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VERDI AT 200: RECENT SCHOLARSHIP ON THE COMPOSER AND HIS WORKS

By Linda B. Fairtile

In December 2012 the Italian media were ablaze with outrage as the Teatro alla Scala inaugurated its new season with a performance of Lohengrin. Opening La Scala with a Wagner opera is nothing new: in 1898 Arturo Toscanini chose Die Meistersinger to begin his tenure as music director there. In the recent case, however, the timing struck many as a deliberate slight. Although both Verdi and Wagner were born in 1813, on the eve of their shared bicentennial Italy’s most prestigious opera house selected the German for the honor of an opening night. Certainly, politics played a part in the Italian press’s reaction. With the struggling economy forced to look northward for support, any whiff of German advantage was bound to rankle.

Verdi and Wagner—as men, as composers, and as cultural figures—have been linked as yin and yang at least since the 1860s. Each played a role in his country’s struggle for nationhood and each became the standard bearer for its musical tradition. Recently, cultural historian Peter Conrad profiled both composers in a thick monograph called Verdi and/or Wagner.1 Conrad’s title invites readers to compare and choose between the twin subjects of his study; the latter is, of course, easy for some and impossible for others. While Verdi’s generosity and relative humility elevate him as a man, and Wagner’s all-consuming ego and posthumous association with Nazism forever debase him as a cultural icon, Conrad nonetheless seems to give the nod to the German, whose music and thought aspire to the cosmic, and not simply the human.

Musicology’s Teutonic origins guaranteed that the academy would not easily accept Verdi on his own merits. As is well known, Verdi scholarship gained momentum in the 1960s, after the founding of the Istituto (now, Istituto nazionale) di studi verdiani (INSV) in Parma, Italy. By amassing an archive of primary source materials, publishing books and journals,
and sponsoring exhibits and scholarly events, the INSV led the effort to recognize Verdi as a serious composer. In the next decade, the American Institute for Verdi Studies (AIVS) followed suit. Established at New York University, the AIVS assembled a vast microfilm archive of correspondence and performance materials, while also emulating Parma in publishing and promoting new scholarship.

Recent years have witnessed the passing of three giants who helped lay the foundations of modern Verdi studies: Julian Budden (1924–2007), who wrote the definitive historical-analytical study, *The Operas of Verdi*; Harold Powers (1928–2007), a pioneer in exploring Verdi’s adaptations of operatic convention; and Pierluigi Petrobelli (1932–2012), the insightful and prolific president of the INSV. Other prominent writers on Verdi who have died in recent years include Francesco Degrada (1940–2005) and Wolfgang Osthoff (1927–2008). Mary Jane Phillips-Matz (1926–2013), author of the monumental *Verdi: A Biography*, and one of the founders of the American Institute for Verdi Studies, departed early in the year of the composer’s bicentenary.

Publications resulting from the centennial commemorations of Verdi’s death in 2001, as well as the burgeoning interest in opera studies in general, guarantee that a bibliography of recent Verdi-themed scholarship would easily reach several hundred entries. Thus the present article is, of necessity, a selective look at some recent trends and popular topics over the past decade. Readers desiring a more comprehensive account of Verdi studies through the end of 2010 should consult Gregory Harwood’s *Giuseppe Verdi: A Research and Information Guide*, now in its second edition.² Other commentators who have reflected on recent directions in Verdi scholarship include Roberta Montemorra Marvin,³ as well as Roger Parker and Mary Ann Smart.⁴

**CONFERENCES**

After irregularly scheduled activity in the 1960–90s, Verdi conferences now seem to cluster around important anniversaries. The centennial of the composer’s death, commemorated in 2001, inspired close to a dozen such gatherings. The largest by far was “Verdi 2001,” jointly sponsored by the Istituto nazionale di studi verdiани, the American Institute for Verdi Studies, and Yale University. This two-week megaconference, held consec-

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utively in Parma, New York City, and New Haven, produced a two-volume set of conference proceedings whose thirty-three papers and seven roundtable discussions have been ably characterized by Gregory Harwood. Among the many themes explored at this gathering were Verdi’s cultural impact in Italy and beyond, the performance of his works in his own time and today, and reflections on his late style.

Additional conferences held in 2001 include “Primal Scenes: Staging and Interpreting Verdi’s Operas,” at the University of California at Berkeley; “La drammaturgia verdiana e le letterature europee,” at the Accademia nazionale dei lincei in Rome; “Verdi e la cultura tedesca, la cultura tedesca e Verdi,” at the Villa Vigoni in Como; “Verdi, l’Europe, et la France,” at the Opéra national du Rhin, Strasbourg; “The Century of Victoria and Verdi: the 21st Annual Nineteenth-Century Studies Association Conference,” held in Roanoke, Virginia; and “Verdi e o mundo operático do século XIX” (Verdi and the Operatic World in the 19th Century), at the Teatro nacional de S. Carlos in Lisbon.

To celebrate the 200th anniversary of Verdi’s birth in 2013, it appears that far fewer large-scale conferences are planned: only “Verdi’s Third Century: Italian Opera Today,” sponsored by the American Institute for Verdi Studies and New York University (New York City), and a shared program titled “The Staging of Verdi and Wagner Operas,” sponsored by the Centro Studi opera omnia Luigi Boccherini (Pistoia, Italy), have been announced through the customary channels.

**BIOGRAPHY**

Recent biographical studies have tended to focus on two areas in particular: Verdi’s fiscal activity and his relationship with Giuseppina Strepponi, the singer who would become his second wife. Concerning the former, the economist Paolo Panico analyzes Verdi’s commercial dealings, from his earliest employment contracts through his agreements with theaters

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and publishers, while also addressing his contribution to the evolving concept of authors’ rights. Pierluigi Petrobelli\(^\text{12}\) explores what Verdi did with his earnings, proposing that his exceptional generosity towards people in need grew from the same social conscience that animates his operas.

While Verdi earns praise as both a businessman and a philanthropist, studies of his romantic life reveal inevitable human failings. Leo Karl Gerhartz\(^\text{13}\) explores the nexus between art and (auto)biography in *La traviata*, tracing the exceptional centrality of Violetta’s private drama to the socially unacceptable relationship between the then unmarried Verdi and Giuseppina Strepponi. Marcello Conati,\(^\text{14}\) too, focuses on Strepponi, reviewing her brief singing career and attendant personal misfortunes, as well as her sometimes unhappy, yet ultimately fulfilling life with Verdi.

