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ISLG Bulletin

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of the Italian Studies Library Group

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ISLG Chairman's Message

Chris Michaelides
ISLG Chair
The British Library

The 2013 Annual Lecture of the Italian Studies Library Group celebrated the bicentenary of Giuseppe Verdi's birth. Stefano Castelvecchi's 'The Modernity of Verdi's *Traviata*' was a lively, entertaining, and well-illustrated lecture which held a large and appreciative audience in thrall. We are grateful to Dr Castelvecchi for allowing us to publish a follow-up article based on his lecture and our thanks go also to the Royal Opera House for its permission to use the photograph of Maria Callas, as *Violetta*, in its 1958 performances of *La traviata* both on the flyer of the lecture and on the cover of this double issue of the ISLG *Bulletin*, which is dedicated to the composer. It includes studies on Verdi's compositional practices, on the social and political background to his work (his problems with censorship are touched upon in two articles), and an essay describing the British Library's rich and diverse Verdi collections - autographs, copyists' manuscripts used for performances in London and elsewhere, printed scores (full scores and first editions), and sound recordings.

This is the first thematic issue of the *Bulletin* which, thanks to Andrea Del Cornò's enthusiasm, initiative, gentle and courteous patience is going from strength to strength. My thanks both to Andrea and also to Cecilia Izzo, from this issue Co-editor of the *Bulletin*.

ISLG Annual General Meeting, 2013, British Library

Charlie Carpenter
University of Reading Library

The 2013 ISLG Annual General Meeting took place on 24 June at the British Library. The Chair, Chris Michaelides, opened the meeting by welcoming those in attendance and noting many more members would be attending the exhibition visit and annual lecture which followed.

Following acceptance of the minutes from the 2012 AGM, a review of the 2012 annual lecture took place. It was noted the well-received lecture, given by Professor Stephen Gundle, University of Warwick, entitled 'After a dictator falls. The shadow of Mussolini in post-war Italy', was attended by over sixty people. An article based on the lecture was included in the 2011-2012 ISLG Bulletin. In addition, new advertising channels for the annual lecture had been established through previous speakers, via the Association for the Study of Modern Italy (ASMI) and the British Italian Society.

Discussion on the subject of the forthcoming 2013 events then took place. Members were particularly pleased to learn over one hundred people had requested to attend this year's annual lecture by Dr Stefano Castelvecchi on 'The modernity of Verdi's *Traviata*', which was partly due to the lecture being widely advertised and direct liaising with the Royal Opera House and the Friends of Covent Garden. The visit, following the AGM, to the British Library's exhibition on Benjamin Britten was greatly anticipated and it was noted the WESLINE (West European Studies Library and Information Network) conference, would be taking place in September, in Oxford.

The Treasurer, Hélène Fernandes, reported the Group's finances were sound, with an operatic surplus in excess of £1,400. It was noted that while individual membership had risen, institutional membership had fallen slightly.

In his capacity as E-secretary, Chris Michaelides advised that Committee members' email addresses on the ISLG website (hosted by the British Library) had now been updated and all except the most recent issues of the ISLG Bulletin were now available on the website. Meanwhile, Hélène Fernandes reported that the ISLG's presence on Twitter had made steady progress, with twenty-six followers, ranging from individuals to cultural institutions and Italian publishers.

The double issue of the ISLG Bulletin (2011-2012) was published earlier in the year, while work on the 2013 thematic issue on Giuseppe Verdi was in progress, with publication expected in 2014.

Members of the group then presented updates from their institutions: The British Library's new Chief Executive, Roly Keating, took up his post in September 2012 and had already made a positive impression by visiting all parts of the Library in his first few months. Meanwhile, the British Library's Newspaper Library at Colindale will close in November 2013, with the newspapers being made available at the St Pancras site from February 2014; At Cambridge, the Modern and Medieval Languages Library, along with other Faculty libraries, will now report to the University Library, rather than their respective faculties, while at the University Library, Resource Description and Access (RDA) cataloguing was implemented in March 2013; The Deputy Librarian at the London Library had retired and recruitment for a successor was in progress. Also, an event involving the London Library and the British-Italian Society was planned to take place in April 2014; The Bodleian's Librarian, Sarah Thomas ,would be leaving in August to take up her new post of Vice-President at Harvard Library, while the plan to build a new Humanities Library, which had been on hold due to financial constraints, is to be revisited. As with Cambridge, Oxford had implemented the new RDA cataloguing standard in the spring and, in common with other UK Legal Deposit libraries, E-Legal Deposit (e-journals, e-books, blogs and UK internet domains) began arriving in April. At the Taylor Institution, the Acting Librarian in Charge, Jill Hughes, retired after forty-four years at the Institution and more renovations of the building were planned for summer 2013; At the University of Reading Library, a major collections review of all stock was due to end in July, with some lesser used items from the Italian collections having already been relegated to an Off-site Store. The extra space created in the University Library as a result of the review will enable a major refurbishment over the next two years, during summer vacations; The Library budget at Trinity College Dublin continued to be subject to financial constraints; At The University of Warwick, Peter Larkin, who was responsible for the Italian collections, had retired.

Plans for 2014 were discussed. Regarding a possible subject and speaker for a future annual lecture, it was noted the history of science had never been covered and there were plenty of Italian candidates who could speak on the topic. The possibility of an ISLG workshop, designed to support librarians who are not specialists in Italian, but nevertheless support the subject, was suggested. Although such workshops had successfully been delivered by the ISLG in the past, it was felt at present the committee was small and too overstretched to provide a workshop;

however, it was agreed the idea was good in principle and should be revisited.

The meeting then adjourned and there followed an informative guided tour of the British Library's exhibition on Benjamin Britten, entitled *Poetry in sound: The music of Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)*, given by exhibition's curator, Dr Nicolas Bell.

Following this, Dr Stefano Castelvecchi delivered a fascinating lecture on 'The modernity of Verdi's *Traviata*' in the British Library Conference Centre. The substantial and enthusiastic audience were suitably impressed by Dr Castelvecchi's 'performance', including his impromptu singing!

Giuseppe Verdi, an engraving by G. Gonin (1867)

Reproduced with permission of the Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani, Parma

The Modernity of Verdi's *Traviata*

Stefano Castelvecchi
University of Cambridge

The librettos and posters printed on the occasion of the first production of *La traviata* (Venice, Teatro La Fenice, 1853) specify, under the list of *dramatis personae*, that the opera's story is set in «Paris and its environs around the year 1700». Today's opera-goer is likelier to have attended productions in which *La traviata* rather takes place in Verdi's own time, which is in fact what the composer intended. In this, Verdi was in line with his immediate literary model for the opera: the play *La dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Dumas *fils*, first staged in 1852, also takes place in contemporary Paris. (Dumas had derived the play from his own novel of the same title, of which he had published a first version in 1848 and a second in 1851).

A first clue to the meaning of that change of setting may be sought in some important responses to the opera by critics of its time. In 1859 - that is, at the height of Verdi's successful theatrical career - the musician-critic Abramo Basevi published the first monograph to be written on Verdi's operas.[1] Arguably the most notorious passage in the book, and one with a proven potential to surprise modern readers, is that in which *La traviata* is attacked at length on moral grounds. Basevi saw the opera as part of a recent tendency towards moral decay in literature, one that reflected a similar tendency in society at large; with his music, Verdi had glamorised:

> «a foul and immoral subject that is universally enjoyed at present only because the very vice it depicts is itself universal today. […] [W]ith the mores observed in Italy ten or fifteen years ago *La traviata* would not have been such a success; perhaps Verdi […] would have been unable to descend to ennobling a harlot».[2]

This article is based on the 2013 Annual Lecture of the Italian Studies Library Group, British Library, 24 June 2013.

[1] This is the oft-cited *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Florence: Tofani, 1859). For an English translation, see Abramo Basevi, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi*, trans. by Edward Schneider with Stefano Castelvecchi, ed. by Stefano Castelvecchi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[2] Basevi, *The Operas of Giuseppe Verdi*, pp. 195, 202.

Basevi's attitude, however alien to us, is in fact likely to be historically representative: it is hard to imagine that, in the 1850s, he would have been the only member of the Florentine bourgeoisie to condemn 'free love' (and the apparent condoning of it in Verdi's opera). Rather more noteworthy than Basevi's moralising (besides his attempt to place *Traviata* within a broad literary trend that includes Stendhal, Balzac and George Sand) is that few of his contemporaries would have been able to discern and articulate with as much precision the complex of features that characterise this opera and its modernity: its strong French connotations (partly stemming from the use of certain musical forms), as well as the qualities that bring it very close to the traditions of domestic tragedy and bourgeois drama (the association of pathos with a contemporary setting, private situations, and characters of a social condition similar to that of the spectators).

Basevi's assessment of *Traviata* is in partial agreement with that of another critic also writing in 1859, the young Niccola Marselli. The two writers detected similar elements in *Traviata* (its generic specificity and its connections with modern life and the literature and drama that reflected it; its sympathetic portrayal of the female protagonist and tolerance towards a certain kind of amorous relationship), but they attributed opposite value to them. Marselli placed *La dame aux camélias* in a literary tradition (beginning with Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*) that had managed to turn seemingly lascivious women into objects of compassion; for him, Verdi, «artista modernissimo», was «the artist of our society, in that he gives musical expression to modern drama».[3]

Indeed, it could be argued that many of the problems surrounding *La dame aux camélias* and *La traviata* in their time were engendered not just by these works' tragic and supposedly immoral subject, but by their associating that kind of subject with a contemporary setting - by their serious treatment of modernity. After all, Verdi's opera *was* accepted for production at Venice's Teatro La Fenice in 1853, but at the expense of its present-day setting, which had to be put back by a century and a half. Such a move will be better understood as part of a broader historical picture.

In the eighteenth century, the theatre of Italy and France was still in the grip of a classicist theory by which tragedy had to be associated with the distant kings and heroes of antiquity, whose actions were bound to have ramifications in the public sphere (often even affecting the destinies of nations). Tragedy's rough equivalent on the musical stage was governed by similar *convenienze* (a term suggesting both 'conventions'

[3] Niccola Marselli, *La ragione della musica moderna* (Naples: Detken, 1859), pp. 76, 79-80.

and 'proprieties'): *opera seria* most often focused on protagonists such as Dido and Aeneas, Alexander the Great, or Julius Caesar. The depiction of contemporary life and ordinary people, on the other hand, was deemed appropriate for comedy of one kind or another - and therefore for *opera buffa*. In such a context, the idea of a tragedy in present-day clothes was quite simply an abomination, which is why there was such entrenched resistance to the then emerging forms of 'bourgeois' drama - where 'bourgeois' refers less to the social station of the characters than to the serious treatment of contemporary, private life. Such developments affected the operatic stage, where a number of works borrowed their plots from sentimental literature and bourgeois theatre. These operas, not unlike their literary sources, would typically stage the vicissitudes of virtuous characters (often women) in great and undeserved distress.[4]

In spite of the changing approach to genre in nineteenth-century *melodramma*, and the concomitant widening of the range of possible operatic subjects and settings, some aspects of the culture were remarkably resilient. Not long before the time of *La traviata*, the staging of Verdi's *Stiffelio* (1850) had proved problematic, partly because the opera presented serious, morally sensitive subject-matter in quasi-contemporary costumes (the action takes place around 1800). Verdi would later be compelled to undertake a heavy rewriting of *Stiffelio* - its story and music shoehorned into the thirteenth-century mould of *Aroldo* (1857) - and this even though the original does not possess the degree of tragic realism found in *Traviata*.

It would be decades before Verdi's Violetta was allowed to appear on stage in modern clothes. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century settings are evident in the iconography of *La traviata* from the entire second half of the nineteenth century, the first production in 1850s costumes apparently being the one celebrating the opera's fiftieth anniversary in 1903 - a couple of years after the composer's death.[5] The enduring power of realistic stagings to upset audiences is suggested as late as 1897 by Eduard Hanslick's comments on a Viennese production of Puccini's *Bohème* (the great music critic was evidently unaware that he knew only 'sanitised' versions of *Traviata*):

[4] On these developments, see Stefano Castelvecchi, *Sentimental Opera: Questions of Genre in the Age of Bourgeois Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[5] See Emilo Sala, *The Sounds of Paris in Verdi's 'La traviata'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 153.

> «The few earlier operas that deal seriously with affairs between wanton courtesans and weak youths (Traviata, Carmen, and lately Manon) have at least dressed them in picturesque national or historic garb, or set them in romantic surrondings and thus raised them out of the lowest regions of everyday wretchedness. With Bohème, our composers take the last step towards the naked, prosaic dissoluteness of our time».[6]

All the uglinesses of real life (poverty, ill health, immorality) would be acceptable to the audiences of grand opera only if presented in rather anodyne, indeterminate settings.

Since 1903 there has of course been many a *Traviata* in 1850s costumes; and in more recent decades, in line with a widespread trend, numerous productions have even made the unfortunate Violetta *our* contemporary. The tendency to bring this subject up to date can be spotted as early as 1921: *Camille*, a silent film based on Dumas's *Dame aux camélias*, is determinedly topical, beginning from its stunning art deco sets.[7] But I would argue that transformations of this sort are not as painless in the case of *Traviata* - perhaps especially because of the music. In the wake of the radicalism of Dumas's play, Verdi took pains to make *Traviata* sound as 'Paris c. 1850' as possible. The critic Camille Bellaigue, a Parisian through and through, would later make it clear that what he called the opera's «quest for topicality» *includes* its music, and that productions in seventeenth- or eighteenth-century garb flew in the face of this patent quality.[8]

The web of relationships between *Traviata* and real life is complex, to say the least. At the origin of one of the most powerful feminine myths of modern times is a very real woman.[9] The Marguerite Gautier of *La dame aux camélias*, and therefore indirectly the Violetta Valéry of *Traviata*, is based on Marie Duplessis (*née* Alphonsine Plessis), who at the age of fifteen moved from Normandy to Paris, where she rapidly became a celebrity courtesan, dying of consumption aged only twenty-three in 1847. Duplessis - who emerges from contemporary descriptions as an extraordinary mixture of intelligence, cynicism and over-delicate

[6] Quoted from Arthur Groos and Roger Parker, eds., *Giacomo Puccini: La bohème* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 133.

