

1-1-1991

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Recommended Citation

Marvin, Roberta M. (1991) "Abstract: Verdi's Artistic Concerns and Practical Considerations in the Composition of 'I masnadieri': a Newly-Discovered Version of "Tremate, o miseri"," *Verdi Forum*: No. 19, Article 7.
Available at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/vf/vol1/iss19/7>

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Abstract for a paper given at a joint meeting of the American Institute for Verdi Studies and the Greater New York Chapter of the American Musicological Society, Feb. 2, 1991.

Keywords

Giuseppe Verdi, I masnadieri

Abstract*: Verdi's Artistic Concerns and Practical Considerations in the Composition of *I masnadieri*: a Newly-Discovered Version of "Tremate, o miseri"

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For aesthetic and pragmatic reasons that differed according to varying circumstances, Verdi often modified his musical-dramatic conceptions during the course of an opera's composition. *I masnadieri* (1847) has proved especially enlightening in evaluating influences on Verdi's compositional decisions at various stages in the opera's genesis. Verdi's revisions in *I masnadieri* reflect his concerns with fulfilling his aesthetic principles and satisfying the practical circumstances at hand.

Three significant revisions from *I masnadieri* are discussed in this paper. The first involves Verdi's rescoring of the Act III duet for the soprano, Amalia, and the tenore, Carlo. The second focuses on the revised *fioritura* and transposition of Amalia's Act I *cavatina*, "Lo sguardo avea degli angeli". The third, and by far the most revealing, revision centers on a newly discovered early version of the baritone, Francesco's, Act I *cabaletta*, "Tremate, o miseri". A

comparison of Verdi's recomposition of this number with his early setting encapsulates many of his artistic concerns and practical considerations found on a smaller scale elsewhere in *I masnadieri*. Reflecting Verdi's choices in matters of text declamation, melodic contour and character, structural articulation or continuity, internal proportional relationships, dramatic propriety, accommodation of a singer's vocal abilities, and adaptation of the music to stage movement; the two version of the *cabaletta* provide an opportunity to assess motivations that prompted the composer's compositional choices.

By investigating how Verdi reconciled his increasingly demanding aesthetic values with the often absurd, inflexible demands of the *ottocento* opera world -- without destroying his creation in the process but rather improving it; the study of the genesis of *I masnadieri* affords a glimpse into the complexities of his creative world.