto pratico*, *partimento*, and *soffeggio*.

When commenting on issues of music education Verdi invariably promoted a conservative agenda, with significant nationalist implications. In this paper, I will discuss the importance of tradition in selected numbers from *Nabucco* (1842), demonstrating that standard Neapolitan formulas and techniques underpinned the composition process. This will form the basis of a critical interpretation of some of early Verdi's work, in which Verdi's use of some of the most basic Neapolitan doctrines is understood to imply nationalist sympathies. The rousing chorus of ancient Hebrews, "Va pensiero," for instance, identified as a hymn to the Risorgimento at the time, is built on a

number of elementary lessons that would have been instantly recognisable to anyone with basic musical training. Could Verdi or his audience have understood such statements as celebrating the past glories of an Italian musical tradition?

### **Nabucco's Band**

Marcelo Campos Hazan (University of South Carolina)

Directing and writing for bands were activities integral to Verdi's formation and it is likely that this apprenticeship informed his early operatic career. Not only do on- and offstage bands punctuate his early operas prominently, but wind-band sonorities and styles infuse the very orchestral fabric of some of these operas. Verdi's bandmaster experience in the squares, however, was not put to use in the theaters capriciously. Rather, Verdi explored stage bands as a means to underscore acoustically and scenically the ceremonial and militaristic ethos of his early-period plots. More controversial, perhaps, is the contention that this militaristic ethos was allegorical and political in nature, that it covertly reflected Verdi's activism against Austrian rule, and that stage bands, thus, integrated the composer's expressive Risorgimento apparatus.

Focusing attention on *Nabucco*, this paper aims to reassess Verdi's activism while expanding the opera's performance history along the way. I begin with the breakthrough identification of the band hired for *Nabucco*'s La Scala premiere in 1842 as an Austrian military ensemble. After discussing the general importance of the Austrian bands stationed in Lombardy-Veneto at the time, I turn to the specifics of *Nabucco*'s band. By examining first the instrumental make-up of this ensemble and then its role in disseminating *Nabucco* beyond the theaters, I illuminate the opera from both a performance practice and a transmission history perspective. I conclude that *Nabucco*'s band does not foreground Verdi as a composer channeling Risorgimento patriotism, but rather as one who was finely attuned to local tastes and performance circumstances.

## **SATURDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 12, 2013**

### **2:30-4:30 • Reception, National Identity, and Monuments**

Pierpaolo Polzonetti (University of Notre Dame), Chair

#### ***Simon Boccanegra* and the 1881 Milan Exposition**

Francesca Vella (King's College London)

Premiered at La Scala in March 1881, six weeks before the opening of Milan's Esposizione Industriale Nazionale, Verdi's revised *Simon Boccanegra* attracted suspiciously little coverage in Ricordi's *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*. Although Verdi's publishers released a supplement reprinting reviews from the daily papers, they did little to fashion the event in the nationalist terms that had characterized recent Verdi premieres. Moreover, critical discussion focused almost exclusively on musico-dramatic elements. The opera's reception suggests that *Boccanegra* did not match the spirit of the forthcoming Esposizione, meant to display Italy's progress and modernity. The reviews did, however, share one feature with accounts of the exhibition: a tendency to

figure the “new” through old-fashioned methods of analysis and representation. Indeed the past – whether represented by Verdi's 1857 music or by the relics on display alongside modern machinery at the Esposizione – was omnipresent.

Responses to Verdi's revised *Boccanegra* can illustrate some of the complex questions posed by Italy's project of late-19th-century modernization. The traditional view of a country obsessed with its own past has recently been revisited by historians calling for a more transnational, “progress-centered” perspective. Much contemporary Verdi criticism could also be re-read in these terms. Yet, as the case of *Boccanegra* and the Esposizione shows, Italy's route to modernization was obstructed by an uneasy relationship with its past. An increasingly reified national figure such as Verdi was both a useful and a problematic presence, continually requiring negotiations between contradictory attitudes to musical and historical development.

### **Asserting Identity, Defying Stereotypes: The Reception of Verdi's Operas in New York at the Height of Italian Migration to America (1908-1909)**

Daive Ceriani (Rowan University)

The New York Italian community took great pride in Giulio Gatti-Casazza's appointment as a general manager of the Metropolitan Opera House in 1908; this was the first time that an Italian would run a music institution financed by American patrons. The widespread assumption among music critics was that Gatti-Casazza would favor Italian opera over, for instance, the German or French repertoires. Even though Gatti-Casazza denied this possibility, the production of Italian operas—and particularly those of Verdi—provoked enthusiasm in Little Italy. I argue that in an era in which discrimination against Italians was commonplace in the United States, immigrants saw Italian opera as a means of social legitimization; in particular, Verdi's works as staged at the Met became a symbol of both ethnic pride and nostalgia for their lost motherland.