[7] The film starred Alla Nazimova and Rudolph Valentino, and was produced by Metro Pictures (shortly to merge into Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).

[8] Camille Bellaigue, *Verdi: Biographie critique* (Paris: Henri Laurens, [1912]), esp. pp. 53 ('recherche de l'actualité') and 54.

[9] At the same time, it is worth noting that this mythical power reached its zenith through *Traviata*, which presents a less indecent and more idealised picture of the protagonist than its literary source.

sensitivity (and perhaps as what we would call a bipolar, or manic-depressive, personality) - was Dumas's first true love, and is buried a hundred yards from him in the cemetery of Montmartre.

Verdi's first Parisian sojourn began in 1847 - only a few months after Duplessis's death - and lasted until 1849; he was therefore in the city when the novel about her was published (and indeed resided in the fashionable rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, where Duplessis had lived for some time). In 1849, Verdi caused a scandal by returning to his native Busseto with his partner Giuseppina Strepponi, to whom he was not yet married and who had borne several illegitimate children to earlier partners. On 21 January 1852 Verdi wrote to Antonio Barezzi (his sponsor, and the father of his first, by then long-deceased wife) in words that could well have been spoken by Alfredo Germont to his father Giorgio in the second act of *Traviata*:

> «I have nothing to hide. In my house there lives a lady, free, independent, a lover like myself of solitude. […] Neither I nor she owes anyone at all an account of our actions. […] And even if it is a bad thing, who has the right to ostracise us? I will say this, however: in my house she is entitled to as much respect as myself - more even».[10]

Verdi went on to mention Giuseppina's entitlements on account of her personality and conduct, and his own deep-seated aversion to social conformity. As early as a dozen days later, now back in Paris, the composer may have attended the premiere of *La dame aux camélias* (2 February 1852); he is anyway not unlikely to have seen Dumas's play, which was given there for one hundred nights in a row. By 18 September, again in Busseto, he certainly asked to be sent a copy of the drama, from which point things proceeded at remarkable speed.[11] The text must have reached him by early October. By mid-October at the latest he had penned a 'synoptic sketch' for the opera's first act - an extraordinary document displaying on one-and-a-half sides of music paper his plan for

[10] Translation from John Rosselli, *The Life of Verdi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 82.

[11] Much of this chronology is derived from Fabrizio Della Seta's introduction (pp. xi-xl) to his critical edition of *La traviata* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Milan: Ricordi, 1997).

the entire act, complete with the main melodic ideas and an outline of the onstage action.[12] On 20 October the librettist Francesco Maria Piave wrote in a letter that Verdi was very excited by this subject, and had given him five days to draft the scenario for the opera.

The period of the opera's setting was soon the object of dispute. Piave began by taking the story back to the first half of the seventeenth century, prompting the baritone Felice Varesi (who would create the role of Germont *père*) to comment, «I don't know, though, if a story of our time transported more than a century into the past can produce the same effect».[13] Verdi was still adamant about retaining the present-day setting on 1 January 1853:

> «A subject of our own time. Perhaps another would not have done it because of the costumes, the period, and a thousand other silly scruples … I am doing it with the greatest of pleasure».[14]

On 6 January 1853, the impresario Giovan Battista Lasina wrote to the administration of the Teatro La Fenice: «Maestro Verdi wishes, asks, and begs that the costumes of his opera *La traviata* remain, as they are, of the present time, and that the era not be removed, as the poet Piave has done, to the time of Richelieu». According to Lasina, Verdi thought that parts of the opera would have 'to be sacrificed if his request is not honored', as he would have to rewrite some of the music in the first two acts; furthermore, the composer was ready to take personal responsibility before the audience for this choice of contemporary setting.[15] The music at risk of being 'sacrificed' was presumably part of the *introduzione* (the opera's opening number) and part of the second-act finale: the two *soirées* staged in these numbers are accompanied by very contemporary dances, including waltzes and fashionable polkas (one of which is used as the curtain-raiser to the opera).[16]

[12] A facsimile of the sketch can be seen in Giuseppe Verdi, *La traviata: Autograph Sketches and Drafts*, ed. by Fabrizio Della Seta (Parma: Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani, 2000). This synoptic sketch is the only known surviving document of the kind for Verdi, though it is conceivable that he may have produced other, similar ones.

[13] Letter of 10 November 1852. Translation from Della Seta's introduction, p. xiv.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] This and other connections with contemporary Paris are explored especially in Sala, *The Sounds of Paris*, passim.

The administration replied that the audiences of grand theatres such as La Fenice were unwilling to renounce the splendour of period costumes, as already demonstrated by the shouting elicited by *Stiffelio*. By 6 March 1853, the day of the premiere, Verdi had conceded with great reluctance that the setting of *La traviata* be set back to circa 1700. As noted earlier, he would not live to see the opera staged the way he had imagined it.

The abovementioned synoptic sketch for the first act of *La traviata* shows that, even before seeing a single line of the libretto, or before the opera's title or its protagonists' names had been established, Verdi was already thinking about the staging of the characters' main psychological drives and conflicts. Moreover, he had already made his boldest decision, visualising the present-day dinner party that opens the drama and beginning to hear the music that would eventually accompany it. This kind of composer-dramatist approach - a global conception of the opera, including its drama, *mise-en-scène* and music - is a phenomenon that emerges in the nineteenth century, as variously demonstrated by Meyerbeer, Wagner, and Verdi himself.[17] The synoptic sketch for the first act of *La traviata*, then, allows us a glimpse not only of the modernity of this opera, but also - and in a different sense - of the modernity of its composer.

[17] See Fabrizio Della Seta, *Italia e Francia nell'Ottocento* (Turin: EDT, 1993), pp. 215-218.

Verdi at the British Library

Nicolas Bell
The British Library

Research into the music of Giuseppe Verdi has always benefitted from an abundance of documentary material, widely spread across public and private collections worldwide but concentrated in a few notable repositories. The archives of Verdi's publisher Ricordi are pre-eminent in this regard: as well as preserving the autograph scores of twenty-seven of Verdi's thirty-one operas, they are custodians of extensive correspondence, set and costume designs and much other material. Because of its historical and cultural importance, the Archivio Storico Ricordi was recently placed under the supervision of the Italian Ministry of Culture, and the owners of Ricordi & Co. are actively promoting the archive through cataloguing, restoration and digitisation. Another very significant collection is that of the Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani in Parma, which has been active since the 1960s in assembling a vast collection of copies of documents. The Bibliothèque nationale de France owns the scores of three of the remaining operas (*Jérusalem*, *Les Vêpres siciliennes* and *Don Carlos*) and last year mounted images of four hundred letters from Verdi, predominantly to his French publisher Léon Escudier, on its website gallica.bnf.fr. Other libraries have been more recent beneficiaries: a little over a decade ago, the Beinecke Library at Yale University was presented with the Frederick R. Koch collection, which among many other things boasts one of the largest collections of Verdi's letters outside Italy. The Villa Verdi, inhabited to this day by the Verdi family, also retains a vitally important archive, with numerous sketches and early drafts.

In this context, the British Library's Verdi collections are relatively less significant, but nevertheless worthy of note. They include the autograph full score of the one opera not accounted for at Ricordi or the Bibliothèque nationale, *Attila*, as well as some smaller autographs and many copyists' manuscripts used for performances in London and elsewhere. Before considering these manuscript sources, though, some mention should be made of the printed collections. The Library has actively and systematically collected printed scores of Verdi's music ever since his lifetime, and now has a near-comprehensive collection of nineteenth-century editions together with selective coverage for the twentieth century. As was customary at the time, Verdi's operas were originally published only in vocal score with piano reduction, the full orchestral score being available only on hire from the publishers. The

Library has managed to acquire full scores of almost all the operas, often in the limited editions that the publishers never intended for sale. The earliest of these was the full score of *La traviata*, printed in 1855, for which the British Library's copy is heavily annotated with performance directions and corrections made by the German conductor Willibald Kaehler, as well as a German translation of the text. This score was acquired by Paul Hirsch for his music library in Frankfurt, a collection which has since 1946 formed part of the British Library's music collections, and has the pressmark Hirsch II.922. Other full scores clearly used in performance include *Falstaff* (printed in 1893, also with a German translation added: BL I.572.n.). All of these scores are pragmatic rather than beautiful, lacking such niceties as a title-page; some are explicitly labelled 'la presente edizione non deve considerarsi quale pubblicazione'. Some were reproduced lithographically, such as *Aida* (1872, BL K.10.c.11.) or *Il trovatore* (1880, BL I.572.). Since 1983 a complete edition of *The Works of Giuseppe Verdi* has been actively underway, published jointly by the University of Chicago Press and Ricordi, and most of the remaining operas for which only manuscript scores were hitherto available have now been edited in this series. The autograph manuscripts of *Otello*, *Falstaff* and the Requiem as well as various smaller manuscripts have been reproduced in photographic facsimile, but it is more likely that future reproductions will be in the digital domain.

Beyond the full scores and first editions, Verdi's music has been published in a particularly diverse range of formats. Ricordi published some of the operas in 'Edizioni da bibliofili', in sumptuous bindings on heavier paper with added illustrations and preliminaries. Many others were more practical: arrangements for piano solo, piano duet and various popular ensembles including brass band served an important function in disseminating Verdi's music to audiences beyond the opera house. Meanwhile, from an early stage Verdi's favourite melodies became the themes of variations, fantasias, even polkas and quadrilles at the more popular end of the market. Of the more than 3,000 scores of Verdi's music in the British Library's catalogue of printed music, the vast majority are arrangements of some sort or other; collectively they attest to the remarkable and uninterrupted popularity of his music across all branches of musical life. The British Library Sound Archive is likewise home to more than 20,000 recordings of Verdi's music, ranging from cylinder recordings made in the years immediately following Verdi's death to present-day DVDs and digital downloads.

The music manuscripts of Verdi in the British Library are much fewer in number, but make up for this in the richness of their content. The first example of Verdi's handwriting to enter the Library's collections arrived in January 1891 as part of the bequest of Andrew George Kurtz, secretary of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society. He amassed a substantial collection of composers' letters, including four particularly interesting letters from Verdi to Marie-Pierre Escudier, founder of the Parisian journal *La France Musicale* and brother of Léon mentioned above (Add. MS 33965, ff. 399-405).

Since full scores of the operas were a necessary precondition for any performance but often remained unpublished for several years after composition, the growing demand for performance materials was met by manuscript copies of the full score and instrumental parts (singers would use the vocal scores, which were generally available in print some time before the first performance, though published in trade editions only after the performance). The manuscript performing materials were normally produced by or for Ricordi, often using a number of different in-house copyists, but in further-flung opera houses the copies seem to have been made at a second remove. All of them can, though, give important evidence of the alterations and cuts made in particular contexts and for particular singers, some of which have remained in standard use until today, when the new critical edition based on the composer's own intentions is gradually coming into more regular use on the stage.

Several of these manuscript copies have entered the British Library's collections over the years, mainly full scores, but also a few sets of parts. Between 1878 and 1892 the Library purchased several scores from Alfred Mapleson, Queen Victoria's music librarian and brother of James Henry Mapleson, the opera impresario who did more than anyone to promote Italian opera in London in the second half of the nineteenth century. Mapleson's full score of *I due Foscari*, sent by Ricordi for use at the 1862 production at Her Majesty's Theatre, is Add. MS 30980. His full score of *Il trovatore*, used for the 1877 production in the opening season of the newly rebuilt theatre and possibly for earlier productions too, is now BL Add. MSS 33366 and 33367. *Les Vêpres siciliennes* was apparently sent to Mapleson from Paris, as it is repeatedly stamped by Léon Escudier (Add. MSS 34235, 34236). Mapleson's scores of *Ernani* (Add. MSS 34231, 34232) and *Rigoletto* (Add. MSS 34233, 34234) complete this collection.

It seems that Mapleson had retained these scores in his own possession when Her Majesty's Theatre burnt down on 6 December 1867. At that time many of the performing materials were salvaged, and remained in the possession of the Royal Opera House until 1993, when they were transferred to the British Library. These include the printed vocal scores and chorus parts and manuscript instrumental parts used for several of the first English performances of Verdi's operas: *Attila* in 1848 (MS Mus. 1715/59), *Ernani* in 1845 (MS Mus. 1715/60, including a printed full score of Acts 3 and 4, perhaps replacing Mapleson's manuscript score Add. MS 34232), *Luisa Miller* in 1858 (MS Mus. 1715/63, including a printed full score of Acts 3 and 4) and *Nabucco*, performed as 'Nino' in 1846 (MS Mus. 1715/65). There are also printed vocal parts only for *Giovanna D'Arco* (MS Mus. 1715/61) and material for Act 4, scene 4 of *Jérusalem* (MS Mus. 1716/62). Some of these manuscripts are badly charred, and in some cases only a small portion of the material survived the fire. Most important in this collection is the material for *I masnadieri*, for which Verdi himself conducted the first performance on 22 July 1847, at Her Majesty's Theatre. The score was copied from Verdi's autograph (now in the Ricordi archive) and although it does not contain any annotations by Verdi himself, there are many occasions where alterations made to the score and parts may be directly accounted to the composer. As well as the materials salvaged from the theatre, further information about these performances may sometimes be obtained from the archives of the Lord Chamberlain's office, now also in the British Library. Until 1968 the Lord Chamberlain acted as censor of all theatrical performances in Britain, and it was therefore required that libretti of all operas (with translations) be submitted for his scrutiny in advance of performance. Several very early libretti of many of Verdi's operas are therefore found among the Lord Chamberlain's Plays, from the 1850s onwards.

