The Early Publication History of Oberto: An Eye Toward Nabucco

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The Early Publication History of *Oberto*: an Eye Toward *Nabucco*

by Luke Jensen

Verdi both began his career as an opera composer and initiated his relationship with Casa Ricordi, his preferred publisher, with *Oberto*, *Conte di San Bonifacio*. Bartolomeo Merelli, the impresario at La Scala, initially produced *Oberto* shouldering all the expenses, with Verdi's payment coming from the subsequent sale of the score to Ricordi. On October 6, 1839, a month and a half before the premiere of *Oberto*, Verdi wrote to Pietro Massini, an early Verdi promoter who led an organization of amateur musicians. Verdi said,

Arrangements for my opera are still going well. The singers are all happy and the women have their parts. The score remains my property, and I'm having the parts prepared by the 'copisteria Ricordi' [the branch of the firm that prepared performance materials for La Scala and for rental to other theaters]. The price hasn't been decided yet, and it will be entrusted to Pasetti. [Giovanni Ricordi later dedicated the piano-vocal score of *Oberto* to Verdi's friend, Francesco Pasetti.] Ricordi told me he had the printing rights without giving any compensation. This doesn't seem right to me. Enough; it doesn't pay to talk about it now.1

As Verdi recalled later in life, Giovanni Ricordi acquired *Oberto* for 2,000 Austrian lire.2 This appears to have been the purchase of the performance rights. Casa Ricordi had various activities, and Giovanni's role as a general publisher differed from his role as a publisher with music for hire. In 19th-century Italy, general publication of operas included reductions of the score for public sale, rather than reproductions of the full orchestral score. In the rare instances where a full score was printed, the editor used it to facilitate performances of the work, that is, a score for hire and not for sale to the general public. For the moment, Verdi probably resolved the issue of printing rights by participating directly in the reduction of his score for general publication. His subsequent contract left provisions for the sale of publication rights ambiguous, which led to a lawsuit over *Nabucco*.3 An examination of the early publication history of *Oberto* indicates Verdi's activities during the earliest period of his career and reveals previously unknown music that he wrote for a subsequent performance of *Oberto*. This new music may indicate the gestation of some ideas Verdi used in his third opera, *Nabucco*.

Giovanni Ricordi, founder and patriarch of the firm bearing his name, kept a set of books


3Pougin, p. 42.
commonly referred to as the libroni. These volumes of internal documents chart the printing process in his establishment and provide clues to Verdi's role in the preparation of his works for general publication. They indicate that he reduced at least three numbers of Oberto in piano-vocal score, as well as the overtures of Un giorno di regno, his second opera, and Alzira, his eighth. He also prepared the reduction of the duet for Lida and Rolando in the third act of La battaglia di Legnano.

Although writers who have discussed 19th-century Italian music in the last 20 years have occasionally referred to the libroni, no thorough study of these important records currently appears in print. Their size and complexity partially explain this absence: they span well over 100,000 plate numbers, which includes the entire history of Casa Ricordi in the 19th-century. Some description of the libroni is necessary in order to put the Oberto material in context, however a full discussion would require an effort much beyond the scope of this study.

These books are large, manuscript, oblong ledgers that record through 23 volumes the publications of Ricordi by plate number, with entries in many different hands. Giovanni Ricordi began his publication records in 1808 with number one, Le Quattro Stagioni, a piece for guitar solo by Antonio Maria Nava, and he continued consecutively. The earliest entries record, from left to right, the plate number, author and title, price, the number of plates used, and the number of copies made. Ricordi included a date column between the author and title, but no consistent entries appeared until about 1816. In about 1818 or 1819, Ricordi began to enter the name of the engraver assigned to each number. In 1820, he began a new volume in which he established a format that provided the model for the rest of the century. This new volume and the first were bound together at a later date and now form volume one of the libroni. Ricordi reserved each opening for a certain class of music, with class one and two indicating piano solos, class three simplified piano music, class four vocal pieces, class five violin, and class six flute. These classifications later changed, and occasionally Ricordi included more than one on a single opening of facing pages, or dropped them altogether. Table One presents a diagram of an opening in the 1820 format. The layout covers both sides and there were 25 entries per opening. The plate number appeared first to the far left side, followed by the name of the engraver. Next came the composer. The fourth column gave the date the piece was assigned to the engraver, and the fifth the title. In addition, the left side included the price, the number of plates, and the number of copies printed on various occasions. The number of plates appears on the right side in later volumes, and the number of copies disappeared altogether from the libroni about 1827. The format of 1820 included three pieces of information on the right side: the date of publication, the

