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From the Director's Desk

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All library collections of significance tend to be developed in two ways. Materials are identified as necessary or valuable and either purchased or reproduced. Or, alternatively, they are donated by friends of the organization responsible for that collection. This year the archive of the American Institute for Verdi Studies has been especially fortunate to receive three such donations. An old friend, Mary Stringham Shamrock, currently on the faculty of the State University of California at Northridge, has given us five autograph letters by Verdi collected by her deceased husband, the Verdi and Schubert scholar Scott Stringham who taught at the University of West Virginia at Morgentown. This is the second significant gift to the Institute by Mary. In 1976, shortly after the founding of AIVS, she donated Scott's extensive holdings of Verdi scores, books, librettos, recorded materials and research notes. That splendid donation helped the Verdi Archive at New York University qualify as sufficiently extensive to receive development support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music.

As far as I can determine, three of the five holographs, including the letter to Mauro Corticelli reproduced in this issue, have never been published before. In addition, a sixth autograph letter by Verdi has joined the five Stringham-Shamrock letters in the Rare Book section of New York University's Bobst Library. It was owned by John and Rita Russell and also appears to be unpublished. John, an avid collector of music and a dedicated chamber music player, was one of the earliest and most enthusiastic members of AIVS. You may recall that when John died, his wife Rita donated his extensive collection of Verdi scores and librettos to the Institute. John had a letter to Charles Nutter beautifully framed together with a photograph of Verdi. During the late 70's, when John Nádas, the Institute's first archivist, and I were filming some rare early editions of Verdi piano-vocal scores, Mr. Russell said he would like to leave the letter to AIVS. Following the demise of Rita, and through the good offices of Gene Bruck, John Russell's wishes were fulfilled.

Finally, Dr Ilsa Lind of the New York University faculty, the widow of deceased AIVS member Paul Polskin has donated to the Institute a splendid collection of Paul's long-playing-records, books and librettos. The recordings include many complete operas by Verdi as well as numerous individual discs sung by some of the finest vocalists of the twentieth century.

Members will have undoubtedly noticed our new look. The expanded format is, we believe, particularly well suited for reproducing the first of the AIVS holograph letters, as well as the previously unknown and unpublished autograph sketches from *I due Foscari* discussed by AIVS Secretary-Treasurer David Lawton.

I am happy to remind our members that The Royal Opera at Covent Garden, London, will inaugurate its seven year summer festival series of all 28 Verdi operas in 1995. The initial works to be performed are *Stiffelio*, *La traviata*, *Simon Boccanegra* and *I due Foscari*. One of the events planned to celebrate the first year is an International Congress of Verdi Studies.

I am also pleased to report that because of the success of the Conference 'Verdi's French Operas', sponsored by the Institute in March of 1994, there is an excellent possibility that another such event will take place in March of 1996 in conjunction with performances of both versions of *La forza del destino*. These will be conducted by the artistic director of the Sarasota Opera, Victor DeRenzi, who led fine performances of *Les Vêpres siciliennes* and a beautifully danced version of its ballet, *The Four Seasons*. Incidentally, the music gained immeasurably from the addition of the visual component of the dance.

I hope you will consider attending one or both of these exciting events.

Finally, let me share with you the news that a set of papers read at the Belfast Verdi Congress of 1993 will be published by the University of Chicago Press. The book is tentatively titled *The Mature Verdi: Source Studies, Analysis and Performance (1849-1859)*.

-Martin Chusid