Other conducting scores in the British Library's collections were used further afield. A score of the three-act Italian version of *Rigoletto* is marked as having been used for eight performances in Italy and Germany between 1855 and 1858; this score was later combined with the final act of the four-act French version, used in Paris in 1882 (Hirsch II.920). Another volume from Paul Hirsch's library, Hirsch III.924, is a German copy of *Il trovatore*, with the ownership stamp of the 'Congress. Theateragentie von Fr. Kratz. vorm. F. Holding in Wien', and the stamps of 'C. G.' (apparently the impresario Karl Gaudelius) and 'Th. Rieck'. A copyist's score of *Attila* is unusual in having no performance annotations (Add. MS 33951).

The autograph manuscripts of Verdi in the British Library tell us both more and less than the copies. None of them seems to have been used in performance, and so the details of how a performance came into being cannot be gleaned from the manuscripts. But they do on occasion show the composer's own changes of mind as he wrote down and perfected his composition. This can be seen most clearly in the manuscript of *Attila*, Add. MS 35156.

The autograph full score of *Attila* was purchased by the British (Museum) Library from a Mr Josef Coen on 10 January 1898 for the sum of fifty pounds. Any further information about Josef Coen has so far proved elusive. The score was bound by the British Museum as a single volume, but the original cardboard covers which are retained in the volume show that it was previously in two volumes, the first for Act I and the second for Acts II and III. Each of these cardboard covers bears the signature of 'F. Goring, Firenze'. *Attila* was first published not by Ricordi but by the rival company of Francesco Lucca, which was subsequently bought out by Ricordi. Lucca had commissioned and paid for the work, and therefore was the owner of the manuscript and the copyright. It seems that he sold the manuscript to Mr Goring (about whom we know no more) some time after the production. Given the particular care with which both publishers generally retained physical possession of all scores including the autograph, it is a peculiar anomaly that this manuscript ended up in private hands.

The manuscript demonstrates the composer's normal and highly pragmatic approach to composition, which depended on the perennial fact that the singers needed their music to rehearse and memorise significantly in advance of the instrumentalists. Verdi composed each number of the opera on a separate quire of manuscript paper, numbering and signing the top of each new section. In a first phase, he wrote out the words, the vocal parts, the bass part and the principal melodic line in the instrumental parts. In this skeletal form, each instalment could be sent to the publishers to prepare printed parts for the singers. Later, when the manuscript was returned to the composer, he filled out the remaining portions of the orchestration, returning the completed score to the publishers so that instrumental parts could be copied out in time for the performance. The alterations made by the composer are remarkably small in number, and most emendations are corrections to simple errors, such as changes of clef or corrections to bring a repeated idea into line with its earlier presentation. A more revealing comparison can be made in cases where an earlier, abandoned skeleton score survives. Verdi was unhappy with his first draft of the Introduction, and rewrote more than a hundred bars. His discarded pages are now preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and have been edited alongside the final version in the new

Collected Works. The most substantial alterations are in Odabella's cavatina and cabaletta in Act I: in the first, Verdi rewrote parts of the vocal line, while the second is given a completely new text in a more appropriate verse structure, and the music is newly rewritten.

The British Library's other notable Verdi autograph is Add. MS 37264. Verdi composed his 'Cantica', or *Inno delle Nazioni*, in response to a commission for the opening of the 1862 Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. Verdi completed this short work at the end of March, and his wife delivered the manuscript to London in person, but it was excluded from the official opening on the grounds that it demanded significantly greater forces than were available, and had arrived too late. It was performed a few weeks later at Her Majesty's Theatre on 24 May, following a performance of *The Barber of Seville*, with Mapleson's company combined with the two hundred members of Sir Julius Benedict's Vocal Association. The composer was present at the performance, and the work was published soon thereafter almost simultaneously in Milan by Ricordi, Paris by Escudier and London by Cramer, Beale and Wood. Simultaneous publication was the only way to assert copyright in different territories, and thereby to deter pirate editions. In these circumstances, it seems that three manuscript copies must have been prepared, from which the editions could be engraved quickly in London, Paris and Milan. Since all three published only vocal scores, the composer's full score remained with the London publishers, who sold it to the Library in 1906. The manuscript is hastily written, and once again is strewn with minor 'mechanical' corrections, such as erasures of parts written on the wrong staves. The piece is not frequently performed today, and is chiefly remembered as Verdi's first collaboration with the young Arrigo Boito, and for its clever superimposition of 'God Save the Queen', the Marseillaise and the Inno di Mameli. The instrumental parts used at the first performance remained with the publisher and later entered the BBC's music library. Microfilm copies were made in the 1930s to enable a performance in America, and the film, which remains in the New York Public Library, is now the only record of these parts, the originals of which were destroyed in the Second World War. The piece was famously revived by Arturo Toscanini following the defeat of Mussolini, and formed the basis of a documentary film by the US Office of War Information in 1944 entitled *Hymn of the Nations*.

The remaining musical autographs of Verdi in the British Library are of no textual or musical significance, but form characteristic additions to the collection. In 1862 Verdi wrote out a few bars from *La traviata* in the autograph album of Eliza Wesley, daughter of the composer Samuel and a significant musician in her own right (Add. MS 35026, fol. 69).

Another unknown acquaintance persuaded Verdi to write out a portion of *Luisa Miller* two days after its first performance in Naples. The album from which this was taken was subsequently disbound, and this leaf was purchased in 1940 by the great Austrian writer Stefan Zweig (Zweig MS 95), whose collection of literary, historical and musical manuscripts was presented to the British Library by his heirs.

‘The Opera of the Body’: Verdi’s Compositional Practices

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«[T]o make an opera, you must first have music in your body»
Verdi to Opprandino Arrivabene, 6 March 1868

The bicentenary of Giuseppe Verdi’s birth was celebrated with rather more vigour in Britain in 2013 - including BBC Radio Three’s broadcast of the full range of his works - than his centenary had been in 1913. Then, only a handful of performances of Verdi’s works were staged in the major theatres; the focus of attention had been directed primarily toward that other major composer who shared the same year of birth, Richard Wagner. The muted recognition of Verdi in Edwardian Britain was not so much a reflection of the standing of his operas (still popular, even though both his German rival and Puccini were increasingly replacing Verdi in the enthusiasms of the spectators) but more of the critical suspicions that had accompanied Verdi throughout the nineteenth century. British critics, in common with detractors in Italy and elsewhere, had been disturbed mostly by the feature that significantly marked Verdi’s compositional practices - his emphasis on the body.

Verdi’s immediate predecessors - Bellini, Donizetti and Mercadante - had already begun to draw back from the extremes of Rossinian anti-mimetic sublimity,[1] when music had transcended rather than connected to the body. Verdi went much further in this direction. His comment above (that in order «to make an opera, you must first have music in your body») was made during a discussion about the much-disputed ‘music of the future’, when Verdi expressed concern about the intellectualisation of the compositional process amongst the new generation of composers.[2] Yet it is also a revealing statement about Verdi’s own practices. The critic Alberto Mazzucato in 1847 had declared that the basis of Verdi’s music was an «erupting, fervent, incisive instinct», which created an irresistible sonic drive and energy.[3]

[1] Emanuele Senici, ‘Introduction’, in *Cambridge Companion to Rossini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1-10; here, 4-6.
[2] Annibale Alberti, ed., *Verdi intimo. Carteggio di Giuseppe Verdi con il conte Opprandino Arrivabene (1861-1886)* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1931), pp. 83-84.
[3] ‘Considerazioni retrospettive’, *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, 18 April 1847, VI/16, pp. 124-125.

Many other commentators remarked on the rhythmic propulsion of his scores (see, for example, *Il trovatore*), the athleticism of the vocal lines with their wide leaps and insistent emotional accent, and the use of extreme dynamics, all of which contributed to the effect of visceral potency.[4]

And it was indeed Verdi's own body that seemed to be the inspiration for his music. His early preparation for composition arose from a personal enactment of the drama, as Giulio Ricordi claimed in 1893:

> «Verdi conceives the opera while reading the libretto. The composer plans the first general outlines of his own work by reciting the lines. In so doing, he studies the inflections of his voice, the various colors that the words assume in the sentiments of wrath, pity and love. The great maestro has always done it in this way […]».[5]

Giuseppe Giacosa witnessed this process at first hand during the compositional process of Verdi's *Otello* (1887). He described the afternoons he spent with Verdi and the librettist of *Otello*, Arrigo Boito, when the discussion turned to the expressivity and meaning of the text:

> «Qualche volta il Verdi afferrava lo scartafaccio del dramma, e ne leggeva ad alta voce dei pezzi - Il Boito ed io ci esprimevano a vicenda collo sguardo il sentimento di ammirazione onde eravamo presi - La voce, l'accento, la cadenza, gl'impeti, i corrucci espressi da quella lettura erano tali, tradivano un accendimento così intenso dell'animo, ingrandivano così smisuratamente il senso delle parole, che ci appariva chiara in essi la scaturigine della idea musicale - Vedevamo sì può dire coi nostri occhi germogliare il fiore della melodia e le parole recate alla loro estrema potenza fonica trasmutarsi in onde sonore, travolgenti le infinite angoscie di cui è capace l'anima umana».[6]

[4] A selection of such examples might include Carlo Tenca's article in *L'Italia musicale*, 7 July 1847, I/1, pp. 1-2; Abramo Basevi, *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi* (1859; repr. Bologna: Antiquae Musicae Italicae Studiosi, 1978), p. 159; and Marco Marcelliano Marcello's article in *Il trovatore*, 25 July 1854, I/4, pp. 13-14.

[5] Giulio Ricordi, in James Hepokoski, 'Under the Eye of the Verdian Bear: Notes on the Rehearsals and Première of Falstaff', *Musical Quarterly*, 71 (1985), 2: 135-156; here, 150.

[6] Giuseppe Giacosa, 'Verdi in villa (Note)', in *Verdi - Interviste e incontri*, ed. by Marcello Conati (Turin: EDT, 2000), pp. 165-171; here, 169-170.

Giacosa presents us with an image of Verdi the actor, whose impassioned performance is the foundation for the musical structures that will follow. Verdi's notes to his singers (such as Felice Varesi in *Macbeth*, or Marianna Barbieri-Nini in *Il corsaro*) similarly urged a close attention to the text as the means by which the musical performance would emerge most effectively.[7] His insistence that performance required 'fire, spirit, muscle and enthusiasm' exemplifies the way he expected a consonance of energy between the score and its realisation.[8] One means of developing such energies was to direct the singers' performances himself - a role that did not then exist in the modern sense in Italian opera production, and which was certainly an unusual extension for a composer.[9]

Verdi's interest in guiding the histrionic talents of his singers surfaced relatively early in his career (the most obvious example is his coaching of Barbieri-Nini and Varesi in *Macbeth*),[10] but he only acquired

[7] On Verdi's injunctions to Felice Varesi («I shall never stop telling you to study the words and the dramatic situation; then the music will come right of its own accord»), see David Rosen and Andrew Porter, eds., *Verdi's* Macbeth*: A Sourcebook* (London and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). For Verdi's letters to Marianna Barbieri-Nini written during the rehearsals of *Il corsaro*, see Giuseppe Verdi, *Il corsaro: melodramma tragico in tre atti*, ed. by Elizabeth Hudson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. xx.

[8] Letter to Léon Escudier, 30 March 1872, cit. Hans Busch, ed., *Verdi's Aida: the History of an Opera in Letters and Documents* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), pp. 292-293.

[9] In Italy, the staging of a new opera was usually undertaken in a limited fashion by the librettist, who would supervise essential points such as the entries and exits of the cast, and the deployment of the chorus. Verdi became more heavily involved in the supervision of his operas after witnessing the practices of the Paris Opéra during the 1850s, which was steadily moving towards the use of a *régisseur* - one figure who had the primary responsibility for all aspects of the staging, and therefore ensured the development of a unified production concept.

[10] See Verdi's letter to Marianna Barbieri-Nini on 31 January 1847: «The notes are simple and created with the action in mind, especially in the sleepwalking scene […]. Bear in mind that every word has a meaning, and that it is absolutely essential to express it both with the voice and with the acting», Rosen and Porter, eds., *Verdi's* Macbeth*: A Sourcebook* , p. 40. Verdi writes in similar vein to Varesi on 4 February 1847: «As for the lines in the intervening passage:

> *La vita!... che importa!*
> *È il racconto d'un povero idiota:*
> *Vento e suono che nulla dinota*

I want you to declaim them with all the irony and contempt possible. You'll be able to make much of the death scene if, together with your singing, your acting is well thought out. You can see very well that Macbeth mustn't die like Edgardo, Gennaro, etc., therefore it has to be treated in a new way. It should be affecting, yes; but more than affecting, it should be *terrible*. All of it sotto voce, except for the last two lines,

the formal responsibility for overall supervision of a production for his final three operas, beginning with the Milan staging of *Aida* in 1872.

The limited evidence we have of Verdi's interventions in *mise-en-scène* or stage business suggests that once again his own physical embodiment of the drama was an important wellspring of his ideas. When, according to Ricordi, Verdi supervised the singers' «steps, motions and gestures» during the piano rehearsals, he often did so by means of demonstration: «Should a motion or gesture not satisfy him, he himself takes the place of the character and vigorously indicates by reciting or singing how the role must be interpreted».[11] Ugo Pesci's account of the *Otello* rehearsals noted how Verdi sought to impress upon the soprano Romilda Pantaleoni the required passion in her embrace of Otello by taking on the role of Desdemona himself.[12] A different example was given by Ricordi during the rehearsals of *Falstaff*, concerning the creators of the young lovers Fenton and Nannetta, Edoardo Garbin and Adele Stehle, who were somewhat reserved in the execution of their stage kisses:

> «Verdi rose impatiently: 'Why are we daydreaming here? Make those two kisses real, and there will be the naturalness that you are seeking. Here, Nannetta, I'll be Fenton for a moment: you do it like this - and like this'».[13]

Such close guidance constitutes what in modern parlance would be described as 'line-reading', in which the director imposes his (or her) interpretation on the performers, who must merely imitate rather than invent for themselves. Verdi, wrote Ricordi, is «the true creator of his opera»:[14] a remark that has an intriguing echo of the composer's irritation in 1855 when Adelaide Borghi-Mamo supposedly claimed to the *Gazzetta musicale di Napoli* that her rendition of Azucena in Paris under Verdi's direction was applauded by him with the words «questa è proprio una creazione vostra, e non pur mia».[15] These were words, Verdi wrote,

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which, in fact, you'll also accompany with acting, bursting out with full force on the words '*Vil…corona…e sol per te!'* You're on the ground, of course, but for this last line you'll stand almost straight up and will make as great an impression as possible», Rosen and Porter, eds., *Verdi's* Macbeth*: A Sourcebook*, p. 41.