Table 1

Diagram of Ricordi's *libroni* in 1820

Left side of opening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>plate number</th>
<th>engraver</th>
<th>composer</th>
<th>date assigned to engraver</th>
<th>title</th>
<th>price</th>
<th>number of plates</th>
<th>number of copies printed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Right side of opening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>date of publication</th>
<th>decisione</th>
<th>number of pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>de' fascicoli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"decisione dei fascicoli", the number of pages, but these pieces of information do not consistently appear from one volume to another. In the early years the date of publication appeared regularly, but in later volumes it occurs only sporadically, most frequently for piano-vocal scores of operas. Ricordi generally used the right page of the opening to include information unique to the kind of publication involved. For example, the process used to prepare the title page (lithography, typography, etc.) might be recorded, and an opera reduction with several numbers would carry the information about the title page only once. Other compositions were produced without a separate title page. Also, Ricordi indicated instances where two different pieces used the same plates. This frequently happened when a composition for solo violin was also published in an edition for flute. A single set of plates for the piano accompaniment would serve both editions and an explanation would appear. For most of the 1840s, protocol numbers and dates of approval from the censorship office were included in a column marked "decisione dei fascicoli." Numbers in the column appear to be associated with the date of publication since selections published on the same day carry the same number in this column. Ricordi often included more than one number, but they are always contiguous. The numbers begin with one and increase during the calendar year with the first volume of the libroni using numbers as high as 17 in this position and numbers ranging from one into the 20s occurring in analogous columns in later volumes. They may very well refer to batches of paper.

In short, Ricordi included information specific to a particular composition on the right side of an opening which may not have applied to other publications, or was simply not deemed important enough to record for all numbers.

From this source we can know when a composition and its reduction were completed and given to the engraver. Also, we can identify who prepared many of the opera scores for publication in one of the standard reductions. For a reduction of an opera as a piano-vocal, piano solo, piano four-hand, or any other straightforward arrangement, the entry included the name of the composer with the reducer's name often appearing in smaller writing in the same column. This contrasts with more complex arrangements such as fantasies or paraphrases based on themes from an opera. Here, whoever wrote the particular fantasy appeared as the composer, with the name of the original author in the title column.

Table Two presents information on Oberto culled from two sources: the first column gives the numbering and titles in the autograph, and the other two columns contain information found in the libroni on the numbering, plate number, and date each section was assigned to an engraver, and also the publication date in the case of the piano-vocal score. Footnote one indicates which numbers in the libroni have the indication 'decisione dei fascicoli' appear to be associated with the date of publication since selections published on the same day carry the same number in this column. Ricordi often included more than one number, but they are always contiguous. The numbers begin with one and increase during the calendar year with the first volume of the libroni using numbers as high as 17 in this position and numbers ranging from one into the 20s occurring in analogous columns in later volumes. They may very well refer to batches of paper.

5Numbers in the column "decisione dei fascicoli" appear to be associated with the date of publication since selections published on the same day carry the same number in this column. Ricordi often included more than one number, but they are always contiguous. The numbers begin with one and increase during the calendar year with the first volume of the libroni using numbers as high as 17 in this position and numbers ranging from one into the 20s occurring in analogous columns in later volumes. They may very well refer to batches of paper.

# Table 2

## Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autograph</th>
<th>Piano-vocal score</th>
<th>Piano solo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>no.</strong></td>
<td><strong>title</strong></td>
<td><strong>no.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sinfonia 1.</td>
<td>1. 11976(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Introduzione 2.</td>
<td>2. 11977(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Aria Riccardo 3.</td>
<td>3. 11978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Scena e Cavatina Eleonora 4.</td>
<td>4. 11979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Rec.v.o e Duetto Eleonora Oberto 5.</td>
<td>5. 11980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Coro. Fidanzata avventurosa 6.</td>
<td>6. 11981(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Rec.v.o e Duetto (Cuniza, Riccardo) 7.</td>
<td>7. 11982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Scena e Terzetto 8.</td>
<td>8. 11983(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Fi?ale 1.(^0)</td>
<td>9. 11984(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Rec.v.o ad Aria Cuniza con Coro 10.</td>
<td>10. 11985(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Coro dopo l'aria Cuniza 11.</td>
<td>11. 11986(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Recitativo e Quartetto 13.</td>
<td>13. 11988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Romanza Riccardo 15.</td>
<td>15. 11990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Scena e Rondò Finale 16.</td>
<td>16. 11991(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Romanza Riccardo 17.</td>
<td>17. 11992(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Scena e Rondò Finale 18.</td>
<td>18. 11993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Romanza Riccardo 20.</td>
<td>20. 11995</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recitativo e Cavatina Mezzo Soprano</th>
<th>12583</th>
<th>XI 1840</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recitativo e Duetto Mezzo Soprano e Tenore</td>
<td>12584</td>
<td>[XII 1840]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scena e Duetto Soprano e Basso</td>
<td>12749</td>
<td>12[III 1841]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coro &quot;Sorge un canto e si difonde&quot;</td>
<td>12776</td>
<td>4 II 1841</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\)These numbers have the indication "Rid'e [riduzione] dell'autore" or "Rid'e aut." meaning Verdi prepared the reduction.