Verdi’s educational experiences have also become a popular topic of investigation. Roberta Marvin’s monograph\(^\text{15}\) presents a detailed study of the materials and methods employed in his own musical studies, as well as in his interactions with his sole pupil, Emanuele Muzio. Both Marvin and Andrea Avanzini\(^\text{16}\) also examine Verdi’s role as leader of a commission charged with overhauling the curriculum of Italian music conservatories.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Verdi was a prolific and candid correspondent. Collections of his letters began appearing in print mere months after his death in 1901,\(^\text{17}\) and the publication of previously unavailable correspondence continues unabated. A recent volume of 102 letters drawn from a private Swiss collec-


\(^{17}\) The largest of these early collections of correspondence are Gaetano Cesari and Alessandro Luzio, eds., *I copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Milan: Commissione esecutiva per le onoranze a Giuseppe Verdi, 1913; reprinted, Bologna: Forni, 1968), published to commemorate the 100th anniversary of his birth; and the four-volume Alessandro Luzio, ed., *Carteggi verdi*, Reale accademia d’Italia, Studi e documenti, 4 (Rome: Reale accademia d’Italia, 1935–47). Neither of these editions can be considered authoritative in any sense, since both contain countless inaccuracies and arbitrary cuts.
tion addresses a variety of subjects, including performers and performance practice, plans for unrealized works, the current state of Italian opera, and Verdi’s final wishes concerning his estate. Seventy of Verdi’s letters to the contessa Clarina Maffei document the nearly fifty-year friendship between Verdi and this sponsor of perhaps the most stimulating artistic salon in Milan.

Within the past decade, the Istituto nazionale di studi verdiani has issued three volumes in its Edizione critica dell’epistolario verdiano: the Carteggio Verdi-Somma (edited by Simonetta Ricciardi) in 2003; the Carteggio Verdi-Luccardi (edited by Laura Genesio) in 2008; and the Carteggio Verdi-Ricordi 1886–1888 (edited by Angelo Pompilio and Madina Ricordi) in 2010. Marco Marica considers the difficulty of creating a hypothetical critical edition of the correspondence between Verdi and his most accommodating collaborator, Francesco Maria Piave, due, most notably, to the wide dispersal of the composer’s letters. Ten Verdi letters, most of them previously unpublished, appear in an appendix to Marica’s essay.

DOCUMENTARY MATERIALS

Over the past decade the Ricordi publishing house, Verdi’s own publisher, has issued a number of primary source materials related to his works. In 2002 they produced a deluxe facsimile of the Otello autograph score, together with a selection of costume and set designs, sketches of props, and other documentary materials. In the same year, Ricordi issued a critical edition of the disposizione scenica (staging manual) for Un ballo in maschera as it was produced at Rome’s Teatro Apollo in 1859, together with set and costume designs, and essays on the history of the manual and its relationship to the La Scala production of 1862.

Recent volumes in The Works of Giuseppe Verdi, the critical edition of scores that Ricordi publishes jointly with the University of Chicago Press, include Stiffelio (edited by Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell, 2003), Macbeth (edited by David Lawton, 2006), the Inno popolare and Inno delle nazioni (edited by Roberta Montemorra Marvin, 2007), Giovanna d’Arco (edited by Alberto Rizzuti, 2009), instrumental chamber music (edited by Gundula

Kreuzer, 2011), and Attila (edited by Helen M. Greenwald, 2013). Recently issued vocal scores in the critical edition are Il trovatore (2002), Il corsaro (2003), Luisa Miller and I masnadieri (2004), Stiffelio and Macbeth (2007), and the two Inni (2009). In advance of his forthcoming edition of I due Foscari, Andreas Giger discusses two little-known documents that have informed his work on that opera: an anonymous prose scenario and a copyist’s score with heretofore unrecognized revisions by the composer.22

While most of the documentary materials issued in recent years have come from Ricordi, in 2008 Praesens Verlag published a German translation of letters and other documents related to Simon Boccanegra.23 This volume also includes Antonio García Gutiérrez’s play, Simón Bocanegra, in the original Spanish; the prose scenario that Verdi made from it; and a detailed reception history of both versions of the opera.

VERDI’S OPERAS AND THEIR LITERARY SOURCES

Over his long career, Verdi cast a comparatively wide net in his search for operatic subjects, with Italian sources inspiring fewer of his librettos than German, English, Spanish, and especially French works. Scholarship concerning Verdi’s literary sources and his methods of adapting them for the lyric stage has recently favored German drama, thanks in large part to two collections of essays.24

Unable to read the German language, Verdi acquired knowledge of its literature from a variety of sources. Pierluigi Petrobelli examines the role that Germaine de Staël’s De l’Allemagne played in acquainting Verdi with the works of Friedrich Schiller,25 while Daniela Goldin Folena traces the influence of the poet and critic August Wilhelm Schlegel on both Madame de Staël, whose salon he frequented, and on Verdi, who likely read his commentaries included in the standard Italian translation of Shakespeare.26

Verdi’s operas based on Schiller’s dramas—Giovanna d’Arco (1845), I masnadieri (1847), Luisa Miller (1849), part of La forza del destino (1862), and Don Carlos (1867)—have increasingly captured scholarly attention. Dieter Borchmeyer27 and Gilles de Van28 each discover parallels between

the dramaturgy of Schiller and of Verdi, with de Van focusing on familial tensions resulting from the conflict between public duty and private happiness. According to de Van, Salvatore Cammarano transformed Schiller’s *Kabale und Liebe* into a libretto for *Luisa Miller* by softening depictions of the heroine and her father and moving them from a bourgeois to a semirural setting. The resulting mix of political conflict and French-style melodrama produced an *opera semi-seria*. Marcello Conati remarks that in *Luisa Miller* Verdi emphasizes personal and familial tragedy at the expense of Schiller’s social criticism; interestingly, Annamária Szilágyi makes a similar observation about the relationship between *Il trovatore* (written only four years later) and its literary source, Antonio García Gutiérrez’s *El trovador*.

Verdi’s transformation of Schiller’s *Die Jungfrau von Orléans* into *Giovanna d’Arco* is the subject of several recent studies. Maria Nadia Bitante highlights differences between the two works, especially as the opera de-emphasizes the original drama’s pastoral and miraculous features in order to appeal to a Risorgimental audience. Cristina Ricca compares the two title characters, observing that Schiller’s heroine is fundamentally a warrior, while Verdi’s is, above all, a loving woman. Mercedes Viale Ferrero’s generously illustrated essays compare earlier operatic and balletic adaptations of Schiller’s drama to Verdi’s opera, concluding that despite significant divergences, each demonstrates an exceptionally effective scenic vision that is epitomized by the coronation scene.

