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Performances

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Abstract

Selected recent performances of Verdi operas

Keywords

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The bicentennial season at La Scala opened on 7 December 1977 with a new production of *Don Carlos*, directed by Luca Ronconi, designed by Luciano Damiani, conducted by Claudio Abbado. The new Ricordi edition by Ursula Günther and Luciano Petazzoni was used; the version chosen was chiefly 'Modena' (i.e. Act I unrevised joined to Acts II-V in the 1884 revision), to which were added the *Prélude et Introduction*, the mask-changing start of III, and the 'Lacrimosa' duet after the death of Posa; the 1867 ending was used. The opera was sung in Italian translation. Casts: Freni, Obraztsova/Nadine Denize, Carreras, Cappuccilli/Bruson, Ghiaurov/Nesterenko. For a television performance, broadcast worldwide on 29 December, Freni and Carreras (under contract to Karajan and a filming of his *Salzburg Carlos*) were replaced by Margaret Price and Domingo. [review, *New Yorker*, 23 January 1978]. The season continued with *Un ballo in maschera* [review, *New Yorker*, 6 February] and *I masnadieri*, includes *La forza del destino*, *Il trovatore*, and *Simon Boccanegra*—six of the nine grand operas to be performed are by Verdi—and ends in December with more performances of *Don Carlos*.

The 1977-78 Florence season began on 18 December 1977 with a new production of *Il trovatore* (ten performances), director Ronconi, designer Pier Luigi Pizzi, conductor Muti; cast: Gilda Cruz-Romo, Carlo Cossutta, Matteo Manuguerra [review, *New Yorker*, 6 February]. The 1978 Maggio Musicale began with *Les Vêpres siciliennes* (in Italian), *uncut*: conductor, Riccardo Muti; cast: Scotto, Veriano Luchetti, Bruson, Ruggero Raimondi.

The Turin season began November 24 with a new production of *Macbeth*, director Andras Miko, conductor Fernando Previtali, designer Mischa Scandella; cast: Sylvia Sass/Josephine Barstow, Bergonzi, Renato Bruson/Licinio Montefusco, Nicola Ghiuselev.

The Marseilles Opera produced *Attila* on 13 January 1978, director Michelangelo Ventri, director Antoine Selva; cast: Radmila Bakocevic, Veriano Luchetti, Antonio Salvadori, José van Dam.

The Met has announced a new production of *Don Carlos* (in Italian translation) to open on

5 February 1979. Director John Dexter, designer David Reppa, conductor James Levine. Cast: Scotto, Horne, Veriano Luchetti, Milnes, Ghiaurov, Gobbi (Inquisitor). The 1978-79 season also includes *Luisa Miller*, *Rigoletto*, *La traviata*, *Aida*, and *Otello*.

The twentieth anniversary season of the Opera Company of Boston opened on 15 February 1978 with a production of *Stiffelio*; conductor and director Sarah Caldwell, designer Zach Brown. Cast: Anna Moffo/Leigh Munro, Roelof Oostwoud, Brent Ellis. [review, *New Yorker*, 6 March]

The first new production of August Everding's régime at the Munich State Opera was of *Otello*: conductor, Carlos Kleiber; cast: Julia Varady, Carlo Cossutta, Piero Cappuccilli. John Neumeier and Jürgen Rose, director and designer, set the piece in Verdi's day; the ambassadors appeared before Othello in frock-coats. [review, *Oesterreichische Musikzeitschrift*, Dec. 1977, 584]

On 12 March 1978, the Hamburg State Opera presented a new production of *Don Carlos* (in Italian translation) in a version drawn from the Günther-Petazzoni edition: essentially the "pre-première" score of 1886, including the passages that were cut, but with the revised, 1883 versions of the Posa-Philip duet in Act II and of the Elizabeth-Philip scene and subsequent quartet in Act IV. The ballet and the *marziale* episode of the final duet were omitted. Cast: Sylvia Sass, Grace Bumbry, Vasile Moldoveanu, Bernd Weikl, Simon Estes (Philip), Kurt Moll (Inquisitor); conductor Rafael Kubelik, director and designer Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. The performance began at 6 and ended nearly five hours later. [review, *Opera News* 42 No. 21 (May 1978), 34-5]