\(^2\)These numbers were prepared by Pietro Tonassi.
"Rid'e [riduzione] autore", or "Rid'e dell'autore" (meaning, in this case, Verdi). Plate numbers with footnote two report Tonassi as the reducer. (Pietro Tonassi was a composer who also worked for Ricordi translating harmonic treatises, and who also wrote opera fantasies and made reductions of opera scores. He later helped to reduce *I Lombardi* for the piano-vocal score.) Numbers in Table Two without a footnote have no indication in the *libroni* to reveal who reduced that particular piece. On the lower portion of the table, all the information comes directly from the *libroni*.

Work on the piano-vocal score of *Oberto* began almost immediately after the premiere, on November 17, 1839. Ricordi divided the work into 20 numbers, and he assigned 12 to the engravers in about two weeks. He left the remainder, mainly choruses and finales, until April 1842. These are the pieces which Tonassi reduced in piano-vocal format. Verdi prepared three numbers from the full score; the overture, the scena and terzetto in Act I (which became two numbers in the vocal score), and the quartet in Act II. Ricordi gave his engravers the overture six days after the premiere, November 23, the terzetto four days later, and the quartet five days after that. This quartet was the last piece given to an engraver until the score was completed in 1842. Indeed, this piece seems to have straggled in late, since work on the piano solo score had begun on November 30. This quartet was also the last part of *Oberto* that Verdi composed.7

The eight other numbers assigned in 1839 do not record the name of the person responsible for the reduction, but Tonassi probably did all or part of the work. In February of 1840, Ricordi assigned to his engravers two pieces for cello and piano by Tonassi, based on themes from *Oberto*, and requiring some knowledge of the opera's score (plate numbers 12606 and 12607). These predate by more that two years his work on the *Oberto* piano-vocal score indicated in the *libroni*. Also, as someone like Tonassi often wrote fantasies based on operas that they had previously reduced. For example, Luigi Truzzi who reduced many of Verdi's operas beginning with *Nabucco*, frequently produced pedagogical studies based on themes from the operas he had reduced.

The overture reduction functioned for both the piano-vocal and piano solo scores, and therefore carried two plate numbers, but there is no indication who reduced the 16 other numbers of the piano solo edition of *Oberto*. In many other instances, *Nabucco* for example, the same person did both. In any case, work began on the piano solo version on November 30, 1839, and all the pieces that had been prepared for the vocal score were included. Selections omitted at this time from the vocal score were not prepared for the piano solo edition either.

About three weeks after work had begun on the vocal score, the first pieces were published and presumably offered for sale. Both tenor arias and the soprano's cavatina appeared on December 9, with the other solo numbers coming on the 14th. The overture and ensembles, which included all of the music Verdi himself reduced, followed in the next two weeks. By the beginning of 1840, the Milanese could

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purchase the solo arias, duets, terzetto, quartet, and overture in both piano-vocal and piano solo versions. Three of the pieces had been reduced by Verdi himself, although no mention was made in the printed scores. In this way Verdi received some financial remuneration from the general publication of his music.