[11] Ricordi in Hepokoski, 'Under the Eye of the Verdian Bear', p. 153.

[12] Ugo Pesci, 'Le prove dell'*Otello* (1887)', in *Interviste e incontri con Verdi*, ed. by Marcello Conati (Milan: Il Formichiere, 1980), pp. 210-213; here, 212.

[13] Ricordi in Hepokoski, 'Under the Eye of the Verdian Bear', p. 143. Garbin and Stehle later married.

[14] Ibid., p. 153.

[15] Verdi to Cesare De Sanctis, 20 January 1855, in Franco Abbiati, *Giuseppe Verdi*, 4 vols. (Milan:Ricordi, 1959), Vol. II, p. 282.

that he never could or would ever express. Indeed, his stated enjoyment of «communicating clearly my thoughts to the actors, of making them move on stage according to my ideas» during the *Otello* rehearsals[16] and his later warning to Ricordi about the forthcoming production of *Falstaff* («I will let no performance go on as long as the opera is not done my way») exemplify his insistent control towards the staging of his operas.[17] In this sense, Verdi's 'body' at times arguably usurped that of the performer, reducing him or her to empty mimicry.

Verdi's choice of sources for his operas frequently reveals an awareness, even a manipulation, of the semiotics of the body. In *Macbeth*, he envisaged the way evil could be manifested both physically and aurally: thus Varesi's 'small and ugly appearance' was perfect for the title-role,[18] while one soprano (Eugenia Tadolini) suggested for a later production of the opera in Naples was dismissed as much too attractive for the 'malignant' Lady Macbeth;[19] and for both characters Verdi urged the use of a dark, suffocating vocal colour. Composed four years later, *Rigoletto* (1851) precisely disrupted this equation of exterior and interior qualities: there, the beautiful physique and elegant singing of the Duke conceals his hardened cynicism, while the physical disfigurement and *parlante* style of the hunchback Rigoletto occludes a devoted paternal affection.[20] The bodily markers of cultural difference - ethnicity and race - play a vital role in determining the fates of other characters such as Azucena in *Il trovatore* (1853), Don Alvaro in *La forza del destino* (1862), or the eponymous hero of *Otello* (1887). The body as the site of well-being (or otherwise) and sensual pleasure also featured in Verdi's operas: his most popular heroine - both then and now - was the

[16] Giacosa in Conati, ed., *Interviste e incontri con Verdi*, p. 170.

[17] Verdi to Ricordi, 27 November 1892, in Hans Busch, ed., *Verdi's* Falstaff *in Letters and Contemporary Reviews* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 310.

[18] Verdi's assistant, Emanuele Muzio, wrote to the composer's father-in-law: «Nessun attore, al presente, in Italia può fare più bene il *Macbeth* di Varesi, e per il suo modo di canto, e per la sua intelligenza, e per la sua stessa piccola e brutta figura. Forse egli dirà che stuona, questo non fa niente perché la parte sarebbe quasi tutta declamata, ed in questo vale molto», Emanuele Muzio to Antonio Barezzi, 27 August 1846, in *Giuseppe Verdi nelle lettere di Emanuele Muzio ad Antonio Barezzi*, ed. by Luigi Agostino Garibaldi (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1931), pp. 261-262.

[19] Letter from Verdi to Salvadore Cammarano, 23 November 1848, in Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 3 vols. (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1973-1981), Vol. I, p. 275.

[20] See for example Verdi's remarks about the character of Rigoletto when he was responding to the censor's objections during the composition process of the opera: «Io trovo appunto bellissimo rappresentare questo personaggio esternamente defforme e ridicolo, ed internamente appassionato e pieno d'amore», Verdi to Marzari, 14 December 1850, in Marcello Conati, *La bottega della musica: Verdi e La Fenice* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1983), p. 233.

consumptive courtesan Violetta in *La traviata* (1853), whilst his final opera revolves around the glutton Falstaff.

Verdi's music itself is imprinted with signs of the body. In Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene, the 'single gesture' of hand-washing that Verdi asserted should comprise the singer's movements can be heard in the repetitive rhythmic pattern dominating the aria.[21] A recurring musical phrase of exquisite lyricism articulates Otello's kiss ('Un bacio, ancor un bacio'), bestowed first on the welcoming lips of Desdemona during their Act I duet, then again on her sleeping form before she wakes to face his murderous wrath in Act III, and which finally marks the poignant pinnacle of the tragedy at the end of the opera as Otello tries - and fails - to kiss her lifeless body for the last time. Earlier, each step of Otello's stealthy advance on Desdemona when he arrives to kill her is sounded by the shuddering double-basses and cellos. Even the most abstract musical forms offered Verdi possibilities for representing the 'body'. In the fugue he wrote for the battle scene in the revised version of *Macbeth* for Paris in 1865, he imagined the contrapuntal clash of subjects and countersubjects as a metaphor for physical conflict.[22] (Conversely, he returned to the fugue at the end of *Falstaff*, but this time as a joke, where the bubbling insistent voices act as witty markers of individuality within a communal social fabric.) The passionate kiss between Gilda and the Duke in *Rigoletto* that appears in the source material, Victor Hugo's *Le roi s'amuse*, and which censorship would not have permitted to be re-enacted on the opera stage is symbolised instead by a rare intertwining double-cadenza in their duet in Act I. Such moments produce what Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht describes as 'presence-effect' - the physical impact of 'art' on the body of the spectator through sensations such as tears or

[21] Verdi to Léon Escudier, 11 March 1865, in Rosen and Porter, eds., *Verdi's* Macbeth*: A Sourcebook*, pp. 110-111. The sleepwalking scene should be performed «with a single gesture, that of wiping out a bloodstain that she thinks she has on her hand. The movements should be slow, and one should not see her taking steps; her feet should drag over the ground as if she were a statue or ghost, walking. The eyes fixed, the appearance corpse-like; she is in agony and dies soon after».

[22] «You will laugh when you hear that I wrote a *Fugue* for the battle!!! A *Fugue?…* I, who detest everything that smells of school, and it has been nearly thirty years since I wrote one!!! But can I tell you that in this case that musical form can fit very well. The subjects and countersubjects that follow each other, the dissonant clashes, the uproar, etc., etc., can express a battle quite well. I only wish that the beginning could be played on *trombe a macchina*, such as we have, which are so penetrating and sonorous. Your *trompettes à pistons* are sluggish and weak for this passage. Anyway, the orchestra will have a chance to amuse themselves», Verdi to Escudier, 3 February 1865, ibid., pp. 97-98.

palpitations.[23] These physical actions are the points in which Verdi perhaps invested his own creative body most fully - and which in turn impinge most on the body of the spectator. In short, it is at these moments that all bodies connect - the body of the composer, the body of the character, the body of the singer, the body of the spectator - in a common visceral experience.

The composer's operatic inscription of the body nonetheless stopped short of realism. As he memorably once wrote to Clara Maffei in 1876, he regarded «copying truth as photography, not painting».[24] Eleven years earlier he had argued against the reproduction of certain real behaviours by singers, such as overt coughing in *La traviata*, or laughter in *Un ballo in maschera* (during Riccardo's 'È scherzo od è follia' in Act I, or the conspirators' sardonic mockery in the Act II quartet), as such effects had already been given musical form.[25] What then was the specific relationship of body to music in Verdi's operas? Why, given the cultural drive towards realism during the epoch, did he pull back from pursuing this further?

The most likely explanation is that Verdi's idea of opera remained as rooted in some other realm beyond the quotidian experience - a heightened, idealised sphere, in which formal musical structures could indeed still have their place if this accorded with dramatic needs. Verdi's distrust in the new fad of photographic realism and his elevation of creative imagination (it was much better, he wrote, to «invent truth» than to reproduce it) was undoubtedly something shared by other artists of the same generation.[26] Yet there are certain broader ideas of the period that offer an intriguing counterpart. Michel de Certeau describes how in the nineteenth century the earlier «idea of a physics of bodies in movement» (consisting of a 'physics of impacts' in the seventeenth century and a physics of 'action at a distance' in the eighteenth century) was replaced by a scientific model based on thermodynamics and chemistry. The dream of a mechanics of distinct elements correlated by propulsive forces, pressures, changes in equilibrium and manoeuvres of every kind. De Certeau describes this new model, redolent of the industrialised age, as: «The opera of the body: a complex machinery of pumps, pipes, filters

[23] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 17.
[24] Verdi to Clara Maffei, 20 October 1876, in Charles Osborne, *Letters of Giuseppe Verdi* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 201.
[25] Verdi to Léon Escudier, 11 March 1865, in Rosen and Porter, eds., *Verdi's* Macbeth*: A Sourcebook*, p. 110.
[26] Giovanni Dupré, *Pensieri sull'arte e ricordi autobiografici* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1879), p. 434.

and levers, through which liquids circulate and organs respond to each other».[27]

We might see a parallel in Verdi's use of the body in opera. Its impact on compositional processes within Verdi's music is as a force of energy, an intrusion of materiality that grounds and balances but does not deny music's innate transcendence. Body counters, propels, and responds in an interdependent relationship with the metaphysicality of music. Body might be converted into pure sound, such as the fugue in *Macbeth*; equally, it might respond mutely to a musical imperative, as in Otello's deadly walk towards Desdemona. In this respect, Verdi's compositional approach might perhaps be described as a musical essay in thermodynamics, where body functions as energy in transit creating a circularity of movement. The 'opera of the body' is an art machine.

Nineteenth-century critics feared this intrusion of the body, with all its messy implications for the strict governing of social and political behaviours. Italian critics were disturbed by the vocal violence of Verdi's earlier operas - particularly *Attila* in 1846 - and its effects on the tradition of *bel canto*;[28] British critics such as James Davison of the *Times* and *The Musical World* and Henry Fothergill Chorley of *The Athenaeum* castigated the 'repulsive' narrative of *La traviata*'s presentation of a diseased courtesan.[29] In both countries, a recurring theme in critical disapproval was the apparent popularity of such works with their audiences. Verdi's reputation was understandably ever strong in Italy, but its growth in this country in the past hundred years since his neglected centenary suggests not only new critical perspectives on his operas (courtesy of both scholars and composers such as Sir Charles Villiers Stanford and Benjamin Britten)[30] but also the way that they chime with a more modern understanding of the body in society.[31]

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[27] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984), p. 142.

[28] For criticisms of the effect of Verdi's operas on singers' voices, see *La fama,* 21 February 1845, X/15, p. 57; *Corriere delle dame*, 28 February 1845, XLV/12, p. 94; *Gazzetta musicale di Firenze*, 7 July 1853, I/4, p. 13.

[29] On the British reception of *La traviata*, see Susan Rutherford, '*La traviata*, or the "willing grisette": Male Critics and Female Performance in the 1850s' in *Verdi 2001. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Parma, New York, New Haven 24 gennaio-1° febbraio 2001,* ed. by Fabrizio Della Seta, Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Marco Marica, 2 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 2003), Vol. II, pp. 585-600.

[30] I have explored aspects of the changing reception of Verdi's operas in Britain in 'Remembering - and Forgetting - Verdi. Critical Reception in England in the Early Twentieth Century', in *La critica musicale in Italia nella prima metà del XX secolo*, ed. by Marco Capra and Fiamma Nicolodì (Venice: Marsilio, 2011), pp. 253-272.

[31] On sociology's relatively recent development of theories about the body, see Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society* (3rd edn.; Los Angeles and London: Sage, 2008).

Darkening the Renaissance: Giuseppe Verdi Between Drama and Societal Critique

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In any given discussion on the nineteenth-century 'invention' of the Italian Renaissance, Jacob Burckhardt's 1860 essay *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* typically commands pride of place as the paradigmatic point of reference. According to the Swiss historian, the Renaissance man cast off the veil of 'faith and illusion' peculiar to the culture of the Middle Ages, and embraced his individual relation to the material world: «In Italy this veil first melted into air; an objective treatment and consideration of […] all the things of this world became possible. The subjective side at the same time asserted itself with corresponding emphasis; man became a spiritual individual, and recognised himself as such».[1] These words from the second part of the essay (emblematically entitled 'The development of the individual') encapsulate Burckhardt's interpretation of the Renaissance as emancipation from a period of darkness. According to this teleological narrative, the men of the Middle Ages were merely indistinguishable parts of wider communities. In the age of rebirth, by contrast, statesmen, artists, poets, and intellectuals finally emerge as the heroes of a new society that valued individual talent and achievement.

Yet despite its profound influence - still the source of many clichés about the Italian Renaissance - Burckhardt's interpretation was hardly the only nineteenth-century interpretive lens onto the period. The *Storia della letteratura italiana* by Francesco De Sanctis, for instance, published only eleven years after Burckhardt's *Civilization*, provides an alternate reading of the supposed opposition between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In introducing the principal literary figures of the *Quattrocento*, De Sanctis highlights not just their crucial contributions to the development of Italian literature, but also the elitist nature of their humanistic enterprises, which did not involve the society as a whole. «Il

I wish to thank Davide Daolmi, Andrea Del Cornò, and Morgan Ng for their invaluable remarks.

