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## In memoriam Mario Medici

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Giuseppe Verdi, Istituto di Studi Verdiani

## In Memoriam Mario Medici

On the 26th of March 1990 Mario Medici died in Rome. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this man to the world of Verdi studies and performances, and to the American Institute for Verdi Studies. In the words of Pierluigi Petrobelli, his successor as Director of the Istituto di studi verdiani of Parma, "If today Verdi studies are one of the richest areas of musicological research in terms of interest and results, if the strongest and most original interpreters of Verdi in our time want and use for their performances a critically defined edition, all of this is a result of the tenacity, conviction, energy and ability of Mario Medici to affirm and spread a conception of Verdian theatre which is a true reflection of the composer's conception."

Maestro Medici, as he was most frequently addressed, was born in Modena in 1913, a hundred years after his hero and idol, Giuseppe Verdi, and in the same region of Italy, Emilia-Romagna. In the early and middle years of the 1930's he studied composition at the Bologna Conservatory where a student work was praised by Stravinsky; and a number of his later compositions were performed in Italy and abroad by such notables as Luigi Dallapiccola, Adrian Boult and Bernardo Molinari. His compositional career was interrupted, in fact terminated, by the Second World War. He was an officer in the Italian army, was captured, and sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in the United States, a country he came to admire enormously. During the 1950's he became a respected critic and writer on music as well as a librarian at the Bologna Conservatory and later the Parma Conservatory. It was during this period that he appears to have conceived, and then, against heavy odds, brought to fruition his idea of an Institute devoted to Verdi studies. This has generally been recognized as his finest achievement. During his tenure as director, a period of eighteen years, he gathered an incomparable photocopy archive of documents and letters to and from Verdi and his circle. He also

amassed a large and valuable library of secondary sources, an excellent collection of early piano-vocal scores of the Verdi operas and much additional related material. Under his direction the *Istituto* published numerous volumes of *Bolletini* and *Quaderni* devoted to such operas as *Un ballo in maschera*, *La forza del destino*, *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, *Stiffelio*, *Jérusalem* and *Il corsaro*. He also initiated a series of congresses devoted to Verdi studies that stimulated much interest in the scholarly community (Venice 1966, Verona-Parma-Busseto 1969, Milan 1972 and Chicago 1974). The second of these was devoted to *Don Carlo* and the fourth to *Simon Boccanegra*. Medici published proceedings, called *Atti*, for the first three of these events. About the time of the *Don Carlo* congress Medici was also Artistic Director of Italy's finest outdoor theater (1968-70), the Arena of Verona, where among his notable achievements was the introduction to Italy of Plácido Domingo and remarkable productions of *Don Carlos* and *Turandot*.

When in the mid 1970's support for the Parma Institute dropped to a critically low level, there was a fear that the valuable collection of letters and documents would be dispersed, and even possibly lost. To a considerable extent as a result of this fear, the American Institute for Verdi Studies was founded. From the outset Medici was an 'Advisor ad honorem'; he enthusiastically encouraged our activities, and with the Parma Institute, joined the American Institute in cosponsoring the Fifth International Congress of Verdi Studies, the *Macbeth* Congress in Danville, Kentucky. Here he received an honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, an award which gave him immense pleasure. The same year as the Kentucky Congress, 1977, Medici gave the recently founded American Institute permission to film a substantial portion of the holdings of the Parma Institute, and this group of some 30,000 frames of microfilm became one of the cornerstones of the current Verdi Archive at New York University. A year later appeared what is probably

Medici's most significant publication, the *Carteggio Verdi-Boito*, coedited with Marcello Conati.

During the years Medici directed the Parma Institute, one of the most active American Verdi scholars was Scott Stringham, a Professor of Music at the University of West Virginia at Morgantown. One of Scott's passions was flying, and, unfortunately, shortly after the Chicago Congress in which he took part, he died in an accident. With the assistance of Maestro Medici, Scott's widow, Mary, was able to carry out a fervent wish, that his ashes be buried in the small cemetery of the church at Roncole, the village where Verdi had been born. Mary, who knew that Scott and I were planning together a thematic catalog of Verdi's music, donated

his considerable Verdi collection to the American Institute, contributing thereby an important segment of the Verdi Archive.

It seems especially fitting that Mario Medici should have asked his wife, Luciana, to arrange that his ashes be buried next to those of Scott Stringham in the tiny Roncole cemetery. And it was for that burial ceremony that Professor Petrobelli offered an eloquent homage partially quoted above.

On behalf of the many American scholars, performers and *amatori* who now share some portion of your vision of Verdi, of the composer who laughed and cried for all humanity, I say farewell and thank you, Mario Medici.

MARTIN CHUSID

## Announcement

From the 3rd to the 7th of March, 1993, the American Institute for Verdi Studies in conjunction with Opera Northern Ireland and The Queen's University of Belfast will sponsor the Seventh International Congress of Verdi Studies. The subject of the event is "Verdi's Middle Period: The Operas from *Luisa Miller* to *Un ballo in maschera*", and there will be a production of either *Le trouvère* or *Il trovatore* during the Congress. Members of the American Institute for Verdi Studies and others interested in attending the Congress should send their names and addresses to the Seventh International Verdi Congress, Department of Music FAS, 24 Waverly Place Room 268, New York University, New York, NY 10003, attn: Congress Information. A local arrangements group in Belfast will assist those attending the Congress in obtaining lodging in The Queen's University area, Congress registration, and tickets for the performance. Transportation should be arranged privately.