The soprano, Antonietta Marini, and the tenor, Lorenzo Salvi, had great success as Leonora and Riccardo. Ricordi rushed their solos through the publication process more rapidly than the others; and both singers appeared in the first post-Milan production of Oberto. The performance during the carnival season of 1840 at the Teatro Regio, Turin, included them, and Luigia Abbadia in the mezzo-soprano role, Cuniza, a part originally sung by Mary Shaw. There is no cavatina for Cuniza, so the first act duet for Cuniza and Riccardo, No. 6 in the autograph, was dropped in Turin, and Abbadia sang instead a number from Mercadante's Maria da Feltre.8

Marini and Salvi returned to La Scala for the autumn 1840 season, and Abbadia joined them. All of them participated in the failure of Un giorno di regno, Verdi's second opera, premiered on September 5, 1840. This opera was quickly withdrawn and Oberto, took its scheduled performances dates. Verdi's presence at the second Milan production precluded the insertion of any other composer's music, as had happened in Turin. He agreed to drop the duet, as in Turin, and wrote a new cavatina and duet expressly for Abbadia. As seen on the bottom portion of Table Two, these pieces were assigned to the engravers in November of 1840. No reducer is indicated. Verdi also adjusted the title role for Raffaele Ferlotti, who replaced Ignazio Marini during the run of the revival. Ferlotti was a baritone, and so Verdi adjusted the title role for a higher voice.9

At this time Ricordi decided to publish the sinfonia and five separate pieces of Un giorno di regno, probably choosing parts of this failure which he felt he could successfully market, and attempting in the process to capitalize on the popularity of the singers who had originally created the roles. He printed two solo numbers from Un giorno di regno, the coro e cavatina for the mezzo-soprano (Abbadia) in the first act, and the tenor (Salvi) aria that opens the second. Ricordi also printed the terzetto from the first act which features the soprano, (Marini), mezzo-soprano, and tenor. The two other published pieces were for the bassi buffi. Ricordi did not have even remote plans at this time to publish the entire score of Un giorno di regno, unlike Oberto. He published various sections of Oberto at different times, but he entered the entire opera into the libroni as a

8Librettos for this and other early productions of Oberto are in the archive of the American Institute for Verdi Studies, New York University. For a discussion see David Lawton, "Tonality and Drama in Verdi's early operas" (dissertation submitted to the University of California at Berkeley, 1973).

complete vocal score and a complete piano solo score. Ricordi obviously planned on eventually printing the entire opera when he entered all the numbers in the libroni. On the other hand, only these few pieces from Un giorno di regno were entered, with the overture and the five separate pieces listed in two different locations (plate numbers 12321 and 12585-12589). Not until 1845, when the opera had been successfully produced at the Teatro San Benedetto, Venice, as Il finto Stanislaao, did it appear in the libroni with each piece assigned a plate number (18021-18046). In the 1845 location, those pieces that had appeared in 1840 carried their earlier plate number in the engraver's column. The reducers' names appear only in the 1845 location. Cesare Dominiceti, a composer of several comic operas and a pedagogue, reduced the five separate pieces, and was given credit in the libroni and in the printed score. The "autore", meaning Verdi, appears as the reducer of the overture in the libroni. No copy of the overture bearing the original plate number is known, but the 1845 plate for Il finto Stanislaao clearly identifies Verdi as the reducer.

Ricordi's decision to continue publication of works based on Oberto attest to its continued success. In July 1840, a divertimento for piano six-hands by Bartolomeo Grassi was given to Ricordi's engravers (plate number 12050). This occurred between the Turin and the second Milan productions. In October 1840, work began on reductions of the complete opera for both flute and violin, each with piano accompaniment, thus making an abbreviated form of each number from Oberto available to the public for the first time (plate numbers 12462-12465 and 1246612469). On December 4, Ricordi's engravers received a fantasy based on themes from Oberto by Carl Czerny. It appears in the libroni as part of a set of three pieces that include two fantasies on Cristina di Svezia, an opera by Alessandro Nini. This collection sold in piano solo and piano four-hand versions (plate numbers 12434-12436 and 12509-12511). A year after its first production, Ricordi could offer Oberto complete for violin or flute with piano accompaniment; the solo numbers, overture, and ensembles in piano-vocal and piano solo editions, and the new music composed for the 1840 revival in piano-vocal score. He also offered music based on themes from Oberto by three other composers, Tonassi, Grassi, and Czerny.

Oberto's next performance was in Genoa in January 1841. Verdi participated in the staging and wrote new music for the occasion. The Genoese cast included two singers who already knew the score: the title role was sung by Ferlotti, for whom Verdi had adjusted the part in the Milan revival, and Leonora was sung by Marini, who had appeared in every production of Oberto to this point. Catone Lonati sang the tenor role of Riccardo, and Carolina Ferlotti was Cuniza, the mezzo-soprano. From Genoa, Verdi reported on this production to his friend Pietro Massini, on January 11.