Verdi based five operas on the works of English playwrights, Lord Byron and William Shakespeare. The composer’s admiration for Shakespeare is well known, and his settings of the Bard’s plays are among his most esteemed works. As a result, the Shakespearean operas that Verdi did not write have long fascinated scholars. In a sprawling essay Christian Springer addresses differences in characterization and tone between *Macbeth*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff* and the plays that inspired them, before concentrating on Verdi’s three unrealized Shakespeare projects, *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, and *King Lear*. Giorgio Melchiori compares the aesthetic position of Italian

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32. Maria Nadia Bitante, “*Die Jungfrau von Orleans* di Schiller e Giovanna d’Arco di Solera e Verdi,” in *Verdi und die deutsche Literatur*, 55–68.


opera in the early 1800s to that of drama in Elizabethan times, noting that Verdi’s affinity for Shakespeare depended to a large extent on the ability of his librettist: hence the extraordinary success of Otello and Falstaff and the nonexistence of King Lear.\(^{36}\) In a twist on the customary use of correspondence to document compositional process, Philip Gossett cites the indifferent tone of Verdi’s letters to Antonio Somma to confirm that no music was ever composed for the latter’s King Lear libretto.\(^{37}\)

Scholars with training in both music and English literature are frequently drawn to Verdi’s Shakespeare operas. Christoph Clausen’s monograph approaches Macbeth from the dual perspectives of Shakespeare criticism and musicology, exploring both play and opera in their own contexts before confronting the meanings that are shared by both.\(^{38}\) Witchcraft and politics are at the center of this challenging study.

Although nearly half of Verdi’s operas are based on French sources, recent studies of the adaptation process focus on two dramas. Alessandro Di Profio considers Ernani’s French premiere, under the title Il proscritto, in light of the scandalous reception accorded its literary source, Victor Hugo’s Hernani.\(^{39}\) While Di Profio contrasts the aesthetics of drame romantique with those of Italian opera, Damien Colas, inspired by a later review that described Hernani in musical terms, discovers “operatic” traits that link the play to Il proscritto.\(^{40}\) Addressing Verdi’s adaptation of Alexandre Dumas fils’ La Dame aux camélias, Roger Parker asks how La traviata, as a work of music, might be perceived as sharing meaningful aesthetic qualities with the realistic drama that inspired it.\(^{41}\)

**TEXT AND LIBRETTO STUDIES**

Studies that focus on the texts of Verdi’s operas—aspects of their creation or their particular use of language—have been numerous in the past decade. Owing to the interrelationship of textual and musical forms in nineteenth-century Italian opera, the crafting of a libretto became, in a

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38. Christoph Clausen, Macbeth Multiplied: Negotiating Historical and Medial Difference Between Shakespeare and Verdi, Internationale Forschungen zur allgemeinen und vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft, 95 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005).


sense, the first step in composition. Alessandro Roccatagliati investigates Verdi’s involvement in the creation of his librettos, both by influencing the choice of a subject and the formation of dramatic and poetic structures, and by cultivating a variety of working relationships with his collaborators. Vittorio Coletti examines the high-flown language that is typical of Verdian librettos, arguing that its archaic quality suits the outdated plots and extreme emotions, and encourages text and music to be synchronized with stylized gestures. In light of the composer’s active participation in fashioning his texts, Michel Beretti defends Verdi’s librettists, and Francesco Maria Piave in particular, against charges that their efforts were unworthy of his musical settings. Owing to his relative inexperience, Piave was often the target of criticism, even from Verdi. After examining the powerful tone and unusual poetic structures in Temistocle Solera’s incomplete libretto for Attila, Francesco Izzo details his angry response to the conclusion supplied by Piave.

A number of scholars have recently considered the libretto for I masnadieri, written by Verdi’s friend, the poet and translator Andrea Maffei. Roberta Montemorra Marvin analyzes their sparsely documented collaboration, and especially Maffei’s responsibility for the failure of a work that he seems to have looked down upon. Birgit Schmidt compares corresponding scenes in I masnadieri and its literary source, Schiller’s Die Räuber, in order to illuminate Maffei’s efforts to craft a libretto from the idiosyncratically constructed drama.

Analyses of nineteenth-century librettos benefit from a broad familiarity with literature. Pierluigi Petrobelli identifies numerous passages in Antonio Ghislanzoni’s libretto for Aida that strongly resemble phrases or situations in spoken tragedies by the Duke of Ventignano.

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49. Pierluigi Petrobelli, “Altri modelli linguistici per il libretto di Aida,” in “Finché non splende in ciel notturna face”: Studi in memoria di Francesco Degrada, ed. Cesare Fertonani, et al., 299–305 (Milan: LED,
other Verdian librettos are similarly full of literary allusions that scholars are only now beginning to grasp. One author who meets that challenge is the classical scholar Michele Curnis, who traces literary allusions in Antonio Somma’s libretto for *Un ballo in maschera* to works by Dante and by Virgil.\(^{50}\) Not surprisingly, many of these bizarre references are related to the character of the sorceress, Ulrica. In a similar vein, Denise Gallo studies the Italian and French translations of Shakespeare that left their mark on Boito’s *Falstaff* libretto.\(^{51}\) Each of these sources offers an outline of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* featuring dramatic improvements that have long been credited to Boito.

Verdi’s operas composed for the Parisian stage contain a number of stylistic features, such as a five-act structure and prominent ballet, that catered to French tastes. Perhaps more significant in the long run is the effect that setting French texts had on Verdi’s compositional development. Andreas Giger’s work illuminates stylistic differences between the vocal melodies in his French and Italian operas.\(^{52}\) Giger studied versification treatises, as well as Verdi’s musical settings, to determine how he assimilated the irregular line lengths and accent patterns of French poetic texts into melodies with regular phrase lengths. To a similar end, Kitti Messina compares Auber’s *Gustave III* to Verdi’s *Un ballo in maschera*, analyzing the metric choices made by Scribe and Somma, respectively, in order to detect the influence of French textual structures on Verdi’s Italian operas.\(^{53}\)

### COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS AND REVISION

Verdi’s compositional method, from preliminary sketching to post-performance revision, has been well documented, and has even inspired its own vocabulary. In recent years, scholars have addressed every step of the process. Alberto Rizzuti draws on Verdi’s newly published sketches for *La traviata* to illustrate how appearances of the “Di quell’amor” melody coincide with structurally significant positions in the opera, although it no longer appears in the Preludio, thanks to a shift in dramatic emphasis.\(^{54}\)

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\(^{50}\) Michele Curnis, “‘Salamandre ignivore . . . orme di passi’: Sul libretto di *Un ballo in maschera*,” *Studi verdiani* 17 (2003): 166–92.


Philip Gossett focuses on Verdi’s skeleton score (the initial layer of the full score, consisting of the bass line, vocal parts, and sporadic instrumental solos) for *Una vendetta in dominò*, a heavily censored precursor of *Un ballo in maschera*. He describes the work’s tortured genesis and reveals that the “lost” *Una vendetta* can be largely reconstructed from the Ballo autograph. In a later publication, Gossett corrects the mischaracterization of skeleton score fragments related to *I due Foscari* and to *Attila*. Fabrizio Della Seta explores Verdi’s compositional process in *Il trovatore*, which seems to have been drafted in a less continuous manner than the much-studied *Rigoletto*. Focusing on the same period, Roger Parker recounts the overlapping compositional histories of *Il trovatore* and *La traviata*, identifying one passage in each opera where the other seemingly intrudes. Such uncanny correspondences, he writes, suggest that musical creation may be a less controllable act than scholars would like to believe.