By using the reviews that appeared in the New York Italian-language newspapers—a source never used before for musicological research—I investigate the reception of some of the most important Verdi productions from the early seasons of Gatti-Casazza's management (*Aida*, *Rigoletto*, *Traviata*, *Il Trovatore*, *Falstaff*, *Otello*, etc.) In particular, I focus on the Italian community's identity issues as reflected in the reception of these performances, as well as the pride the community took in the Americans' interest in Verdi's operas. The reviews I introduce show both how Verdi's works bolstered the self-confidence of the Italian community, and how opera helped to combat the stereotypes American society attached to the Italians of New York.

### **1951 Verdi and the Cult of Posterity**

Harriet Boyd (King's College London)

The revival of Verdi's *Attila* at the Venice Biennale in 1951 marked a high point in a year of events to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the composer's death.

The performance of a long-neglected opera by the nation's favorite composer became a locus for the specific features of Verdian discussion that year. In particular, the opera formed part of a broader preoccupation with posterity, something that was a primary cultural concern of the immediate postwar period. *Attila* was co-opted into the debate on posterity in several ways. Prior to the performance, critics were quick to label the opera a future classic, despite few having heard it before. The performance thus required a particular kind of listening, one with this potential status in mind. In addition, the opera's complicated historical trajectory since its premiere made it an appropriate vehicle for historical stocktaking, a cultural phenomenon that saw historians and journalists rewriting the history of the Risorgimento in light of recent events.

Concomitantly, critics dubbed this the era of the "politicization" of Verdi. Finally, the Venetian commemoration was a media event, with both old and new technologies engaged in recording the proceedings for a future audience—something that stirred much anxiety in the musical press. In this paper, I excavate the ideological and historical stakes in this particular case study of Verdi commemoration, and suggest that opera—far from being sidelined in a rarefied realm of high culture—remained ever vital to contemporary Italian debates on history and nationhood, past and future.

### **Life Cycle: Celebrating Verdi at the Sarasota Opera**

Emily Richmond Pollock (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

The Sarasota Opera has made the works of Giuseppe Verdi a cornerstone of its artistic identity: Verdi's operas account for a quarter of all productions staged at the Sarasota Opera House over the last three decades. With its Verdi Cycle, the first efforts in which date back to 1989, the company has tackled Verdi's complete works in an ambitiously completist exercise that includes not only alternate versions of entire operas, but also supplementary concerts of choral works and aria variants. When the Cycle is completed, the company's website boasts, "Sarasota Opera will be the only company in the world to have performed every note of music Verdi ever wrote." In this paper, I concentrate on the performances that took place in Sarasota during the Verdi bicentennial season to demonstrate how self-consciously monumental events articulate a strategically specialized version of Verdi's legacy. I interpret these events as amplifications of the values of the Verdi Cycle, supplementing my position in the audience through close readings of reviews and marketing materials, as well as by conducting interviews with artists and administrators. I explore how powerful discourses of rarity, authenticity, and exactitude are used to position these performances as unmissable events, both in the long term (the cycle will reportedly end in 2016) and on the scale of a single occasion (the Bicentennial Concert). Such performances, then, contribute to a larger project, casting Verdi's works not merely as stalwart anchors of the standard repertoire, but as signal achievements worthy of extraordinary attention and commitment.

## **Un ballo in maschera**

David Rosen (Cornell University), Chair

### **Verdi's *Gustavo III* and the Critical Edition**

Andreas Giger (Louisiana State University)

Giuseppe Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* has a troubled and complex history. When Verdi submitted the libretto (then titled *Gustavo III* and set in Stockholm) to the censors in Naples, they rejected it twice. Verdi, willing to compromise after the first rejection (*Una vendetta in dominò*, set in Stettin) but not after the second one (*Adelia degli Adimari*, set in Florence), withdrew the opera and offered it—once again as *Gustavo III* and set in Stockholm—to Rome. But Rome, too, required a change of locale; under the title *Un ballo in maschera*, the opera was eventually set in Boston.