Oberto opened Saturday and had a cold reception. The overture, the introduzione were applauded wildly with curtain calls for Catone and also for me, Marini's cavatina applauded. The duet between Ferlotti and Marini cold (it's a new number). The chorus which follows and is also new had a cold reception (let me mention
that I added a stage band to this opera). Sparse applause for the duet which follows. The terzetto cold. Also the finale. In the second act all the numbers applauded but quite coldly. Last evening, the same if not that the sparse applause for the quartet and the rondò finale completely disappeared. Overall the number which was truly appreciated was the tenor's aria, and do you know why? because now that there's a stage band it makes a diabolical noise. The performance on behalf of the singers was good, rather I will say that Marini has never sung with such concentration and so well, and in the rondò finale she certainly deserved much. So there you have the whole, true story. Let me tell you though that this audience is made of half Genoese and half Turinese soldiers who are always among those in opposition.

Ricordi published the two new numbers, as seen in Table Two, shortly after the six performances in Genoa. The soprano-and-bass duet replaced the soprano-and-bass duet in Act I, No. 4 in the autograph. This change further accommodated the

role of Oberto for the baritone Ferlotti. The new chorus, "Sorge un canto e si difonde," replaced the chorus "Fidanzata avventurosa" which originally followed the soprano-and-bass duet. Earlier alterations of this score resulted from the demands of Abbadia for a more prominent role, but the nature of these revisions would not have benefitted any performer's ego. Verdi most likely sought to strengthen the score because the Milan revival a few months earlier had not been as successful as its first production the year before. Adapting the title role for Ferlotti tailored the score for the present resources. But replacing "Fidanzata avventurosa" was not an accommodation of the score for the Genoese production, but rather an expansion of the score to include additional forces. This alteration eliminates an obvious internal link between the drama and the overture, which begins with the gentle wedding chorus, "Fidanzata avventurosa." The addition of this number that includes the stage band shows that Verdi was willing to sacrifice thematic unity for greater variety of texture.

The music of the chorus survives only in the piano solo reduction that Ricordi published in 1841. A copy bound with the complete piano solo edition is in the library of the Milan Conservatory and is reproduced


11 G. B. Vallebona, Il Teatro Carlo Felice (Genoa: il Comune e la Direzione del Teatro, 1928) p. 72.


OBERTO CONTE DI S. BONIFACIO
Dramma in due Atti posta in musica dal", G. M.

Giuseppe Clerici

Edizione per Piano fatta solo
dedicata all' Illustrissimo 

gentiluomo Gentille 

Cugn. Neipperg 

di Cug. Ricordi

Proprietà degli Editori

Reg. nell'Arch. delli' Unione

12776

CORO "Sorge un rumore e si diffonde", NUOVAMENTE COMPOSTO IN GENOVA DALL'AUTORE.

F. ...75.

III° Vivace

Orchestra

Banda

Orchestra

Banda

Orchestra

Banda

Orchestra

PONNZE presso GIOFRICORDI e JOCHAUD. 

MILANO PRESSO G.RICORDI.

MENDRISO presso C. POZZI.
Verdi: Oberto Conte di S. Bonifacio
here for the first time since its original publication.

Although the stage band was an established part of 19th-century Italian opera, Verdi first used it for the Genoa version of Oberto. In this example, the stage band plays alone, alternates with the orchestra, and then combines with orchestra and chorus. Verdi appears to be experimenting with large blocks of sound originating from different sources, an idea he effectively used in his next project, Nabucco.

Verdi's first acquaintance with Solera's libretto Nabucodonosor occurred either shortly before or immediately after the Genoa production of Oberto. Otto Nicolai had been riding the crest of fame with his opera Il templario. Many theaters staged this opera, first produced in Turin, and two impresarios, Francesco Sanguinetti in Genoa and Bartolomeo Merelli in Milan, negotiated contracts with Nicolai for new works. Toward the end of November, Nicolai passed through Milan on his way to Genoa, where his new opera, Gildippe ed Odoardo was due on December 26, 1840. After three performances, he returned to Milan, and on January 4, 1841, he began to compose Il proscritto, a libretto by G. Rossi. Nicolai had previously refused this libretto, but decided that he preferred it to the second choice Merelli offered him, Nabucodonosor. After Nicolai's first refusal of Il proscritto, Merelli gave it to Verdi. This occurred before Verdi had agreed to set Un giorno di regno. After Un giorno di regno, Verdi attempted to terminate his contract with Merelli, but the impresario would not hear of it, insisting that he still had Il proscritto to compose. Once an agreement had been reached with Nicolai, Merelli needed to accommodate Verdi, to whom the right to set Il proscritto clearly belonged. Merelli effected an exchange of librettos and the famous account of Verdi's "first" acquaintance with Nabucodonosor happened around this time. Michele Lessona's version states that after reading Nabucodonosor, Verdi read bad novels for five months then began composing Nabucco in late May, an account that would place the event in January 1841. Whether Verdi had read Nabucodonosor before the Genoa production of Oberto or afterwards is impossible to say. If before, we could claim that Verdi wished to experiment with ideas that would serve him in Nabucco; if after, that Nabucco's large scenes attracted him because it was a problem with which he had just grappled. In either case, his insertion of the stage band in Oberto prefigures its use in Nabucco, especially in the opening of part 3, "La Profecia," the act that has "Va pensiero." Large-scale scenes with multiple sources of sound obviously fired Verdi's imagination during this period.