Recent studies of Verdi’s revision practices tend to focus on his French operas. Arrigo Quattrocchi examines the speedy transformation of *I Lombardi* into *Jérusalem*, as Verdi, his librettists, and the management of the Paris Opéra adapted the Italian work to the conventions of grand opera. Roger Parker uses the heavily revised scene for Philippe and Posa, from act 2 of *Don Carlos*, as a catalyst to consider the act of revision: is the resulting mixture of musical styles disruptive or does it serve to renew an older work? Looking at the same passage, Peter Cahn compares Verdi’s difficulties with the scene to Schiller’s, arguing that this confrontation, in successively less conventional guises, represents the dramatic heart of the story. Giuseppe Pintorno offers close readings of texts from Verdi’s operas that exist in multiple versions, whether due to adaptation for the

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Paris Opéra or self-motivated revision. The resulting changes in characterization and dramatic emphasis do not always represent improvements. Verdi’s revisions to his Italian-texted operas have also drawn attention. Emanuele Senici compares the original and two alternate versions of Foresto’s romanza from the third act of Attila. Verdi composed the substitute arias for two different tenors, and each of the three versions employs a different rhetorical strategy. Jürgen Schläder compares the conclusions of Macbeth in the original 1847 setting, which emphasizes the title character’s personal downfall, and the 1865 revision, which, like Shakespeare’s original, focuses on the triumphant restoration of the old order.

ANALYSIS AND THE USES OF CONVENTION

For much of the last century, Verdi’s output was typically judged (and found deficient) in accordance with Germanic standards of unity and organic development. Analysis of his operas based on their relationship to distinctly Italian operatic convention—la solita forma—peaked in the late 1980s, but examples can still be found today. Daniele Carnini groups Verdi’s varied uses of the concertato (an ensemble reaction to the revelation of key dramatic details) into categories that depend on the presence of individualized responses and on the type of musical textures and structures employed. Paolo Russo describes an unconventional use of the coda in Ernani: since recitatives are minimal in this opera, key plot details are sometimes revealed in “static” musical numbers, and emotional reactions are postponed to the final, tonally inert measures.

Convention influenced Verdi’s choices not only in the musical sense, but also with regard to dramatic expression, and several recent studies consider his employment of common dramatic tropes. Claudio Toscani considers Verdi’s use of the racconto, a musically distinct passage in which dramatic time is suspended while a character narrates a past event, dream, or premonition. Acknowledging the somewhat checkered critical reaction to operatic curses, Gary Tomlinson identifies the curse in Simon Boccanegra’s council chamber scene as a particularly effective moment of
dramatic, musical, and visual convergence.\textsuperscript{69} Shiamin Kwa investigates the tropes of the joke, the curse, and the vow of love in \textit{Rigoletto}, concluding that the opera’s tragic conclusion grows from incompatible conceptions of words and their meaning.\textsuperscript{70} The representation of verbal deception is the theme of David Rosen’s study, which examines numerous scenes to determine whether Verdi’s music “lies” along with the characters, or reveals their falsehood.\textsuperscript{71}

Today, scholars apply a variety of analytical approaches, sometimes building on the notion of convention. In a penetrating study of Verdi’s late style, Antonio Rostagno interprets the melting away of conventional forms in \textit{Otello} as a symbol of both the title character’s crumbling reality and the disillusioned Italian nation’s abandonment of its Risorgimental ideals.\textsuperscript{72} Paolo Gallarati accepts the usefulness of measuring Verdi’s closed numbers against conventional models, but he also advocates for what he calls “rationalist-deductive” and “realistic-inductive” methods of analysis.\textsuperscript{73}

Another common analytical method focuses on melodies or musical motives. Friedrich Lippmann uses Bellini’s famously long melodic structures as a point of comparison for Verdi’s, observing that the latter employs extended melodies as psychological portraits of his suffering heroines.\textsuperscript{74} Anselm Gerhard applies melodic analysis to arias and duets from several of Verdi’s later operas, noting significant distinctions between Italian- and French-texted works, in order to uncover correspondences of characterization and situation.\textsuperscript{75} In her revised doctoral dissertation, Ingrid Czaika contrasts Verdi’s use of recurring musical motives in his first sixteen operas with analogous techniques employed by Meyerbeer and by Wagner.\textsuperscript{76} Julian Budden discusses the \textit{tinta}—the collection of musical elements that gives each opera its characteristic sound—that Verdi devised for \textit{Don Carlos}, exemplified by an expressive four-note melodic figure.\textsuperscript{77}

Drawing on recent analytical models, William Rothstein examines the


\textsuperscript{74} Friedrich Lippmann, “Verdi und die ‘melodia lunga lunga lunga,’” \textit{Studi verdiani} 17 (2003): 11–69.


\textsuperscript{76} Ingrid Czaika, \textit{Frühe Verdi-Motivik: Charakterisierungsmethoden in den frühen Opern von Oberto bis \textit{Rigoletto}, Musikwissenschaft}, 10 (Wien; Münster: Lit Verlag, 2006).

musical and dramatic significance of particular pitches, motivic gestures, and tonalities in the original version of La forza del destino.\(^{78}\)

Meter and tempo have also been considered as structural markers in Verdi’s works. David Rosen asks whether the web of tempo relationships found in his operas beginning with Attila (the first to include metronome markings) has structural or semantic significance.\(^{79}\) William Rothstein observes that the particular interaction of verse meter and musical meter in nineteenth-century Italian opera renders it resistant to the metrical theories of Fred Lehrdahl and Ray Jackendoff, which are inherently configured for German music.\(^{80}\) Thus, Rothstein concludes, expressions of musical meter are culturally dependent.

**DRAMATIC THEMES**

Verdi was one of the first operatic composers to explore psychological themes such as dreams and interiority, often in conjunction with the supernatural. Perhaps not surprisingly, Macbeth is the opera that is most frequently associated with fantasy and abnormal psychology. Jane Bernstein\(^{81}\) and Daniel Albright\(^{82}\) both find that Verdi bent the conventions of Italian opera in order to depict fantastical elements such as the weirdness of Shakespeare’s witches and the diabolically transgressive nature of Lady Macbeth. In her study of the act I duet for Macbeth and his wife, Elizabeth Hudson traces Verdi’s melding of exterior and interior worlds to reflect the characters’ altered mental states.\(^{83}\) David J. Levin instead maintains that Macbeth’s depictions of interiority seem strangely empty, leaving the externally active protagonists with a hollow core that reflects their personal mediocrity; Levin believes that Pamela Rosenberg’s intention to portray this dichotomy led the San Francisco Opera to cancel her 2004 production of the opera.\(^{84}\)

Interiority is also a common theme in studies of Verdi’s other operas. Carlos Maria Solare explores musical portrayals of interiority in the form of dreams depicted or described in I Lombardi, Giovanna d’Arco, and

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Attila. Melina Esse examines arias from Il corsaro and Un ballo in maschera that pair intense interior struggle with disembodied, instrumental “weeping,” to strikingly different dramatic effect. Alessandra Campana brings a similar association to Simon Boccanegra, likening this opera’s abundant narratives to ghosts mediating between the present and a sometimes idealized past.