[1] Jakob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. by S.G.C. Middlemore (London: Phaidon Press, 1960), p. 70.

movimento è tutto sulla superficie, e non viene dal popolo, e non cala nel popolo. O, per dir meglio, popolo non ci è».[2]

The civilisation of the Renaissance was thus a phenomenon limited to the privileged milieus of the courts, of no consequences to the masses. De Sanctis' remarks bristle with political-ideological critique: the transformation of the lively medieval republics into courtly *signorie* meant the exhaustion of wider political and intellectual engagement. On the one hand the dazzling world of the princely courts, where *letterati* pandered to their patrons' desires; on the other hand, the greater populace completely excluded from cultural rebirth: «Cadute sono le repubbliche, mancata è ogni lotta intellettuale, ogni passione politica. Hai plebe infinita, cenciosa e superstiziosa, la cui voce è coperta dalla rumorosa gioia delle corti, e de' letterati».[3] Far from providing the reader with an idealised portrayal of the Italian Renaissance, De Sanctis describes the growing individualism of the period in terms rather different from those of Burckhardt. The image of the «plebe infinita, cenciosa e superstiziosa», for instance, brings a sharp critical eye to social issues largely ignored, according to De Sanctis, in the context of this cultural rebirth. The noisy festivities of the Renaissance courts have drowned out the voices of the common folk.

Giuseppe Verdi, whose interpretation of the past - as is well known - was deeply coloured by his penetrating analysis of the present, would have likely approved of De Sanctis' statements. Even though it is difficult to say whether Verdi read the *Storia della letteratura italiana*, the composer's approach to the early modern period echoes that of De Sanctis's, in particular, the scholar's implicit criticism of the idealised interpretations of the Renaissance that circulated widely in the nineteenth century. Both the notion of individualism and the social dimension of historical narratives, in fact, play a main role in Verdi's musical poetics. Since a thorough exploration of this theme extends well beyond the purview of this paper, I will limit my discussion to a few key cultural issues that underlie how Verdi's operas stage the Renaissance.

Verdi set to music several librettos based on episodes that take place in the Renaissance. In 1844, for instance, the composer enjoyed remarkable success with *Ernani* and *I due Foscari*. Based on Victor Hugo's romantic tragedy *Hernani* (1830), the former focuses on the controversial interaction between tragic love and politics. Family dynamics and political intrigue are also central to the plot of *I due Foscari*, an adaptation of Lord Byron's historical tragedy (1821) set in

[2] Francesco De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Naples: Morano, 1870), pp. 358-359.
[3] Ibid.

fifteenth-century Venice. If these operas tend to portray conflicts and rivalries among individuals, stronger societal implications are crucial to *Rigoletto* (1851), where Verdi's music, as we shall see, does not limit itself to the psychological shaping of the characters, but engages in a sharp critique of the power dynamics that governed sixteenth-century princely courts. Yet it is only with the long elaboration of *Don Carlo* (1867-1886) - based on Friedrich Schiller's 1787 homonymous tragedy - that all these components merge into a multifaceted representation of the mechanisms (both personal and collective) that characterise Verdi's dark portrayal of the Renaissance.

Reading the passage by De Sanctis mentioned above, where the scholar recalls the «plebe infinita, cenciosa e superstiziosa», anyone acquainted with Verdi's operatic universe cannot but think of the prominent role played by the *popolo* in *Don Carlo*.[4] The great scene of the *auto-da-fé* at the end of Act III, and the finale scene of Act IV are emblematic from this point of view. In both scenes, the *popolo* is indeed represented as crude, superstitious, and easy to manipulate. The burning of the heretics, much awaited by the people who gather in front of the church of Nuestra Señora de Atocha, is introduced by Verdi's music as a festive occasion aimed at the triumph of religious obscurantism. The jubilation choir ('Spuntato ecco il dì d'esultanza') celebrates king Philip II as a father of the nation.[5] On the other hand, the real power that lies behind the king - that is the power of the Catholic Church and, more precisely, the Inquisition's - is highlighted contrastingly by the appearance of the monks leading the heretics to the stake. By means of an impressive musical overthrow, Verdi evokes the subtle dynamics that inform the relations between secular and religious powers. If the celebration of the king inspires joyful music of triumph, the humiliating procession of the convicts is shaped by a dark and mournful choral piece aimed at conveying fear and respect:

> «Il dì spuntò, dì del terror,
> il dì tremendo, il dì feral.
> morran, morran! Giusto è il rigor
> dell'immortal!

[4] I am referring here to the five act Italian version of the opera, which followed the original French version: *Don Carlo. Opera in cinque atti. Parole di Méry e Camillo Du Locle. Musica di G. Verdi. Traduzione italiana di Achille De Lauzières*, (Milano - Napoli - Firenze: Ricordi, 1869).

[5] *Don Carlo*, Act III, part 2, scene 1 (p. 44): «Spuntato ecco il dì d'esultanza, / Onore al più grande de' Re! / In esso hanno i popol' fidanza, / Il mondo è prostrate al suo piè! / Il nostro amor ovunque l'accompagna, / E quest'amor giammai non scemerà. / Il suo nome è l'orgoglio della Spagna, / E viver deve nell'eternità!».

Ma di perdon voce suprema
all'anatema succederà,
se il peccator all'ora estrema
si pentirà!».[6]

The dramatic effect desired by Verdi in setting the scene to music is based on the contrast between the two choral components. As suggested by the libretto, «il popolo, rimasto silenzioso per un momento, riprende le grida di gioia. I frati s'allontanano. Le campane suonano di nuovo»: after a short moment of bewildering silence, the *popolo* returns to its singing happily, and the bells resume ringing, as if nothing had happened.[7] The *plebe* shows no compassion for the convicts who are going to be burnt: completely subjugated by the ecclesiastic power, the populace takes a sort of unsettling pleasure from the *auto-da-fé*.

The same kind of contrastive dynamics informs the last scene of the act, when - after the fight between the king and Carlo, who introduced the Flemish ambassadors to his father - the stake stands out again as the core of the stage. The members of the court take their seats and the audience, which - by attending the scene - becomes ambiguously part of the staging, sees the flames rising above the stake. While a supernatural voice suggests that the sinners will finally reach the Heavens, the Flemish ambassadors, previously rejected by Philip, wonder how God may accept the deathly suffering of innocent souls:

«UNA VOCE DAL CIELO
Volate verso il ciel, volate pover'alme,
v'affrettate a goder la pace del signor!
DEPUTATI FIAMMINGHI (*in disparte, mentre il rogo s'accende*)
E puoi soffrirlo, o ciel! Né spegni quelle fiamme!
S'accende in nome tuo quel rogo punitor!».[8]

In order to understand the meaning of the scene, which is conveyed by both the supernatural component and the criticism of the dangerous intersections of religion and politics, it is worth turning to Verdi's own words. In a revealing letter written in 1868 to the conductor Alberto Mazzucato during the rehearsals prior to the staging of *Don Carlo* at La Scala of Milan, Verdi focuses on the dramatic effects that the *auto-da-fé* scene intends to raise. In particular, after pointing out the fundamental importance of the *silenzi* as a way to isolate and stress key moments in

[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] *Don Carlo*, Act III, part 2, scene 4 (p. 49).

the narrative, the composer dwells on the voice from heaven, thus providing a thoughtful insight into his way of conceiving the audience's response to music and drama:

«Che la *voce celeste*, che vien poco dopo, sia ben in alto e ben lontana, onde il pubblico comprenda subito bene, che non si tratta di cosa di questo mondo. Ben inteso, che tutti quelli che sono in scena, come se non sentissero la voce, baderanno soltanto all'*auto-da-fé*».[9]

The *voce celeste* - which is not a 'thing of this world' - is placed on a different level. The crowd, totally absorbed by the glorious triumph of the king and the joyful celebration of the punishment of the heretics, does not have access to the supernatural universe in which the convicts are saved. By means of an effective distinction of dramatic layers, Verdi manages to convey his critical views through the voice of the Flemish ambassadors while suggesting that the victims shall be saved.

The *popolo* is again presented in a rather negative light at the end of Act IV. When the popular rebellion aims to rescue Carlo, imprisoned after his failed attempt to challenge the king, it is only thanks to the intervention of the Great Inquisitor that the rioters are crushed. Whereas the king seems to be powerless against the force of the rebellion, the old churchman - who, in a veritable *coup de théâtre*, appears surrounded by his fellow Dominican friars - subjugates the crowd, urging the rioters to revere the king.[10] If the weakness of the secular power stands out, the control exerted by the religious hierarchy over the *popolo* proves the main target of Verdi's critical insight into the dynamics that made up the controversial relations between the Church and the State both in the past and in the composer's own time.

Individualism and loneliness are the other dominant components of Verdi's tragic settings. *Don Carlo* is probably, from this point of view, the central musical embodiment of the solitude that informs most of the historical characters brought to life by the composer. Carlo, Elisabetta, Philip, Rodrigo, and the Princess of Eboli: they all yearn for what they cannot have, thus revealing dramatically the weakness of human hopes and desires. The ideological and political implications of this weakness stand out in the disconcerting dialogue between the king and the Great

[9] Frank V. De Bellis and Federico Ghisi, 'Alcune lettere inedite sul *Don Carlos* dal carteggio Verdi-Mazzucato', in *Atti del II Congresso internazionale di studi verdiani* (Parma: Istituto di Studi Verdiani, 1971), pp. 531-541.

[10] «CORO: Morte, Morte! Niun ci arresta. / Bandi alfin, bando al timor! / Tremi il re, cader dovrà, / Se tutto un popolo sorge in furor. / Corriam, feriam. […]
L'INQUISITORE: Vi prostrate! / Popol ribelle ed empio / T'umilia innanzi al Re, / Al Re che Dio protegge» (*Don Carlo*, Act IV, part 2, scenes 4-5, pp. 62-63).

Inquisitor following Philip's touching and most celebrated monologue ('Ella giammai m'amò') in the great meditation scene at the beginning of Act IV. The intense exchange between the two characters works in fact as a turning point in their relationship: by asking the Inquisitor for some advice on Carlo's punishment, Philip is forced to admit his complete submission to the ecclesiastic power. On the one hand, the king - as a father - longs for a moral justification for the death warrant expected to fall upon his son Carlo; on the other hand, as a ruler, Philip must accept what is good for the preservation of both his power and the State. This includes another death sentence: after persuading Philip that, as God's own behaviour shows, a father is indeed allowed to kill a son if made to do so by higher sources, the Inquisitor blames the king's acquaintance with Rodrigo. As a strong supporter of the infidel and treacherous Flanders, Rodrigo is labelled by the Inquisitor as a heretic, hence a dangerous friend to both Philip and Carlo. The old churchman, while claiming his role of active warrantor of Christian doctrine, points out the crucial connection between religious and political order: it is only the former, in fact, that is able to sustain and protect the latter. The Inquisitor's demand for Rodrigo's death is all the more daunting for Philip, who clearly projects on his favourite the feeling of fatherhood frustrated by his problematic relationship with Carlo. The king's final sentence in the scene can be read, in fact, as the resigned acknowledgement of Philip's defeat as both father and ruler: 'Dunque il trono piegar dovrà sempre all'altar'.[11]

The tragedy of Philip's solitude allows the composer create unforgettable musical moments concerned at once with the portrayal of psychological components and the critical discussion of political and ideological dynamics. If the intersections of morality, religion, and political power are central to *Don Carlo*, Verdi's acute understanding of the problematic implications that inform social relations and power dynamics were also at the core of *Rigoletto*, based on Victor Hugo's *Le roi s'amuse* and first performed in 1851. As pointed out by Abramo Basevi in his seminal essay on Verdi's operas, published as early as 1859, the plot of Hugo's drama is morally questionable: «Questo dramma è immorale perché vi si deprime la virtù, e vi si esalta il vizio».[12] Despite this judgment, Basevi acknowledges that the story of the lascivious prince, which the librettist Francesco Maria Piave simply transferred from Renaissance France to Renaissance Mantua, inspired some of the composer's best music. Additionally, the author explains that the plot,

[11] *Don Carlo*, Act IV, part 1, scene 2, p. 53.
[12] Abramo Basevi, *Studio sulle opera di Giuseppe Verdi* (Florence: Tofani, 1859), p. 184.

which would be offensive to a 'moral' audience, was enthusiastically received by the contemporary public, whose taste was morally corrupted.[13]

Actually, the tragedy of *Rigoletto* is not concerned with morality, but with the ruthless power dynamics that make the protagonist both a victim of his prince and the target of the courtiers' derision. The trick planned to the buffoon's detriment leads eventually to the abduction and the rape of Rigoletto's daughter, Gilda. The tragic situation in which Rigoletto finds himself after the abduction of his beloved child is vividly expressed by Verdi's music when the old man appears in the third scene of Act II. Unaware of Gilda's fate, Rigoletto tries to convince himself that her abduction is an innocent joke. However, the musical setting clearly suggests - as of the beginning of the scene - that the boundaries of a joke have been exceeded. The courtiers, who embody the treacherous dimension of court life throughout the opera, prevent Rigoletto from reaching his daughter: the dramatic exchange between the buffoon and the choir of the courtiers, built on a touching series of *a parte*, leads to Rigoletto's famous outburst against the 'Cortigiani, vil razza dannata'.[14]

Verdi's music and Piave's libretto (which is exhaustive, as usual, in detailing stage movements) contribute to the dramatic representation of a conflict that is at once physical and psychological. The latter component is the same one already present in other Verdi's operas: in both *Ernani* and *I due Foscari*, for instance, the suffering of the individual - crucial to the Romantic poetics - stands out. One might think, in particular, of *I due Foscari*, where the dramatic core lies in the tragic implications of the father/son relationship. Although received as the unripe fruit of Byron's young poetical commitment, the plot of this tragedy provided Verdi with dramatic bonds that were able to inspire moments of highly dramatic music.[15] A similar example can be found in the 1847 opera *I masnadieri*, based on Schiller's *Die Räuber*, which stages the story of a gruesome political intrigue in sixteenth-century Germany. The preface by Andrea Maffei - who was both the Italian translator of Schiller's tragedy and the author of the libretto for Verdi - offers thoughtful insights into the kind of materials that are suitable for musical settings. As Maffei explains, the story of *I masnadieri* («spaventosa pittura della società») is not credible and lacks in the subtle psychological analysis that informs Schiller's later dramas.[16] However, the tragedy is so rich in human passions that - in spite of their

[13] Ibid., p. 185.
[14] *Rigoletto*, Act II, scene 4.
[15] For an example of the reception of Byron's tragedy at the time, see especially Basevi, pp. 61-62.
[16] Andrea Maffei, *I masnadieri. Melodramma* (Milan: Francesco Lucca, 1847), p. 3.

bewildering and confuse nature - eventually provide the composer with dramatic situations cut out for music. Whereas the poet is only allowed to sketch the characters, it is in fact the composer that will give them «form, warmth, and life». The libretto is thus presented as «the seed of the poetical creation that receives its full maturity from the musical thought».[17]

Maffei's remarks seize upon a crucial feature of Verdi's own ideas on the relations between music and poetry, or - more precisely - of the composer's understanding of drama. Whenever the weakness of a plot is balanced by the presence of truly dramatic knots, music may bring them to life. The composer will not solve the flaws of the plot, but will harness their dramatic potential and express it through the music. One might argue, of course, that this characterises Verdi's operatic production in general. Yet it is worth stressing that the multifaceted dimension of conflict - at once personal, social, political, and ideological - as a source of musical inspiration is particularly prominent in such operas as *I masnadieri*, *I due Foscari*, *Rigoletto*, and *Don Carlo*. Instead of addressing the Renaissance as a positive moment of renewal, Verdi builds his own depiction of the period on Romantic sources deeply concerned with the staging of dead-end situations, and, in turn, challenges the foundations of modernity instead of celebrating them.

