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## From the Director's Desk

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Giuseppe Verdi, American Institute for Verdi Studies

## From the Director's Desk

Two Verdi events, one past, one pending, are of prime interest to members and friends of the American Institute for Verdi Studies. In March of this past year, 1993, the Institute organized and sponsored the Belfast International Verdi Congress, in conjunction with Opera Northern Ireland and the Queen's University of Belfast. Entitled "Verdi's Middle Period: From *Luisa Miller* to *Un ballo in maschera*," the event included a recital during which the Liszt "Paraphrase on themes from *Rigoletto*", "Variations on a theme ['Caro nome'] from *Rigoletto*" and the Verdi String Quartet were performed; and the opera *Il trovatore* was presented at the Belfast Grand Opera House. An exhibit of Verdi materials was prepared by the American Institute's staff and a panel discussion on the topic "Verdi Visualized: Staging his Operas in the 19th Century and Today" drew a sizable audience. Participating on the panel were Pierluigi Petrobelli, Director of the Istituto nazionale di studi verdiani, who delivered the opening remarks, Julian Budden, author of the acclaimed study, *The Operas of Verdi*, Kenneth Montgomery, Artistic Director of Opera Northern Ireland, who conducted the performance of *Il trovatore* and Javier Lopez Piñon, Stage Director for *Il trovatore*; the author of this report moderated and presented closing remarks.

The highlight of the event, as it should have been, however, was the set of papers read at the Congress. Although I hardly qualify as an impartial observer, in my experience at major international conferences on Mozart, Haydn, Dvorák, Schubert and Verdi I have never heard a set of papers whose general level of quality and interest was as high. But you will be able to judge this for yourselves. Included in this and the next issue of the *Verdi Newsletter* are a complete set of the abstracts of the papers read at the Congress.

The second event is forthcoming, a conference on "Verdi's French Operas" at Sarasota, Florida, to take place March 25 and 26 of 1994. Again organized by the American Institute for Verdi Studies, it is co-sponsored by the Sarasota Opera Association, which will mount performances, before and during the conference, of the first French language staging in the United States of *Les Vêpres siciliennes*. It will be conducted by the Artistic Director of the Sarasota Opera Company, Victor De Renzi. Participating in the conference, in alphabetical order, are:

**Elizabeth Bartlett**, Associate Professor of Music at Duke University, discovered new material on *Les Vêpres siciliennes* specifically related to rehearsals supervised by Verdi. She will analyze archival documents from Paris and discuss some of the revisions made before the opera's premiere.

**Martin Chusid**, Professor of Music and Director of the American Institute for Verdi Studies at New York University, is the author of *A Catalog of Verdi's Operas* and co-author of *The Verdi Companion*. He has edited *Rigoletto*, the inaugural volume of the new critical edition of Verdi's complete works. Professor Chusid will discuss the tonal-dramatic associations of the key of C major in *Les Vêpres siciliennes* and some relationships between *Vêpres* and *Trovatore*.

**H. Robert Cohen**, Professor of Musicology at the University of Maryland and Director of the Center for Studies in Nineteenth-Century Music, has published critical studies of the original *mise-en-scène* of 19th century opera, and the original staging manuals for twelve Parisian operatic premieres. He will present a paper dealing with Berlioz as critic of the "young Italian composer," Verdi.

**Phillip Gossett**, Dean of Humanities and Professor of Music at the University of Chicago, is President-Elect of the American Musicological Society. He is General Editor of the new editions of the music of Verdi and Rossini. An authority in the area of performing practices, he will explain the way Italian 19th-century composers reworked their Italian operas for the French stage.

**James Hepokoski**, Professor of Musicology at the University of Minnesota has published books on Verdi's *Otello* and *Falstaff*, and edited the original production book for *Otello*. He is currently editing *Falstaff*, the subject of his dissertation, for the new critical edition. Professor Hepokoski will discuss ternary aria structure in *Les Vêpres siciliennes*.

**Jeffrey Langford**, Director of Doctoral Studies at Manhattan School of Music, wrote his dissertation on the operas of Berlioz. His articles include "Text Setting in Verdi's *Jérusalem* and *Don Carlos*." Professor Langford will present material on French text setting and its influence on rhythm in *Les Vêpres siciliennes*.

**David Lawton**, scholar and conductor, Professor of Music and Director of Graduate Studies at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, has edited *Il trovatore* for the new critical edition and is preparing *Le trouvère*. Dr. Lawton is also Secretary and Treasurer of the AIVS. He will discuss aspects of translating the text of *Trovatore* into the French version of the opera.

In addition to the opera in the evening of Saturday, March 26, that same afternoon there will be a concert of rarely heard music by Verdi as well as a staged performance of The Four Seasons Ballet. Both events are at the Opera House.

There will be no charge for attendance at the conference, which will take place at Felding Hall. While tickets for the opera are scarce, you may inquire at the Sarasota Opera Box Office (813) 953-7030. Other performances of the Verdi events will take place Wednesday evening, March 23 (*Les Vêpres siciliennes*) and Monday, March 28 (Verdi concert and Four Seasons Ballet). Other performances of the season include the opera *The Bartered Bride* (Tuesday, 2 pm, March 22 and Friday evening, March 25), *Madame Butterfly* (Thursday and Sunday evenings, March 24 and 27), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Tuesday evening, March 22, and Sunday at 2 pm, March 27) and a concert of American music (Wednesday, March 23, at noon).

For hotel or motel accommodations during this busy season, it is best to contact your own travel agent or the Sarasota Chamber of Commerce.

Other events of significance for Verdians took place during the Fall of 1993. The Metropolitan Opera successfully staged *I lombardi* and the first New York performances of *Stiffelio* using the new critical edition. The performing materials for *Stiffelio* were prepared by Kathleen Hansell, Music Editor for the University of Chicago Press and Managing Editor of *The Works of Giuseppe Verdi*.

Additionally, the Chicago Lyric Opera mounted the first Western Hemisphere performance of *Il trovatore* using David Lawton's new critical edition. At the invitation of Lee and Brena Freeman, the generous patrons of the new Verdi edition and of the Chicago Lyric Opera, my wife and I were privileged to attend the successful opening on December 11. Of special interest in this performance was the effectiveness of the chorus, a component of the opera often overlooked in favor of the brilliant solo parts.