GENDER ISSUES

Like other opera composers, Verdi has undergone considerable scrutiny for his treatment of female characters, though the topic seems less prevalent in recent years. Joseph Kerman observes that in the six stage works written between 1849 and 1853 (La battaglia di Legnano, Luisa Miller, Stiffelio, Rigoletto, Il trovatore, and La traviata), Verdi punishes his heroines for their sexual transgressions, perhaps subconsciously expiating his new romantic relationship with the “fallen” Giusepina Strepponi. Jürgen Schläder explores a theme that begins to emerge in Verdi’s operas of this period: trapped between propriety and personal happiness, a woman dies believing—in vain, it turns out—that her demise will benefit the man she leaves behind.

The transgression of gender stereotypes is the subject of Heather Hadlock’s study of Il corsaro, in which a female hero violently frees herself and the opera’s unexpectedly passive male protagonist from captivity. Exploring Verdi’s penultimate opera, Otello, Scott L. Balthazar identifies two sides of Desdemona’s personality, observing that while her “girlish” demeanor calms her enraged husband, expressing her womanly and sensual nature only serves to fuel his fatal jealousy.

The study of male characters and operatic masculinity is gaining in popularity. Addressing this theme in its broadest sense, Susan Rutherford identifies Verdi’s use of dramatic conflict, with music that agitates, disturbs,
and provokes the audience, as part of a new aural code of virility in a developing bourgeois society.\textsuperscript{92} In many studies the male characters defy stereotypes and gender-based expectations. In a brief yet dense monograph, David A. J. Richards draws on the gender theories of Carol Gilligan to explain how Verdi’s male characters navigate the troubled space between patriarchal authority and democratic expression.\textsuperscript{93} Jürgen Schläder tackles the representation of heroes in Verdi’s late operas, arguing that Desdemona’s murder represents a moment of psychological transformation for Otello, since her death brings him clarity and restores his love.\textsuperscript{94} This new type of Verdian hero, capable of reflecting on the final catastrophe, first emerged in \textit{Aida}, and might have been influenced by Wagner’s \textit{Tannhäuser} and \textit{Lohengrin}.

Other authors focus on individual operas and the restrictive conditions that society imposes on their male protagonists. Noting that Verdi was pressured to cast Ernani as a mezzo-soprano \textit{en travesti}, Rosa Solinas considers his indulgent, diva-like personality and waver ing sense of self.\textsuperscript{95} Ralph Hexter relates the story of Sweden’s King Gustaf III and his fictitious representations, inspirations for the male protagonist in \textit{Un ballo in maschera}, revealing his partially masked homosexuality.\textsuperscript{96} David Rosen explores how Posa’s death motivates the emotionally paralyzed Don Carlos, as text and music convey his new sense of self-discipline and purpose.\textsuperscript{97}

Two recent studies address gender issues in novel ways. Luca Serianni offers a lexicon of key terms and phrases common to Italian opera librettos, which Verdi applies differently depending on the character’s gender.\textsuperscript{98} Emanuele Senici’s close reading of the Riccardo/Amelia duet in \textit{Un ballo in maschera} relates it to other operatic seduction scenes and notes the lovers’ penchant for role reversal.\textsuperscript{99}

\textbf{STUDIES OF INDIVIDUAL OPERAS}

While each of Verdi’s operas has been the object of study over the past decade, three works have clearly captured the scholarly imagination: \textit{Don

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  \item \textsuperscript{92} Susan Rutherford, “‘Il grido dell’anima’ or Un modo di sentire: Verdi, Masculinity and the Risorgimento,” \textit{Studi verdiiani} 19 (2005): 107–21.
  \item \textsuperscript{93} David A. J. Richards, \textit{Tragic Manhood and Democracy: Verdi’s Voice and the Power of Musical Art} (Brighton, UK; Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2004).
  \item \textsuperscript{95} Rosa Solinas, “Ernani: The Tenor in Crisis,” in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Verdi}, 185–96.
\end{itemize}
Carlos for its grand opéra conventions, melancholy atmosphere, and convoluted revision history; Aida for its exoticism and complex layers of race and nationhood; and Falstaff for its genre-bending modernity and status as Verdi’s final opera. Gloria Staffieri calls Don Carlos, based on the tragedy by Friedrich Schiller, “perhaps the most elusive and enigmatic” of Verdi’s operas. She examines its genesis and repeated revision, concluding that Verdi’s intense preoccupation with the libretto exposes him as its real author, and proposing that his use of “double action” is derived from Victor Hugo’s analysis of Shakespeare’s works. Udo Bermbach also explores this opera’s compositional history, blaming its initial failure on its pervasive tone of resignation and inaction. David J. Levin surveys the different versions of Don Carlos, proposing a hybrid that combines the Paris and Modena versions. He offers an interpretation of plot, characterization, relationships, and musical details that would influence the staging and interpretation of the work. The opera’s conclusion is the subject of Adriano Cavicchi’s study, in which he argues in favor of the original, supernatural ending on the grounds that Verdi believed it would compensate for the lack of spectacle in Schiller’s drama.

The characters in Don Carlos have been discussed by several authors. According to Uwe Schweikert, each lives in the shadow of death, either literally or through the language that they choose to describe their struggles. The tragic Elisabeth of Valois is the subject of Daniela Goldin Folena’s study, which draws on historical depictions, Schiller’s drama, and the two scenarios prepared for Verdi’s use, as well as the opera itself. Jens Malte Fischer examines dramatically parallel confrontations involving church and state, in which two characters discuss an absent third party.

Edward Said famously dismissed Aida as an orientalist fantasy, but scholars continue to debate its elaborate cultural intersections. Christopher R. Gauthier and Jennifer McFarlane-Harris view the opera’s 1871 premiere from the perspective of the Egyptian audience, who found themselves portrayed as the dominant power, with Ethiopians as the exploited...
Other.\textsuperscript{107} Ralph P. Locke investigates textual and musical symbols that, while not meeting the textbook definition of “exotic,” nonetheless convey the essence of imperial Egyptians and conquered Ethiopians, with the latter functioning as surrogates for Verdi’s own experience with colonial domination.\textsuperscript{108} In later studies Locke surveys a range of interpretations, from the literal to the metaphorical, that focus on \textit{Aida’s} portrayals of the conquerors and the conquered.\textsuperscript{109} Steven Huebner considers the ambiguous role played by patriotism, as reflected in Radames’s blind narcissism, \textit{Aida’s} agonizingly divided loyalty, and the work’s wider cultural significance.\textsuperscript{110}