[17] Ibid., p. 4: «a queste situazioni, a questa forza d'affetti deve principalmente mirare chi si mette all'ardua prova di scrivere per quest'arte […]; giacché, confinato il poeta in brevissimo spazio, non può dare al pensiero le proporzioni e il discorso psicologico voluti dal dramma, ma lavorare a gran tratti, e presentare al maestro poco più di uno scheletro che aspetti dalle note, anziché dalla parola, le forme, il calore, la vita. […] Il melodramma pertanto non può essere che il germe di quella creazione poetica che riceve dal pensiero musicale la sua piena maturità».

London 1847: Verdi and Mazzini, the End of a Misunderstanding

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It was in the early summer of 1847 that Giuseppe Verdi and Giuseppe Mazzini met in London. Verdi was in England for the staging of *I masnadieri*, an opera adapted by Andrea Maffei from Schiller's *Die Räuber*. Its premiere was due to take place on 22 July at Her Majesty's Theatre.[1]

Verdi, the great composer, and Mazzini, the conspirator, were both in England but for unrelated reasons. Mazzini, in exile, was acting to strengthen and augment British support to the cause of Italian unification.[2] For Verdi the issue was different. In 1847, the *lion* of Busseto, once the simple country boy who had studied in Milan thanks to public and private support, was the rising star of the Italian opera scene. Verdi was climbing the ladder of success with great determination and was marching on with the spirited arduousness and tenacity that his ancestors from Emilia had inherited from the Roman legionaries, Julius Caesar's soldiers who had established themselves in those fertile regions.[3]

During the fifty days Verdi spent in London, the performances of his two operas - *I due Foscari* and *I masnadieri* - received only a disappointingly lukewarm response. Neither the delight expressed by the Royal couple, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, nor his being an acquaintance of Prince Louis Bonaparte (no longer a *carbonaro*), nor his relations with the cellist Alfredo Patti, nor his genuine closeness to the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind, the Amalia of *I masnadieri*, could counterbalance the manifest hostility shown by Michael Costa, Director of Covent Garden's Opera House, who, later, in 1862, was to oppose the presentation of Verdi's 'Cantica', *Hymn of the Nations* (*Inno delle Nazioni*).[4]

[1] Virginia Cisotti, *Schiller e il melodramma di Verdi* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1975), pp. 48-81.
[2] Roland Sarti, *Giuseppe Mazzini. La politica come religione civile* (Rome: Laterza, 2000), pp. 115-155.
[3] Paolo Panico, *Verdi businessman* (Biella: Gruppo editoriale Atman, 2002), pp. 7-18.
[4] Franco Abbiati, *Giuseppe Verdi*, 4 vols. (Milan: Ricordi, 1959), Vol. I, pp. 710-715.

Verdi's impressions of the city agree to those of many other Italian travellers of the time: he complained of London streets and *piazzas* engulfed by thick fog and smoke. In letters sent to Countess Maffei, Verdi wrote: «Mi secca però questo fumo e questo odore di carbone: mi pare d'essere sempre in un batello (sic) a vapore»; (letter to Clara Maffei, London, 9 June 1847). And again: «Certo questa è una città magnifica, sorprendente, e come tutti dicono la prima del mondo, ma il clima avvelena tutto; per me particolarmente è insopportabile e non posso abituarmi al fumo, alla nebbia, ed all'odore di carbone; con tutto ciò non sto male di salute»; (letter to Clara Maffei, London, 27 June 1847).[5]

The question of whether Verdi was at the time a sympathiser of *Young Italy*, Mazzini's secret association, remains unanswered. The paucity of evidence is both striking and baffling: a fragment from a letter sent by Giuseppe Lamberti - Secretary of France's Central Confraternity (the Parisian section of *Young Italy*) - to Mazzini and a sentence in a letter by Nino Bixio. The first letter concisely reads: «15 luglio, sera. A Pippo. - Unisco lettera Gen [ova]. Dia la sua al Verdi».[6] The second document is a letter dated 8 July 1847 sent by Bixio to Lamberti. From the letter it would appear that a shared project emerged following on from a meeting between Verdi and Mazzini and that the composer put to music a piece written by Mazzini: «La madre di Pippo gli disse d'un concerto degli artisti italiani a Londra per la sua scuola, e Pippo scrivesse canto messo in musica là dal Verdi - Son contenti di ciò, e più per veder anco gli artisti, benché tardi, concorrere al bene patrio».[7]

It is worth recalling here how Mazzini had already, and for quite some time, sought the support of several opera singers for the Free Italian School, the charitable institution he had established in 1841 to benefit the numerous destitute Italian children living in London in precarious and appalling conditions.[8]

[5] Giuseppe Verdi, *Lettere*, ed. by Eduardo Rescigno (Turin: Einaudi, 2012), pp. 170-173.

[6] *Protocollo della Giovane Italia* (*Congrega Centrale di Francia*), 6 vols. (Imola: Cooperativa tipografico-editrice Paolo Galeati, 1916-1922), Vol. V, pp. 149-153. The letter is dated 15 July 1847.

[7] Nino Bixio, *Epistolario di Nino Bixio*, ed. by Emilia Morelli, 4 vols. (Rome: Vittoriano, 1939-1954), Vol. I, p. 5. 'Pippo' was Mazzini's moniker to his closest companions.

[8] In support of the Free Italian School, which continued its activities at least till 1860, Mazzini established two journals, *Il Pellegrino* (dating from 1842) and *L'Educatore* (dating from 1843); see Andrea Del Cornò, 'Un ritrovato giornale mazziniano: *Il Pellegrino*', in *Le fusa del gatto. Libri, librai e molto altro* (Sinalunga: Società Bibliografica Toscana, 2013), pp. 191-208.

Engaged and busy in the staging of *I masnadieri*, leaving aside for a moment his political beliefs, Verdi would not have had time to get involved directly with Mazzini's political initiatives. These included the annual concert from which the Free Italian School obtained the biggest single part of its funding. It was Mazzini himself, however, who, in the course of a letter to his beloved Mother, leaving no doubts, wrote: «No; Verdi non compose cosa alcuna pel nostro Concerto».[9]

The two men had hit it off badly from the start. Mazzini appears to have first mentioned Verdi in the context of a rather flat remark. No trace here of the enthusiastic descriptions of Giacomo Meyerbeer or Franz Liszt, but only the laconic: «Ho veduto Verdi il compositore».[10]

Verdi arrived in London as a successful composer. Mazzini had obtained support and gained popularity as a political exile and martyr of the Italian cause. He was not without musical talent himself as an accomplished guitarist capable of performing in public. In a letter to his mother, Mazzini explained how he enjoyed playing the guitar and entertained his friends: «Domenica andai a pranzo dagli Israeliti, e fui colto da una pioggia tale che non ho mai veduto qui e che m'ha ricordato le nostre pioggie. Prima del pranzo suonai, per la prima volta dopo che sono fuori, alcuni duetti per flauto e chitarra con uno di essi».[11]

[9] London, 2 August 1847, in Giuseppe Mazzini, *Scritti editi ed inediti*, 100 vols. (Imola: Cooperativa tipografico-editrice Paolo Galeati, 1906-1943), Vol. XXXII, p. 245. From then onward the *Scritti editi ed inediti* is indicated as S.E.I. with corresponding volume number.

[10] London, 22 June 1847, S.E.I., XXXII, p. 187. At the same time, Mazzini stated to have attended a performance of *I due Foscari*, but without showing much interest for an opera set in Venice. This fact can appear rather surprising, considering the enthusiasm with which the Genoese had praised in his *Filosofia della musica* the *Marin Faliero* by Donizetti, seen as a seal of the alliance between opera and the process of music regeneration advocated by Mazzini; see Stefano Ragni, '*Il Marin Faliero* di Donizetti tra Byron e Mazzini', in *Psallitur per voces istas. Scritti in onore di Clemente Terni in occasione del suo ottantesimo compleanno*, ed. by Donatella Righini (Florence: Sismel-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1999), pp. 265-284. On Mazzini's opinion about Liszt, summarised by the well-known quip «Liszt is a republican», see Stefano Ragni, 'Liszt e Mazzini', in *Annali dell'Università per Stranieri di Perugia* (Perugia: Guerra Edizioni, 1991), pp. 119-136.

[11] London, 4 May 1841, S.E.I., XX, p. 186. Between 1840 and 1841 Mazzini established in London the 'Unione degli Operai Italiani', see Emilia Morelli, *Mazzini in Inghilterra* (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1938) and Bolton King, *Mazzini* (Italian trans. by Maria Pezzé Pascolato) (Florence: Barbera, 1903). I remain grateful to Andrea Del Cornò for having brought to my attention Christopher Duggan's 'Giuseppe Mazzini in Britain and in Italy: Divergent Legacies 1837-1915', *The Italianist*, 27, 2 (2007), 263-281.

Unrelated to his ability as a guitarist, in London, Mazzini had established warm relations with various Italian singers and performers. In particular, Mazzini had met Giulia Grisi, the Milanese soprano, a charming singer then in her early thirties.[12] Giulia, sister of the mezzo soprano Giuditta who was close to Lord Wellington, thanks to her political views might be described as the 'Princess of Belgioioso' among the Italian singers. Mazzini, who had already seen Giulia in performance at a concert in support of an Italian exile, did not hesitate to draw her into his circle, notably in charitable concerts for the Free Italian School. The School had opened in November 1841 at 5 Greville Street, Hatton Garden, in Holborn, at the heart of London's *Little Italy*.[13]

The distance between Verdi and Mazzini widened in the period of the Roman Republic in 1848-1849 and their relationship would never be entirely mended. Verdi, no doubt impeded by Mazzini, one of the Triumvirs of the Roman Republic, missed the opportunity to compose an anthem for the Italians, setting into music Goffredo Mameli's lyrics.[14] Mazzini appeared incapable of fully appreciating Verdi's operas, their stylistic development, and their undoubted patriotic tone and *élan* for freedom.[15] Mazzini, however, did attend Verdi's operas more than once. A letter dating from 1856 referred to the hire of a theatre box for a performance of *La traviata*.[16]

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[12] Stefano Ragni, 'Giuseppe Mazzini e Giulia Grisi', *Bollettino della Domus Mazziniana*, 1 (1989), 29-49.

[13] Attendance to the School was completely free. The teachers, both Italian and English, offered their services free of charge. Providing free elementary education was for Mazzini a way to alleviate the scourge of child begging and child exploitation. The young children attending the Free Italian School had often been abandoned by their families; see Michele Finelli, *"Il prezioso elemento". Giuseppe Mazzini e gli emigrati italiani nell'esperienza della Scuola Italiana di Londra* (Verucchio: Pazzini, 1999). In 2005 the Associazione Mazziniana Italiana (AMI) proclaimed the 10 November the 'Giornata Mazziniana della Scuola'.

[14] On the anthem *Suona la tromba / ondeggiano le insegne gialle e nere* 'commissioned' by Mazzini to Verdi see Maurizio Benedetti, 'Divagazioni sulla musica del Risorgimento', in *Suona la tromba. Verdi, la musica e il Risorgimento* (Genoa: Comitato delle Celebrazioni Verdiane, 2001), pp. 41-83. The text includes the letter Verdi sent to Mazzini from Paris on 18 October 1848. Verdi himself appears to have some reservations on the effectiveness of his music: «Ho cercato di essere più popolare e facile che mi sia stato possibile. Fate quell'uso che credete, abbruciatelo anche se non lo credete degno» (p. 69). The only letter Verdi wrote to Mazzini ends with praise and a direct appreciation: «Ricevete un cordiale saluto da chi ha per voi tutta la venerazione»; Gaetano Cesari, Alessandro Luzio, *I copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Sala Bolognese: Forni, 1979), facsim. ed. 1913, p. 470. The original letter appears to have been lost.

[15] Lucio Villari, *Bella e perduta. L'Italia del Risorgimento* (Rome: Laterza, 2009), pp. 121-123.

[16] S.E.I., LVI, pp. 262 and 271, letter to Kate Craufurd, 2 June 1856.

