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## From the Director's Desk

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## From the Director's Desk

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## *From the Director's Desk*

One of the chief concerns of the Institute for some months past has been the preparations for the Fifth International Congress of Verdi Studies. In collaboration with the Istituto di Studi Verdiani of Parma and Centre College of Danville, Kentucky, we are pleased to invite you to attend this event, which will be devoted to Verdi's *Macbeth*. During the Congress we will be privileged to attend a performance of the first version of this work (world premiere Florence, 1847) by the Kentucky Opera Association, Moritz Bomhard conducting. The performance and also the working sessions of the Congress will take place in the beautiful and acoustically renowned Newlin Hall of the Centre College Regional Arts Center. The dates of the Congress are November 10, 11, and 12, 1977, with the performance on Friday evening, November 11. On Saturday, November 12, there will be a symposium devoted to consideration of that performance, with participants including both those responsible for it and nationally-known figures from the world of opera such as Hans Busch, Walter Ducloux, and Jan Popper. During the Congress, about twenty-five papers devoted to *Macbeth* will be delivered by some of the leading Verdi authorities in the world today. It is planned that the Proceedings will be published as a *Macbeth* Sourcebook of permanent value to all persons performing or studying the opera. A major exhibit of *Macbeth* materials, including letters, scores, librettos, stage designs, and costumes for the opera, as well as early editions of the Shakespeare play, will be on display in the spacious foyer of the Arts Center. The Center itself, a strikingly beautiful building designed by the Taliesin Associates of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, opened in 1973 with a performance of *Otello*. A registration form for the Congress is included in this Newsletter. Additional copies may be reproduced from it or be requested from the Institute, or from Dr Floyd Herzog, Managing Director, Centre College Regional Arts Center, Danville, Kentucky 40422.

We are also pleased to report that the Gramma Fisher Foundation, through OPERA America, has awarded a grant to the Kentucky Opera Association for the preparation of a new singing translation of *Macbeth* to be used at the Congress, as well as for their performances of the opera in Louisville. This new translation is by Andrew Porter, editor of the *Verdi Newsletter*, whose translations of Wagner's *Ring* and Verdi's *Rigoletto*, *Don Carlos*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff* have been internationally acclaimed.

### *The Setting for the Congress*

The *Macbeth* Congress will take place in the lovely Bluegrass region of central Kentucky, a scenic area of rolling hills, beautiful waterways, large and attractive horse farms, black tobacco barns, and picturesque stone fences stretching for miles.

This area was the goal of the earliest settlers of the American West, and the very first permanent Kentucky settlement was at Harrodsburg, minutes from Danville. Daniel Boone, whose exploits are commemorated at Fort Harrod State Park, was the most renowned of the early group of explorer-settlers of the area. Initially Kentucky was a territory of Virginia, and in 1770 George Washington among others staked a Kentucky claim. The area provided the most important gateways to the West, the Cumberland Gap and Wilderness Trail from Virginia, and the Ohio River from Pennsylvania. In 1784 a group of citizens met in Danville for the first of a series of conventions leading to statehood. In 1792 Kentucky became the first state of the United States west of the Allegheny mountains. Authentic reproductions of log cabins housing the conventions and the first U.S. post office west of the Alleghenys are situated in Danville's Constitution Square. It was also in Danville, on Christmas day 1809, that Dr Ephraim MacDowell performed the first successful abdominal surgery ever recorded. The attractive building in which he lived and worked has been restored as a museum, and his apothecary shop has been refurbished with a collection of more than 200 pieces of 18th- and early 19th-century pharmaceutical equipment, including handsome period glassware from Europe and the U.S.

Some distance west of Danville is Abraham Lincoln's birthplace, a beautifully preserved National Historic Site. Kentucky, as a border state, had sons fighting on both sides of the Civil War, and it is noteworthy that Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy, was also a Kentuckian. Near Danville is Perryville Battlefield State Park, site of the last major Civil War battle in Kentucky. Henry Clay's beautiful estate of Ashland may be visited in Lexington, 35 miles northeast of Danville, and on the Bluegrass Parkway stretching west from Lexington is Bardstown, My Old Kentucky Home State Park, where Stephen Foster reputedly wrote his famous song. Midway between Lexington and Danville is the beautifully restored Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill. The Shakers of Kentucky, active from 1805 to 1910, led the state in scientific farming and in the development of agricultural implements. The sale of their flatbrooms, preserves, garden seeds and herbs throughout the Midwest and South made the Shaker name a hallmark of excellence. Dining and lodging is available in rooms furnished with reproductions of Shaker furniture.



Among the many famous persons born in the Bluegrass state were President Zachary Taylor, a hero of the Mexican War, and Alben W. Barkley, Vice-President under Harry Truman, Richard M. Johnson, Vice-President under Martin Van Buren, and Adlai E. Stevenson, Vice-President under Grover Cleveland. Thirteen Kentuckians have been U.S. Senators and ten have sat in the U.S. Supreme Court. Among the latter were Louis D. Brandeis, the "people's advocate", John Marshall Harlan, and Fred M. Vinson, thirteenth Chief Justice. Stevenson, Harlan, and Vinson were all graduates of Centre College, the site of our Congress and one of the nation's oldest and most distinguished small liberal arts colleges. Although denominational in origin, Centre was one of the first American institutions of higher learning to specify that "the college shall at all times be conducted upon liberal, free and enlightened principles and that no student shall be excluded in consequence of his religious opinions or those of his parents, guardians or relatives".

During a recent visit to Kentucky, I found myself enjoying another characteristic aspect of the region, the graciousness and warm hospitality of the people. While in Danville, I happened to glance at a volume entitled the *Theatre in Early Kentucky* by West T. Hill, Professor of Dramatic Art at Centre College. The first play by Shakespeare to have been performed in that state was, naturally, *Macbeth*.

MARTIN CHUSID



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