Other aspects of \textit{Aida’s} music and text have also attracted attention. Gabriela Cruz offers a meditation on Verdi’s idiosyncratic use of the flute in this opera—as archeological remnant of a dead and decaying Egypt and a surrogate for the human throat—despite his disappointment at failing to obtain a redesigned, louder instrument.\textsuperscript{111} Anette Unger observes that death is ever-present in \textit{Aida}, in both intimate and spectacular settings, and the four protagonists experience it in a variety of guises.\textsuperscript{112} Katherine Bergeron focuses on the vision of a new political order as conveyed by \textit{Aida’s} spectacle and as embodied in the character of Radames.\textsuperscript{113}

Recent studies of \textit{Falstaff} focus on its unusual musical style and comedic genre, as well as its significance as Verdi’s last work for the stage. Helen M. Greenwald explores the threat that the prevailing emphasis on musical continuity represented for the genre of comic opera in the late nineteenth century,\textsuperscript{114} while Laura Basini interprets \textit{Falstaff’s} eclectic musical style in the context of post-unification culture.\textsuperscript{115} Finding an unlikely musical allusion to \textit{Parsifal}, Roger Parker considers whether Verdi’s final

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\textsuperscript{112} Anette Unger, “Der Liebestod als Weg ins Leben: Todesarten am Beispiel von Verdis Oper \textit{Aida},” in \textit{Die Wirklichkeit erfinden ist besser}, 234–42.


\textsuperscript{115} Laura Basini, “The Plays of Art are for a Playful Art: History, Puzzles, and Play in Verdi’s \textit{Falstaff},” \textit{University of Toronto Quarterly} 74, no. 2 (2005): 740–49.
\end{flushleft}
opera might be viewed not as a valedictory summation, but instead as a step towards modernity and fragmentation.\textsuperscript{116} Udo Bermbach also detects the intrusion of modernity as a foil to Sir John Falstaff’s private reality, but he interprets this as a variation on Verdi’s accustomed trope of conflict between personal and political spheres.\textsuperscript{117} Barbara Zuber briefly considers the musico-dramatic portrayals of each of \textit{Falstaff}’s main characters, locating the genius of Verdi’s autumnal masterpiece in its unusually varied vocal and orchestral palette.\textsuperscript{118} Manfred Osten discusses Boito’s assignment of particular text meters to characters and situations in \textit{Falstaff}, which Verdi sets to a flexible \textit{parlando} that enables every word to be clearly heard.\textsuperscript{119}

**PERFORMANCE ISSUES**

While scholarly interest in Verdi’s works has not abated, attention is increasingly being paid to vocal interpretation, staging, set design, dramaturgy, and visual communication. Christian Springer’s wide ranging essay covers many aspects of performance both during and beyond Verdi’s lifetime, applying the evidence of his scores, correspondence, and contemporary practice to such topics as ornamentation, the importance of the text, the “Verdi voice,” false traditions, scenic design, and conductors’ interpretations.\textsuperscript{120} Antonio Rostagno proposes that \textit{Aida} exemplifies the late-nineteenth-century trend to modify the role of the opera orchestra, by requiring increased instrumental forces, more variety of instrumental timbre, more advanced instrumental technique, and direction by a baton-wielding conductor.\textsuperscript{121} Alessandro Di Profio draws on iconography, correspondence, the testimony of contemporaries, and press accounts to profile Verdi’s conducting activity in Paris.\textsuperscript{122} His research sheds light on differences between French and Italian orchestra direction during the 1860s–70s while also charting the rise of the baton conductor in Europe during that period.

A few recent studies focus on vocal interpretation. Roger Freitas examines Verdi’s remarks about his preferred vocal style, noting that it often conflicts with the bel canto-based technique favored by most modern

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} Roger Parker, “In Search of Verdi.”
\item \textsuperscript{117} Udo Bermbach, “Private List und öffentlicher Hohn: Zur Figur von Verdis \textit{Falstaff},” in \textit{Opernsplitter}, 141–46.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Barbara Zuber, “Musik über Musik, Spiel im Spiel: Varianten musikalischer Komik in Verdis \textit{Falstaff},” in “Die Wirklichkeit erfunden ist besser,” 261–76.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Manfred Osten, “Personencharakteristik durch Versmetren: Verdis \textit{Falstaff} als Klangrede,” in “Die Wirklichkeit erfunden ist besser,” 253–60.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Antonio Rostagno, “\textit{Aida} e l’orchestra: Le prime esecuzioni, la partitura, le prassi esecutive,” \textit{Studi verdiani} 16 (2002): 265–92.
\end{itemize}
performers and pedagogues.123 Karen Henson examines the career of baritone Victor Maurel, whose acting skills and exaggerated, “modern” performing style may have influenced the creation of Otello.124 Performers themselves have also spoken out about their craft. Two celebrated singers, baritone Giuseppe Taddei125 and soprano Adriana Maliponte,126 give insight into their interpretations of key Verdi roles. Conductor Bruno Rigacci cites examples from several operas to argue that certain vocal traditions—principally, tempo distortions and interpolated high notes—undermine Verdi’s carefully crafted musical structures.127

Fabio Failla offers a profile of Giuseppe Cencetti, the librettist and stage designer who likely prepared the disposizione scenica (staging manual) for Un ballo in maschera.128 While it is generally accepted that the application of the disposizioni sceniche’s prescriptive contents is neither practical nor desirable on today’s stages, scholars have long appreciated their value as historical documents. Andreas Giger has found a new purpose for the Otello staging manual, uncovering visual parallels to that opera’s large-scale structures in the form of blocking and gestural instructions corresponding to formal divisions in the score.129

Two recent studies of Verdian stage design focus on operas set in exotic locations. Emilio Sala introduces Achille Befani Formis’s painting of a scene from Aida’s third act, which hung in Verdi’s home.130 Sala believes that the painting is more faithful to intentions expressed in the opera’s disposizione scenica than Girolamo Magnani’s set design for its Italian premiere. Davide Nadali discusses the sets of Nabucco performances from the 1840s and 1850s and their fanciful representations of ancient Babylon, with special focus on the work of Filippo Peroni.131 Peroni’s designs for Verdi are also the subject of a study by Olga Jesurum, perhaps the foremost scholar of set design in nineteenth-century Italian opera.132

addition, Jesurum recently authored an article concerning visual elements in historical performances of *Un ballo in maschera*.\(^{133}\)

The significance of lighting in Verdi’s operas is beginning to attract scholarly attention. Helen M. Greenwald’s study of the sunrise at the close of *Attila*’s prologue situates this visually inspired musical event in the tradition of Haydn’s *Creation*, Rossini’s *Guillaume Tell*, and Félicien David’s *Le Désert*, and in the theatrical context of optical entertainments in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.\(^{134}\) Anselm Gerhard also explores the theme of light in *Attila*, noting that Verdi translates many of the light and dark metaphors of its literary source, Zacharias Werner’s drama, into visual effects that carry political significance.\(^{135}\) Clemens Risi describes productions of Verdi’s operas by Hans Neuenfels and Peter Konwitschny, who each expand the performance space into the audience by keeping the house lights on and forcing the audience to confront its own role in the spectacle.\(^{136}\) Risi proposes that Verdi might not have disapproved of efforts to jolt spectators out of their accustomed passivity.