The English National Opera staged a new production of *I due Foscari* (in English; translation by Rex Lawson) on 4 May 1978, with Lois McDonall, Derek Blackwell, John Tomlinson, and Neil Howlett; director John Blatchley, designer Stefanos Lazaridis, conductor Charles Groves. The 1978-79 season includes a new production of *Aida* on 18 October; Josephine Barstow, Elizabeth Connell, Tom Swift, Neil Howlett, Clifford Grant; conductor, Groves; director, John Copley; new English translation by Edmund Tracey.

Scottish Opera opens its 1978-79 season in October with a new production of *Simon Boccanegra*, director Peter Ebert.

The latest Verdi presentation of the Conjunto de Opera Verdiana, Mexico City, was of *I lombardi*, on 31 May 1978. Cecilia Bustamente, founder of the group, sang Giselda. Last year it presented *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*.

The 1847 version of *Macbeth* is announced for performance at the London Proms on 25

July. Cast: Rita Hunter, Kenneth Collins, Peter Glossop, John Tomlinson; BBC Singers and BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by John Matheson.

On 3 December 1977 the BBC transmitted a television production of *Macbeth* made by the BBC in association with WNET, CBC Toronto, and Polyphon of Hamburg. Cast: Patricia Johnson, Neil Shicoff, Norman Bailey, Nicolai Ghiaurov; Ambrosian Opera Chorus and London Philharmonic conducted by Robin Stapleton; director, Brian Large.

We have reached the point in our regard for Verdi that we reached some while ago with Shakespeare: we just want to see on the stage everything that either of them wrote.—Desmond Shawe-Taylor, reviewing the English National Opera's production of *I due Foscari* in the (London) *Sunday Times*, 7 May 1978.



Professor Robert Bailey (Eastman School of Music) has drawn our attention to a letter from Wagner to August Freiherr von Lütichau in Dresden (*Sämtliche Briefe* II, p. 548), dated 17 June 1848, which indicates that Wagner was planning to perform *Ernani* during the 1848 season. Unfortunately, the greatest of Verdi's operatic contemporaries, Kapellmeister in Dresden at the time, was forced to flee that city during the revolution as a result of his liberal political activities. *Ernani* was to have been one of three new productions Wagner planned: the others were *Guttenberg* by Fuchs and either Donizetti's *Dom Sébastien* or Lachner's *Catarina Cornaro*.



The first San Diego Opera Verdi Festival will begin on August 4th, 1978 with a performance of *Aida* at the San Diego Civic Theatre. Martina Arroya is cast for the title role.

The Metropolitan Opera Archive, in collaboration with the American Institute for Verdi Studies, will present an exhibit of Verdi materials, "Verdi and His World," for the opening night of the 1978-79 season, in the vitrines of the parterre floor and in cases in other floors of the Opera House.

AIVS members have contributed photographs of portraits and busts of Verdi and Strepponi, a family tree of the Verdi, Uttini, Carrara and Barezzi families (four centuries of the Verdi family at Sant'Agata), holograph letters and musical manuscripts, scores, a portrait and holograph letter of Maria Malibran, a jewel box showing Alphonse Plessis, the "Lady of the Camellias," and other memorabilia.

From the Metropolitan Opera archive will come documents from the Patti and De Reszke collections, costumes, programs, and other memorabilia. Private collectors will lend Eugene Berman sketches; other material on Malibran, Teresa Stolz, Patti, Varesi, and Fracchini has been lent from the Teatro alla Scala.



An exhibit entitled 'Verdi: the Man, his Music' was mounted by the Institute at the Bobst Library of New York University in honor of Italian Culture Week, April 16-23. In addition to biographical items, attention was focussed on facsimiles of the music, early printed scores, and staging materials for *Rigoletto*, *Falstaff*, *Aida*, *Macbeth*, *Forza*, and *Jerusalem*. The exhibit was so well received that it was held over until May 22.