Due to its significant dramatic advantages, stage directors increasingly prefer the Swedish setting to the American one. Several solutions for such a version have been conceived, but none at the same time dramatically convincing, fully compatible with the music of *Un ballo in maschera*, and thus readily usable as an alternative reading in a critical edition. This paper proposes ways in which a hardly known existing version—one that largely draws on the Rome libretto of *Gustavo III* and the final version of the score—can be modified by limiting the recourse to the continuity draft or skeleton score of *Una vendetta in dominò / Gustavo III*. The proposed version not only offers a practical and dramatically powerful reading largely compatible with the music of *Un ballo in maschera*, it also uncovers a fairly egregious textual mistake in the existing edition of the opera.

### **Verdi's "Un Ballo in Maschera" through the Eyes of Two Contemporary Artists: Oskar Kokoschka and Arnaldo Pomodoro**

Maria Beatrice Giorio (University of Trieste)

Theater and Visual Arts have always worked closely together to promote, on the stage, an aesthetic experience in terms of a perfect union between Music, Painting, Sculpture and Architecture; the fascination of Verdi's works motivates, even today, the most important artists to realize the mise-en-scene. On the occasion of the international conference "Verdi's Third Century: Italian Operas Today," I aim especially to demonstrate how his music continues to inspire significant artistic creations in the contemporary world.

To this end, I will examine the original contribution of two of the major 20th-century artists to set and costume design for the opera *Un Ballo in Maschera*. In this masterpiece, Verdi mixed comic elements with a tragic dimension in such a perfect balance, to match the artistic vision of the expressionistic painter Oskar Kokoschka, inspiring his stage sets for the "Maggio Musicale Fiorentino" in 1963. I will particularly focus my attention on the correspondence between music, passions and Kokoschka's painting style, in order to discuss Verdi's present-day significance.

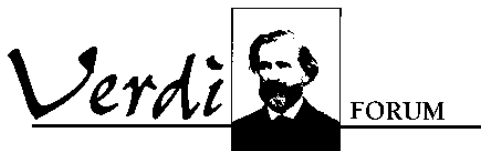
Most recently, the same melodrama encouraged the sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro to collaborate on the staging of the performance that took place at the Leipzig Opera in November 2005. According to his amazing interpretation, bronze carved panels were the only scenographic elements on



the stage. Nevertheless, this abstract solution perfectly embraced the Romantic conception of the opera, and its unusual minimalism acted like a sounding board, permitting Verdi's immortal music still to give "una voce alle speranze e ai luffi" [D'Annunzio].



# AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR VERDI STUDIES



## *A Forum for Verdi Scholarship*

Under the sponsorship of the American Institute for Verdi Studies at New York University, since its inception in 1976 the *Verdi Forum* (formerly the *Verdi Newsletter*) has published essays, documents, and conference proceedings, which have contributed meaningfully to the scholarly literature on Verdi. It also provided ephemeral news of forthcoming events and information of interest to members of the AIVS. Now the journal is a peer-reviewed, annual publication with editor Roberta Montemorra Marvin, associate editors Andreas Giger and Steven Huebner, and book review editor Denise Gallo. For more information on the American Institute for Verdi Studies and the *Verdi Forum*, including subscription and membership options, please visit [www.nyu.edu/projects/verdi](http://www.nyu.edu/projects/verdi)

### **Guidelines for Contributors**

The *Verdi Forum* invites the submission of articles on all aspects of music and culture related to the life and works of Giuseppe Verdi. The editors welcome not only traditional source, analytical, and performance practice studies but also interdisciplinary contributions. Submissions to *Verdi Forum* may be made electronically (by e-mail in a word-processing file readable by Microsoft Word for Windows) or in paper copy (three copies); if the proposed article contains musical examples, diagrams, or other visual material, these are to be sent in paper copies. Bibliographic citations should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. All submissions should include full contact information, including an e-mail address. The editors will also be happy to receive offers to review books, editions, and recordings of exceptional historic or aesthetic interest. Questions and submissions may be directed to the editor: Roberta Montemorra Marvin ([roberta-marvin@uiowa.edu](mailto:roberta-marvin@uiowa.edu)).





American Institute for Verdi Studies  
New York University  
Department of Music  
24 Waverly Place, Room 268  
New York, NY 10003  
[verdi.institute@nyu.edu](mailto:verdi.institute@nyu.edu)  
[www.nyu.edu/projects/verdi](http://www.nyu.edu/projects/verdi)