Now that the Metropolitan and other opera companies are broadcasting to movie theaters around the world, audience expectations will inevitably change. While high-definition video and close-up camera shots are a boon for savvy directors, there have been accusations that vocal quality has become a lower priority in casting decisions. If true, will this change in values affect opportunities for “Verdi voices” who do not conform to new visual standards? Will we see more—but not necessarily better—performances of operas, such as *La forza del destino*, which are notoriously difficult to cast with vocally appropriate singers? Scholars with an interest in performance will, no doubt, monitor these trends.

**RECEPTION STUDIES**

The public’s response to Verdi’s works and their embrace of him as a cultural symbol have become exceptionally fruitful areas of study. For Italians, Verdi has always been a potent figure, though the nature of his significance has not remained static. In recent decades scholars have increasingly questioned his identification as an icon of the Risorgimento.

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the creator of political art designed to whip audiences into a revolutionary frenzy, and instead have sought a more nuanced understanding of when and how he became a representation of Italian unity and patriotism. The work of Laura Basini, in particular, illuminates post-unification efforts to weave Verdi into the national narrative. Her study of his late-career sacred compositions illuminates the resolutely conservative role of the Catholic Church in the new Italian nation. Álessandra Avanzini also explores the roots of the “Verdi myth,” and argues for a more nuanced understanding of his political views in order to deepen his effectiveness as a pedagogical resource. Similarly, in his analysis of Italian history textbooks, Giovanni Genovesi finds that Verdi’s value as a patriotic symbol typically outweighs, and even distorts his efforts as a musician.

Of course, the perpetuation of the Verdi myth would not have been possible without the media’s participation. The contemporary reporting of Verdi’s death and its subsequent commemorations is the subject of Gavin Williams’s study. He links Italy’s mourning of Verdi to its response to King Umberto’s recent assassination, noting that both events inspired the public enacting of a unifying, ritualized silence. Ornella Calvano compares two biographical films, Divine armonie (1938), depicting Verdi as an almost superhuman exemplar of fascist ideals, and Giuseppe Verdi (1953), which attempts a more realistic, if melodramatic portrayal of the aged composer’s reminiscences.

With a clearer understanding of Verdi’s emergence as a republican icon in the post-unification period, scholars have been reconsidering conclusions about his so-called revolutionary works of earlier decades. Marveling at an unknown composer’s remarkable good fortune to have his first opera produced at La Scala, Anselm Gerhard investigates the young Verdi’s connections to Milanese nobility, including aristocratic journalists who may have given him favorable treatment. Mary Ann Smart explores the tension between Verdi’s place in the pantheon of Italian patriotic cul-

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tural figures and the more flexible and intimate political sentiments expressed in his works, with emphasis on his only explicitly Risorgimental opera, *La battaglia di Legnano*.\(^\text{144}\) Arguing that neither Verdi’s 1840s operas nor his audiences were inherently nationalistic, the sociologist Peter Stamatov explores the role played by “interpretive activists,” small groups of audience members who initiated politically motivated demonstrations at theatrical performances.\(^\text{145}\) Pushing back against revisionist claims, Douglas L. Ipson documents the highly charged political atmosphere surrounding the December 1847 performances of *Attila* in Rome.\(^\text{146}\) Addressing this same work, Carlotta Sorba sees Verdi’s interest in the subject of *Attila* as typical of a Risorgimental fascination with conquerors and conquered peoples.\(^\text{147}\)

Offering a new interpretation of revolutionary sentiments in Verdi’s operas, the political scientist Udo Bermbach equates them with the implicit values on which singers orient their actions.\(^\text{148}\) If Verdi’s identification as a symbol of the Risorgimento is now understood to be largely a post-unification development, politics in *Nabucco* nonetheless emerge as an existential struggle for survival. Comparing Verdi to Wagner, Bermbach observes that Verdi neither participated in revolutionary activity nor indulged in political theorizing.\(^\text{149}\) Rather, he was a pragmatist whose concept of theater was apolitical, but whose operas nonetheless engage with “everyday politics.”

A well known consequence of the volatile atmosphere in preunification Italy is Verdi’s battles with censorship. Recent research focuses on his conflicts with Rome, in particular. Both Andreas Giger\(^\text{150}\) and Dominik Höink\(^\text{151}\) examine rare manuscripts of censored librettos from Rome’s Archivio di Stato. Giger’s study concerns premiere performances of *Un ballo in maschera* and *La forza del destino* that bear the conscientious interventions of a police chief, an impresario, and a stage manager, acting in place of the ineffectual official censors. Francesco Izzo finds that context


\(^\text{149}\) Udo Bermbach, “‘Ich liebe die Politik nicht’: Verdi und Wagner—Ähnlichkeiten und Differenzen,” in *Opernsplitter*, 241–57.


often determined the outcome of a censor’s investigation and proposes that contradictory reactions to Marian references in two of Verdi’s operas were occasioned by the female characters associated with them, one embodying traditional womanly virtues, and the other aggressive and politically subversive.\textsuperscript{152} Marcello Conati offers examples from \textit{Macbeth} to demonstrate that the geographical location of a performance often determines whether religious or political censorship predominates.\textsuperscript{153} Similarly, David B. Rosen reports on several censored \textit{Ernani} librettos, most notably, a version prepared for the Papal States and used in southern Italian cities.\textsuperscript{154}

In addition to his place in Italy’s national narrative, Verdi also played an important role in European artistic life, portrayed by the press as everything from Wagner’s valiant foil to the more-or-less willing victim of his pervasive influence. In contrast to the universal popularity of Verdi’s works among ordinary operagoers, Antonio Baldassarre finds a range of responses from professional critics.\textsuperscript{155} French writers, impressed by middle-period works such as \textit{Luisa Miller} and \textit{Les Vêpres siciliennes}, embraced him as their own, while German critics found his early operas deficient in comparison to Mozart’s, but his later operas much improved thanks to Wagner’s perceived influence. Myriam Garcia surveys nineteenth-century Italian and French biographies of Verdi, noting that their accounts of his operas’ fortunes could be bent to the service of larger historical or stylistic (pro- or anti-Wagnerian) narratives.\textsuperscript{156} Christian Springer contrasts Verdi’s knowledge of and curiosity about Wagner’s works with Wagner’s dismissive attitude towards Verdi’s music, traces journalistic attempts to identify a Wagnerian influence in Verdi’s later scores, and compares the two composers’ home lives.\textsuperscript{157}

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Germans, too, have a complicated relationship with Verdi. Gundula Kreuzer’s recent monograph is a comprehensive study of the country-wide anxiety that resulted when Germany’s self-ascribed musical superiority bumped up against the undeniable popularity of Verdi’s operas; Kreuzer’s article on *Don Carlos* traces the German performance history of that work, from the 1920s to the present, in order to illuminate today’s *Regieoper* trends. More narrowly focused studies of German Verdi reception include Johannes Streicher’s spotlight on the nineteenth century, and two similarly titled studies of the Requiem’s fate in Germany, by Egon Voss and by Gundula Kreuzer. Josef-Horst Lederer also explores the Requiem’s reception, this time at its Viennese premiere. Like most studies of the Requiem, these three relate the work’s reception to questions about its genre.