There are more precise details referring to *Il trovatore*, an opera redolent of popular taste, which Mazzini had repeatedly discussed in his *Philosophy of Music* (*Filosofia della musica*). In 1867, as it often happened, Mazzini was invited to attend a performance of *Il trovatore* by his friend Pietro Mongini. Unexpectedly, Mazzini wrote: «Again and again, I found the Trovatore not to my taste: the scene of the Miserere, etc., being an astonishing, wonderful, perfect inspiration, descended there I don't know how».[17] Surprisingly, Mazzini also tried to acquire the score of a Verdi's *romanza da camera*: «Trovaste in Milano le due arie di Gordigiani? E 'Ad una stella' di Verdi?».[18] Mazzini's musical tastes were almost completely focused on Meyerbeer's operas. In Meyerbeer Mazzini saw the precursor of the Europe to come.[19] In a letter dating from 1867, Mazzini wrote: «Meyerbeer è il più grande artista di un periodo di transizione, nel quale il Sommo Sacerdote non può ancora apparire, […]. Nato nell'Istria italiana da famiglia tedesca, si potrebbe dire che ci è stato dato come simbolo dell'unione futura, come legame fra i due mondi, il cui armonizzarsi costituirà la più alta espressione musicale del futuro».[20]

[17] Letter [original in English] to Emilie A. Venturi, London, May 31, 1867, S.E.I., LXXXV, pp. 59-60. Verdi, on his part, had no doubts about the popularity of the *Il trovatore*. On 2 May 1862, writing from London to his friend Opprandino Arrivabene, Verdi stated: «Quando tu andrai nelle Indie e nell'interno dell'Africa sentirai il *Trovatore*» ; Annibale Alberti, ed., *Verdi intimo. Carteggio di Giuseppe Verdi con il conte Opprandino Arrivabene (1861-1886)* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1931), p. 17.

[18] Letter to Elena Casati, Genoa, 4 October 1856, S.E.I., LVII, p. 122. Verdi's romanza, with text by Andrea Maffei, was originally published in 1845 by Francesco Lucca of Milan.

[19] Mazzini's first yearning for an European synthesis appeared in his juvenile writing *D'una letteratura europea*, published in the journal *Antologia*, November-December 1829. This same concept, of a Europe united in brotherhood between the pensive North and the generous and passionate South, which can be found also in the *Filosofia della musica*, was often repeated with the conviction that:«[…] esiste dunque in Europa una concordia di bisogni e di desideri … Esiste una tendenza europea». On Meyerbeer as unknowingly bearing this concept see Stefano Ragni, '*Les Huguenots* di Meyerbeer tra George Sand e Mazzini', in *Annali dell'Università per Stranieri di Perugia* (Perugia: Guerra Edizioni, 1993), pp. 165-181.

[20] Letter to Emilie A. Venturi, 21 May 1867, S.E.I., LXXXV, pp. 45-47. Mazzini's thoughts on Meyerbeer and his work should have been appended to Emilie Venturi's complete works of Mazzini. Their significance is in displaying Mazzini's love and interest in music. This went back over thirty years and may be said to date from the pamphlet *Filosofia della musica*. On the idea of Donizetti emerging as a musician of the future, put forward in the concluding pages of the *Filosofia della musica*, see Stefano Ragni, *Filosofia della musica*. *Note di lettura* (Pisa: Domus mazziniana, 1996), pp. 87-91.

Verdi's opinions on Mazzini are unrecorded. It is well-known, however, that the composer was against any form of violent revolution, though capable to express, perhaps unexpectedly, his reconsiderations on a 'republican' and united Italy.[21] This took place during the Great Exhibition in London in 1862. Verdi was part of the official Italian delegation which also included other composers. Among them: Sterndale Bennet, the French Auber and Meyerbeer. Verdi had composed, for the occasion, a 'Cantica' in a single movement on verses by the young Arrigo Boito. Its title, *Hymn of the Nations* (*L'Inno delle Nazioni*) represented an explicit tribute to the three European countries which had embraced the new liberal values: England, France and Italy.

[21] Verdi's disillusionment with the post-unification Italian political class is clearly expressed in an 1881 letter: «È impossibile vi sia stato, vi sia, vi possa essere in avvenire un Governo così … metterai tu l'epiteto … io non parlo di Rossi, di Bianchi, di Neri,… Poco m'importa la Forma e il Colore. Guardo la storia e leggo grandi fatti, grandi delitti, grandi virtù nei governi dei Re, dei Preti, delle Repubbliche! … Non m'importa, ripeto; ma quello che domando si è che quelli che reggono la cosa pubblica sieno Cittadini di grande ingegno e di specchiata onestà»; letter to Opprandino Arrivabene, Sant'Agata, 27 May 1881, in Giuseppe Verdi, *Autobiografia dalle lettere*, ed. by Aldo Oberdorfer (Milan: Rizzoli, 1951), p. 216.

The unrelenting hostility of Michael Costa, a person of great influence among London's theatre circles, made it almost impossible for Verdi to present his newly-composed *Inno*.[22] Excluded from official ceremonies, Verdi, nevertheless saw his music performed at Her Majesty's Theatre on the evening of May 24, with predictable and triumphal results.[23]

Verdi's choice included, totally unexpectedly, the Mazzinian-Republican anthem *Brothers of Italy* (*Fratelli d'Italia*), musical emblem of revolutionary radicals. The performance of the *Inno*, on the enthusiasm heightened by Boito's lyrics, included renditions of *La Marseillaise* and *God Save the Queen*, surprisingly followed by the musical saga composed by Michele Novaro on verses by Goffredo Mameli.[24] For Verdi, at the time a member of the first Parliament of a united Italy, and future Italian Senator by royal appointment, the exclusion of the *March of Savoy* in preference of a republican anthem revealed a clear political choice guided by his heart.[25]

[22] Mary Jane Phillips-Matz, *Verdi. A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 526-533.

[23] Pierre Milza, *Verdi e il suo tempo* (Rome: Carocci, 2001), pp. 269-272. The tenor Tamberlick, under contract with Covent Garden's Royal Opera House, at the time directed by Michael Costa was unable to take part. Verdi adapted the part for the soprano Titiens.

[24] The *Inno degli Italiani* (the exact title of *Fratelli d'Italia*) had been played at Genoa in December 1847 to mark the one-hundred and first anniversary of the city breaking away from Austria. The Press of the day reported: «Da molte sere - leggevasi in una corrispondenza del 12 dicembre da quella città all'*Italia* - numerosa gioventù si raduna nel locale dell'accademia filodrammatica a cantare un inno all'Italia del cav. Mameli (sic), posto in musica dal maestro Novaro; la poesia, quantunque un po' trascurata, è piena di fuoco; la musica vi corrisponde pienamente»; Raffaello Monterosso, *La musica nel Risorgimento* (Milan: Vallardi, 1848), pp. 140-141.
In London, Mazzini having received tidings of the events wrote to his mother: «[…] tra canti resi popolari è quello del giovine Mameli che qualche amico dovrebbe ricopiarmi. Anzi, siccome so ch'egli ha composto altre poesie, se sono stampate e vi giungesse l'occasione, dovreste ricopiarmele»; London, 20 December 1847, S.E.I., XXXIII, pp. 156-157.

[25] Giuseppe Gabetti, musical director of the Savoy Regiment, composed the *Marcia reale d'ordinanza* introduced by a *Fanfara reale* nel 1831. It was during the reign of Charles Albert of Sardinia that the *Marcia reale d'ordinanza* became the hymn of Kingdom of Sardinia and then of the Kingdom of Italy. Up until 1943 the verses *Viva il re, le trombe liete squillano* resounded during every public ceremony, whilst members of the House of Savoy remained hostile to the hymn *Fratelli d'Italia*. See Stefano Pivato, 'Il canto degli Italiani. L'*Inno di Mameli*, gli inni politici e la canzone popolare', in *Almanacco della Repubblica. Storia d'Italia attraverso le tradizioni, le istituzioni e le simbologie repubblicane,* ed. by Maurizio Ridolfi (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2003), p. 147.

Giuseppe Verdi and Censorship in Pre-Unification Italy

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> «From *Nabucco* onward I haven't had, one can say, an hour of peace. Sixteen years in prison!»[1]

With these words, on 12 May 1858, Giuseppe Verdi vented to his Milanese friend, Clarina Maffei. The closing expression, 'years in prison' ('anni di galera'), surfaces frequently in modern discussions on the composer, and is all too often decontextualised and misunderstood. Many have taken it to indicate Verdi's exasperation with a number of obstacles he had to face, from tight deadlines to singers' demands. 'Anni di galera' is frequently used to refer to the period of Verdi's activity between his debut with *Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio* in 1839 and the late 1840s or early 1850s. Very few take the trouble to mention - let alone explain - that the passage reads '*sixteen* years'.[2] An important clue to what Verdi actually meant comes from the date of the letter: in May 1858, Verdi was having enormous difficulties with his *Gustavo III*, planned for the Teatro San Carlo in Naples and vetoed by the censors. After various modifications, the opera saw the light of day only the following year in Rome as *Un ballo in maschera*. It was an intense and protracted struggle, in which ultimately the composer had to accept substantial changes to the plot and the text. In this context, it is plausible that Verdi's frustration had to do primarily with theatrical censorship - a metaphorical prison since the time of *Nabucco* (1842).

At that time, of course, Italy was divided into a number of different states, mostly under foreign rule. Verdi had composed operas for several states, including Lombardy-Venetia (Milan and Venice), the Papal States (Rome), the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Naples), and the Grand-Duchy of Tuscany (Florence). In each of those states, political authorities monitored every aspect of artistic expression, including the theatre. Although dramatists and poets tried to forestall potential problems with subject matter, dramatic situations and verbal expressions that could

[1] Giuseppe Verdi, *Autobiografia dalle lettere*, ed. by Aldo Oberdorfer (Milan: Rizzoli, 1981), pp. 230-231. «Dal Nabucco in poi non ho avuto, si può dire, un'ora di quiete. Sedici anni di galera!».

[2] An important exception is Philip Gossett, Introduction to 'An *Attila* Symposium: Convened and Edited by Helen M. Greenwald', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 21 (2010), 227-240.

trigger censorial intervention problems often arose. The censors often intervened, with responses that varied between requests for minor revisions and outright prohibitions.

The history of operatic censorship in nineteenth-century Italy concerns first and foremost the texts of librettos. Why, then, should we concentrate on a composer rather than, say, a librettist or the opera libretto in general? I can think of at least three reasonable answers to this question. Firstly, many of Verdi's operas of the 1840s and 1850s are widely known and can be used as case studies to analyse operatic censorship in pre-unification Italy. Secondly, to a greater extent than his predecessors, Verdi exerted extensive control over all aspects of the creation and production of his operas, choosing the subject matter himself, having his own ideas about how to turn literary sources into operas, and providing librettists with detailed instructions; thus, his authorial impact in the preparation of the librettos he set to music was significant. Thirdly, although his principal aim, on pragmatic grounds, was to make his operas performable, he became increasingly unyielding to the censors during the second decade of his career.

Indeed, in pre-unification Italy, one of the preliminary concerns in the creation of a new opera was to choose a subject that would obtain censorial approval. The librettist typically prepared a summary of the subject matter, which was then submitted to the authorities. It was only after receiving their *nihil obstat* or requests for alterations that the librettist would draft the poetry, which was then sent to the censors for detailed examination and final approval, typically while the composer worked on the music. The process was often fairly straightforward, and new operas could see the light of day without any significant difficulties. In other instances, subject matter that was deemed unacceptable by the authorities was set aside once and for all and the process began anew.

Sometimes, however, the production of a new opera was the result of painstaking negotiations between authors, management companies, and government authorities. Such is the case of *Rigoletto*, planned for the Teatro La Fenice in Venice and premiered there in 1851. On 28 April 1850 Verdi wrote to his librettist of choice, Francesco Maria Piave: «I would have another subject that, if the police wanted to allow it, would be one of the greatest realizations of modern theater. Who knows! They permitted *Ernani*, and they might allow this one as well, and here there would be no conspiracies».[3] The subject in question was *Le roi s'amuse*, a controversial play by Victor Hugo dealing with the licentiousness and

[3] Franco Abbiati, *Giuseppe Verdi*, 4 vols. (Milan: Ricordi, 1959), Vol. II, p. 59. «Avrei un altro soggetto che se la polizia volesse permettere sarebbe una delle più grandi realizzazioni del teatro moderno. Chi sa! Hanno permesso l'*Ernani* potrebbe permettere anche questo, e qui non ci sarebbero congiure».

corruption of the French court. The management of La Fenice were concerned, however, and on 24 August the composer wrote to the superintendent, Carlo Marzari: «The doubt that *Le roi s'amuse* may not be allowed puts me in great trouble. I was assured by Piave that there were no obstacles to that subject, and I, confiding in the poet, began to study it, to think through it deeply, and in my mind the idea, the *tinta musicale* [musical colour] was found».[4] Indeed, Verdi was concerned about the possible interference of the authorities not only because of the subject in itself, but also because of the music he had begun to conceive for it.

The magnitude of the censorial opposition to this opera, then entitled *La maledizione*, became fully apparent on 21 November, when the authorities flatly forbade its representation on the Venetian stage. The changes they required disfigured the plot as we know it today: Rigoletto's physical deformity was to be omitted, the curse was to disappear not only from the title but also from the plot, the king was not to take part in the inn scene, and Gilda's body was not to be placed in a sack. Piave hastened to draft a new libretto, entitled *Il duca di Vendome*, which transposed the time and place of the action and introduced numerous other changes.[5] Verdi's reaction was downright negative. In another letter to Marzari he insisted that the subject and the words were strictly connected to his musical thought: «I chose precisely this subject for all of these qualities, and if these original traits are taken away, I can no longer make music for it».[6] It was only by the end of December that a compromise was reached, leading to the creation of the opera under the title of *Rigoletto*. Even after the details of the plot were agreed upon, the authorities continued to scrutinise the text through the compositional process. A late change to the poetry of the opera occurred at the beginning of Act III, when the Duke arrives at Sparafucile's inn. In the uncensored poetry, the Duke asks Sparafucile for 'tua sorella e del vino' ('your sister and some wine'), still legible in Verdi's autograph

[4] Mario Lavagetto, *Un caso di censura: Il 'Rigoletto'* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2010), p. 44. «Il dubbio che *Le roi s'amuse* non si permetta mi mette in grave imbarazzo. Fui assicurato da Piave che non eravi ostacolo per quel sogetto, ed io fidando nel suo poeta, mi misi a studiarlo, a meditarlo profondamente e l'idea, la tinta musicale erano nella mia mente trovate».