About this time Ricordi decided to complete the piano solo edition of Oberto: on March 10, 1841, all the pieces which had not been done in 1839 were assigned to the engravers. This
could explain why the new chorus appeared in piano solo rather than piano-vocal format. Ricordi probably anticipated sales to accompany performances of Oberto in Barcelona, the first non-Italian production of a Verdi work, and in Naples, both taking place later in 1841. As Roger Parker recently pointed out, Verdi wrote an insert aria for Ignazio Marini, the first Oberto, who also sang this role in Barcelona. This aria, "Infin che un brando vindice," later became identified with Ernani. Ricordi did not publish this piece until after its identification with Ernani in 1844.18

In April 1841, work began on a fantasy by Giuseppe Fahrbach based on themes from Oberto. It appeared in his regular collection, fantaisies élégantes, a series of pieces for two flutes based on popular operas of the day. He was the fourth composer to write a fantasy on Oberto published by Ricordi before Verdi had any other operatic successes. Years later, a few more compositions based on Oberto appeared, some of them printed by publishers other than Ricordi, but they were issued around the times of revivals of Oberto. These performances and publications were marketed on Verdi's overall popularity and no longer circulated on the strength of the opera itself. Verdi spent most of 1841 concentrating on Nabucco and negotiating its initial production. He had helped to prepare editions of his previous two operas published by Ricordi, but did not participate in the preparation of Nabucco for general publication. This opera opened on March 9, 1842, and on the 12th, Verdi signed an agreement selling his half rights to Nabucco to Francesco Lucca, Ricordi's main competitor. This act constituted the basis for a legal dispute between Ricordi and Lucca over publishing rights. This was only one suit in a series of legal actions between Ricordi and Lucca which spanned 13 years, from 1831 to 1844, litigation which helped define the role of a music publisher in 19th-century Italy.19

With an agreement signed by Verdi, Lucca began legal proceedings against Ricordi when he heard that Ricordi had an edition of Nabucco in progress. Ricordi claimed rights to Nabucco through Bartolomeo Merelli, impresario at La Scala, with whom he had a long-standing arrangement. Ricordi's agreement included printing rights of all the new operas at La Scala as long as Merelli was impresario. Although the government decided on a compromise solution for the performance rights, with both publishers claiming some royalties, Ricordi prevailed with the printing rights to Nabucco and could therefore publish it in any form of reduction he chose. The dispute delayed this publication until the fall of 1842, however, and Verdi played no role in the preparation of these reductions. While this case was being argued, Ricordi completed the piano-vocal score of Oberto, assigning all remaining pieces

18Roger Parker, "'Infin che un brando vindice': from Ernani to Oberto" in Verdi Newsletter no.12 (1984). pp.5-7.

19An analysis of this litigation and its ramifications remains to be done. The most useful work to date is by Anna Pasquinelli, "Contributo per la storia di Casa Lucca" in Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana vol. 16 (1982). pp.568-581.
on April 16, 1842. He probably wanted to capitalize on Verdi's success during the peak of Nabucco's popularity, so he offered a complete Otello for voice and piano.

Verdi learned in this period how to market his work successfully, and, with his growing popularity, he could negotiate from a position of strength. His relationship with publishers and impresarios evolved increasingly on terms specified by the composer. This early period also demonstrates how Verdi could revise an old work, strengthen it, and use the revision as an opportunity to develop ideas that he would use in a future project. This evolutionary procedure would serve him on later occasions, most notably in revising Simon Boccanegra before writing Otello.