The music critic Christian Springer examines some of the people, events, and reactions tied to Verdi’s two visits to the Austrian capital, to conduct *Nabucco* in 1843 and the Requiem in 1875, with additional material on Viennese productions of *Don Carlos* and *Otello*. Springer also offers a wealth of excerpts from the writings of Eduard Hanslick to illustrate his belief that the Austrian critic’s insultingly poor assessment of Verdi’s works was largely attributable to national prejudice. A more measured assessment emerges from Mathias Mayer’s survey of judgments about Verdi’s works made by prominent cultural figures in fin-de-siècle Vienna, suggesting that each appears to appreciate those aspects of the composer’s oeuvre that best reflect his individual aesthetics.

Several factors influenced Verdi’s generally positive reception in France, including his extended residence in Paris, his numerous conducting appearances there, and his willingness not only to adapt completed
scores such as *I Lombardi* and *Il trovatore* to the conventions of *grand opéra*, but also to compose new works in this genre. Marcello Conati surveys Verdi’s encounters with French culture, characterizing Paris as a locus of artistic and personal renewal, despite some frustrating dealings with theaters and journalists,167 while Roland Mancini traces Verdi’s experiences at the Opéra, culminating with the first performances of *Don Carlos* in 1867.168

More than any other foreign country, France made its mark on Verdi’s music. Gian Paolo Minardi looks at his transformations of *I Lombardi, Il trovatore, Aida,* and *Otello* into French-texted versions that conform to the conventions and dramaturgical values associated with the Paris Opéra.169 Andreas Giger investigates other French influences that may have guided Verdi toward an increased reliance on the chorus, the incorporation of dance, and more expressive instrumental accompaniments in his Italian operas.170 Dance music is also an important theme for Emilio Sala, who finds evidence of Verdi’s Parisian experiences in the milieu depicted in *La traviata.*171

While Verdi’s impact on the English-speaking world has not received anywhere near the level of scholarly attention given to German and French cultures, the British reaction to his works has been the theme of a few recent studies, including Massimo Zicari’s brief consideration of the fate of Verdi’s operas in 1840s London.172 Paul Rodmell discusses the mixed critical response to the earliest British performances of *Macbeth,* an “obscure” opera that suffered in comparison to its Shakespearean source.173 Roberta Montemorra Marvin’s research on the Victorian practice of supplying popular operatic arias with morally acceptable English texts has opened an important new avenue in Verdian reception studies.174 Only George Martin’s recent monograph addresses the fate of Verdi’s operas—and just his early works, at that—in the United States.175

Studies of Verdi reception in other countries have been scarce in mainstream scholarly literature, with Eastern Europe emerging as a dominant locus. Olga Haldey profiles the rise and fall of the Moscow Russian Private Opera, a small yet ambitious company that performed a number of Verdi’s operas with a mix of native and Italian singers, ultimately succumbing to a nationalistic preference for Russian works.\(^\text{176}\) In her examination of Verdi and Wagner reception in nineteenth-century Zagreb, Vjera Katalinic’ finds that both composers were equally successful, even though Italy’s operas had a twenty-year head start.\(^\text{177}\) While some Croatian critics detected Wagnerian overtones in Verdi’s later scores, his originality was nonetheless admired and his earlier works were not denigrated. Markian Prokopovych questions Verdi’s symbolic role in the Hungarian national narrative, which linked the Risorgimento with local aspirations for independence.\(^\text{178}\)

Clearly, the field of reception studies provides ample opportunity for further exploration. Research on Verdi’s impact in the Americas, and especially such outposts of Italian culture as Argentina and Brazil, would be especially welcome. Within Italy, the distribution of his music by means of arrangements for piano solo, band, reduced orchestra, and other nonstandard performing forces would offer another valuable measure of his influence in both the pre- and post-unification periods.

**NEW DIRECTIONS**

Future Verdi scholarship will increasingly depend on digitized, and ideally, freely available resources. An especially promising undertaking is Progetto RADAMES (Repertoriazione e Archiviazione di Documenti Attinenti al Melodramma E allo Spettacolo, or, Indexing and Archiving of Documents Pertaining to Melodramma and Performance). This initiative, based at the University of Bologna, aims to digitize and index a wide variety of primary sources related to Italian opera of the seventeenth–nineteenth centuries. According to Giorgio Pagannone, RADAMES will include librettos, scores, correspondence, set and costume designs, staging manuals, and audio and video recordings, all searchable in numerous ways.\(^\text{179}\) In addition to the enormous amount of labor that such a project


\(^{177}\) Vjera Katalinic’, “Verdi vs. Wagner oder Verdi und Wagner auf der Zagreber Bühne im 19. Jahrhundert?” in *Wie europäisch ist die Oper?*, 177–86.

\(^{178}\) Markian Prokopovych, “‘Instead, I saw a little man’: The Reception of Verdi in the [sic] Late Nineteenth-Century Hungary,” in *Wie europäisch ist die Oper?*, 161–76.

will require, Pagannone also warns potential users that the inevitable questions about copyright and royalties have yet to be settled. Although scholars must wait for Progetto RADAMES to become a reality, it is currently possible to consult selected Italian manuscript materials online at the Internet Culturale Web site (www.internetculturale.it). It would be a boon to scholars and performers alike if the manuscripts housed at Verdi’s Sant’Agata estate, rumored to include abundant sketches and drafts for many of his operas, were to be made available for study.

The assessment of Verdi’s place in his own century and in ours continues, both in Italy and abroad. Music in the 19th Century, a recently published volume in W. W. Norton’s Western Music in Context series of textbooks, locates him within a chapter devoted to operetta and “popular appeal,” while giving Richard Wagner a chapter to himself. But at least this season, at the close of Verdi’s bicentennial year, the Teatro alla Scala will open with La traviata.

ABSTRACT

The 100th anniversary of Verdi’s death, observed in 2001, inspired nearly a dozen academic conferences. At the dawn of his 2013 bicentennial, a celebratory year shared with Richard Wagner, hundreds of recent studies assess Verdi’s life, his works, and his impact. The present article surveys a selection of books and articles published between these two commemorations. A popular topic is Verdi’s role as a national icon, the calculated product of Italy’s search for a postunification identity. His engagement with foreign cultures has also received attention, for his German literary sources, his forays into French grand opera, and his use of exotic settings. Recent studies of Verdi’s operas often focus on the testing of boundaries, whether between genres, genders, or psychological states. While musical analyses still engage with operatic convention, they also examine other features, such as melody, meter, and tempo. Visual aspects of performance (set design, lighting, staging), considered separately in some studies and as a unified concept in others, constitute a newer area of scholarly interest.