[5] The text of *Il duca di Vendome* is published in Lavagetto, *Un caso di censura*, pp. 147-179.

[6] Gaetano Cesari, Alessandro Luzio, *I copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Milan: n.p., 1913), p. 111. «Scelsi appunto questo sogetto per tutte queste qualità, e questi tratti originali, se si tolgono, io non posso più farvi musica. Se mi si dirà che le mie note possono stare anche con questo dramma, io rispondo che non comprendo queste ragioni, e dico francamente che le mie note o belle o brutte che siano non le scrivo mai a caso e che procuro sempre di darvi un carattere».

manuscript, whereas printed sources transmit a less explicit request: 'una stanza e del vino' ('a room and some wine'). Before the publication of a critical edition of the opera prepared by Martin Chusid, performances of *Rigoletto* routinely used the latter version of the text.

Verdi incurred even greater difficulties with *Un ballo in maschera*, his last work composed for an Italian opera house prior to the unification. The libretto, initially adapted from a French text by Eugène Scribe for Daniel François Esprit Auber's *Gustave III* (1833), dealt with the assassination of Gustavus III of Sweden at a ball in Stockholm in 1792. Verdi and his librettist, Antonio Somma, began work on the new opera, then called *Gustavo III*, but the Neapolitan authorities stepped in decisively. They forbade the representation of the assassination of a monarch, demanding a change of status for the main character; they called for a change of time and setting for the action; and they requested various other alterations. Somma and Verdi readily came up with a new version of the story, set in seventeenth-century Pomerania and called *Una vendetta in domino*. The censors, however, called for a transposition of the story to a more remote past, suggesting a setting in fourteenth-century Florence during the struggle between Guelphs and Ghibellines. Verdi's refusal to set this version led to a lawsuit, and it is at this point that the composer wrote the letter cited at the opening of this article. When the contract with Naples was cancelled, the composer offered *Gustavo III* to Rome. There, too, the censors had their objections. When an agreement was finally reached, it involved the oft-quoted change of locale from Gothenburg to colonial Boston; the King of Sweden became the governor of Boston and was assassinated not by gunshot, but by knife (a more noble death by the standards of the time). The title was *Un ballo in maschera*, and the premiere performance finally took place on 17 February 1859.

The musical implications of the censorship of *Gustavo III* are particularly complex. There is ample evidence that while negotiations were underway in Naples, Verdi had not only begun to think of *tinta musicale*, but also produced a draft of the entire opera in short score (what Verdi scholars typically call a 'continuity draft'). Based on that draft, the American musicologist Philip Gossett has even produced a hypothetical reconstruction of *Gustavo III* as it might have been without the intervention of the censors in Naples.[7] Furthermore, in recent times it has become common to perform *Un ballo in maschera* with the locale moved to eighteenth-century Sweden and the names of the principal male

[7] The reconstruction is discussed in Philip Gossett, *Divas and Scholars. Performing Italian Opera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 491-513. A commercial recording conducted by Maurizio Barbacini is available.

characters changed from Riccardo to Gustavo, and Renato to Anckarström, respectively.

A mere ten weeks after the premiere of *Un ballo in maschera*, on 27 April 1859, war broke in northern Italy, rapidly leading to the end of Austrian domination in substantial portions of the Italian peninsula. Lombardy and several duchies were rapidly liberated and annexed by plebiscite to the Kingdom of Sardinia, leading to the foundation of the Kingdom of Italy on March 17 1861. One of the effects of the liberation and unification was the lifting of censorship. While the process of unification continued, with the annexation of Venetia in 1866, and finally the end of the temporal power of the Roman Catholic Church and the annexation of Rome in 1870, Verdi fulfilled commissions only for opera houses outside Italy - *La forza del destino* (1862) for Saint Petersburg and the revision of *Macbeth* (1865) and *Don Carlos* (1867) for Paris. Although *La forza del destino* had to be modified for Rome, where its title changed to *Don Alvaro*, Verdi never had to face problems of the magnitude of *Rigoletto* or *Un ballo in maschera*. His 'anni di galera' were over.

Verdi's approach to censorship during the 1850s was to tread along the fine line that separates idealism from pragmatism and artistic rigour from concreteness. Indeed, his operas were the object of censorship not only at various stages during the creative process, but also under the pressure of specific local circumstances and requirements. Verdi himself, aware of the highly volatile political climate of the time, knew that some of his works were bound to be altered by the authorities - or to disappear altogether. *La battaglia di Legnano* (1849), which deals with the 1176 battle in which the Lombard League faced and defeated the army of the Holy Roman Empire led by Frederick Barbarossa, was given for the first time at the Teatro Argentina in Rome on 27 January 1849. Even before the premiere, however, Verdi was already concerned that this overtly patriotic work would not be able to circulate easily as the revolutions of 1848-49 were beginning to fail. On 24 September 1848, while he was still composing the opera, he wrote to the librettist, Salvadore Cammarano: «in the event that the censors were not to permit it, do you believe that by changing the title, the locale, etc., we'll be able to retain all or most of the poetry?».[8]

[8] Carlo Matteo Mossa, *Carteggio Verdi-Cammarano (1843-1852)* (Parma: Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani, 2001), p. 51. «Mi raccomando a voi; intanto continuate a mandarmi il dramma incominciato e ditemi: caso mai le Censure nol permettessero credete voi che si potrà cambiando titolo, località etc.: ... ritenere tutta o quasi tutta la verseggiatura?».

Indeed, during the 1850s *La battaglia di Legnano* circulated as *L'assedio di Arlem*, in which the action was transposed to the Spanish-Flemish conflict during the Thirty-Years' War. The opening chorus of the people of northern Italian cities in *La battaglia di Legnano*, which begins with the cry 'Viva Italia!' ('Long live Italy!'), became a chorus of Flemish people singing 'Viva Olanda!' ('Long live Holland!'). It was only after the second war of Italian independence that the original version of the opera resurfaced and *L'assedio di Arlem* disappeared.

The censorship of *La battaglia di Legnano* was clearly motivated by political concerns. Indeed, after the failed revolutions of 1848-49, the political climate became more restrictive. References to 'patria' (homeland) became problematic, especially in association with scenes of oppression and with calls to action. When *Macbeth* (1847) was revived in Milan in 1849, for example, the opening words of the chorus of Scottish exiles, 'Patria oppressa' ('Oppressed homeland') were changed to 'Noi perduti' ('We are lost'), and later in the same act 'La patria tradita' ('The betrayed homeland') became 'La fede tradita' ('The betrayed faith'). At the same time, censors continued to be concerned with political or religious matters, and intervened pervasively, especially *post facto*.

In recent decades, research conducted in conjunction with the ongoing critical edition of Verdi's operas, a joint publication by Ricordi and the University of Chicago Press, has unearthed an abundance of evidence concerning the working of censorship, and sought to restore the texts of several operas to what the composer and his librettists had originally intended. Thus, we now often (although not always) hear the Duke sing the correct words, 'tua sorella e del vino'. Moreover, thanks to important studies by Andreas Giger, we know who Verdi's censors in Rome were and what they sought to achieve.[9] Indeed, it is becoming increasingly possible today to read librettos, as it were, through the eyes of mid-nineteenth-century censors, and to determine how they may have intervened on texts for which we only have the final product. The choice of the word 'product' is not casual. Ultimately, it is important to realise that, for all of Verdi's vehement responses to censorial interference with the operas that were to become *Rigoletto* and *Un ballo in maschera*, and for his perception that he had spent «sedici anni di galera», the ultimate result of that interference was hardly ever an outright prohibition, but typically a compromise that allowed the show to go on.

[9] Andreas Giger, 'Behind the Police Chief's Closed Doors: the Unofficial Censors of Verdi in Rome', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, 7 (2010), 63-99; 'Social Control and the Censorship of Giuseppe Verdi's Operas in Rome (1844-1859)', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 11 (1999), 233-265.

Sixth WESLINE Conference, Oxford, 2-3 September 2013

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The 2013 WESLINE Conference took place at Balliol College, University of Oxford, and focused on current challenges in the field of Modern Languages Librarianship, some quite technical like blogging, social media and foreign language cataloguing, others more wide-ranging, like collection management, the role of the subject specialist and electronic resources.

It was impeccably organised by Nick Hearn (Taylor Institution Library) and Joanne Edwards (Taylor Institution Library), with the assistance of the committees and chairs of FSLG, ACLAIIR and GSLG. The Conference, as well as several exciting talks, offered the fifty-nine attending delegates the opportunity to visit Duke Humfrey's Library (the oldest reading room in the Bodleian Library, dating back to 1487), the newly refurbished Gladstone Link, the Taylorian Library, Balliol's Historic Collections Centre, and the Bodleian Library Exhibition: *Magical Books - From the Middle Ages to Middle-earth*. They were all memorable tours. I particularly enjoyed the visit to Balliol's Historic Collections Centre in St Cross Church, as the traditional exterior appearance revealed a very modern facility that is home to beautiful illuminated manuscripts and early printed books.

The first day revolved around the future of Modern Languages Collection Management and Modern Languages Librarians, with a more specific session on 'blogging'.

Catriona Cannon (Associate Director, Collection Support Bodleian Libraries) spoke about Collection Management at the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, giving a general overview of some of the challenges of managing such a complex collection, from budget structures and print collections to electronic resources, open access, e-books, and digitisation.

Joanne Edwards (Subject Consultant, Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies, Taylor Institution Library, Bodleian Libraries) talked about approval plans and their advantages, for example: flexibility, helpfulness when buying books from several different countries, especially those where local knowledge of the market is essential, avoidance of duplication of titles on standing orders, financial stability for the publishers to invest in new titles, and their disadvantages, like the

time-consuming process of setting up and the ongoing monitoring and costs of returning unwanted items.

Maureen Pinder (Arts and Social Sciences Faculty Team Librarian, University of Leeds) described COPAC Collection Management (CCM) tools used at Leeds University Library in partnership with other libraries, including Sheffield, York, and Manchester. These Collection Management tools are used essentially to create library's collection profiles and to compare them with similar collections held in other COPAC libraries, to help evaluate and categorise the collections, to prioritise digitisation and conservation, to weed them and to drive collaborative collection management. CCM tools are currently providing useful and occasionally unexpected results, revealing pockets of valuable collections across various libraries, but needing improvement. For example specialised libraries and uncatalogued collections are not included, some bibliographic records are inadequate and, at present, it is not possible to retrieve information on the physical conditions of books or to establish if other libraries intend to retein their copies.

Hilla Wait (Philosophy and Theology Librarian, Bodleian Libraries) brought us up to date on Demand-Driven Acquisitions (DDA), which are being trialled across several academic libraries across the UK. For electronic books packages can be selected so that e-books appear on a library catalogue and can be consulted by readers, but are only purchased after being used a certain number of times. There are complications with regards to simultaneous usage, printing, access by external readers and duplication. The most pressing issue is that it is very difficult to predict costs as they can increase very rapidly. Alternatives are being experimented with, for example staff mediated purchases or reverse DDA with a fixed agreed cost independently of usage. It is a field that is opening up an entirely new concept of ownership of electronic books.

Rachel Kirkwood (Research Services Librarian, University of Manchester Library) talked about the directions in which Library Services in Manchester are heading. More specifically, the Research Services are trying to implement systems which allow collections to develop without subject specialist librarians, using data-driven decision-making, for example: patron-driven acquisitions, scorecards to evaluate subscriptions and CCM tools through categorised collections and collaborative approaches at institutional level. However, (thankfully!) at the moment it seems that a human subject specialist still has a value, as it is necessary to make sure that all funds are spent, to ensure that collections do not remain undeveloped in certain areas and to liaise with academics.

Colin Homiski (Research Librarian for Art History, Film and Media, Music, Philosophy & Religious Studies, Senate House Library) and Nick Hearn (French and Russian Subject Specialist, Taylor Institution Library, Bodleian Libraries) presented the results of a recently undertaken Survey on the State of Western European Languages across UK libraries: the study of languages is declining and many departments are closing, which is affecting libraries. The hope is that the survey results can be used as a benchmark to be re-evaluated in two to three years' time.

After a most original guest lecture on 'Riding the buses in contemporary Brazilian film' by Dr Claire Williams (Lecturer in Brazilian Studies, University of Oxford) and an optional tour, the Conference moved on to Social Media. Isabel Holowaty (Bodleian History Librarian) spoke about her blog on Western European history collections and gave advice to librarians interested in starting their own blogs. She recommended that a blog has to be active, monitored, publicised and often paid for. On the other hand a blog is a very flexible, easy, functional and dynamic tool that can be shared with colleagues and provides feedback about the audience.

Susan Reed (Lead Curator, Germanic Studies, The British Library), manages a blog at the British Library, to which eighteen curators and guests contribute. It is used to publicise exhibitions, new acquisitions and projects and to inform readers about the collections. Her recommendations for aspiring bloggers were: to know the target audience, post frequently, be informative, write in a lively manner and include pictures and links.

An engaging talk by Malgorzata Czepiel (Kafka Curator, Bodleian Library) about Kafka's manuscripts recently donated to the Bodleian Library highlighted the challenges that often arise from valuable and fragile material and the importance of digitisation in this context. It was fascinating to learn about Kafka and the adventurous story of these manuscripts!

A wine reception in the Main Reading Room of the Taylor Institution Library sponsored by Casalini Libri and dinner at Al-Andalus gave the delegates the chance to mingle and compare notes and ideas on recent developments.

The second day saw the discussion move to the role of the subject specialist, with talks by Janet Foot (Celtic Librarian, Taylor Institution Library, Bodleian Libraries) and Clare Bristow (Library Assistant, Legal Deposit Operations, Bodleian Libraries) about the role of the Celtic Studies librarian. Janet and Clare highlighted that, with several Celtic languages to care for, and without a large numbers of students, the academic communities are very close-knit. Janet's main challenge is to be

as accessible as possible to her students and academics within her limited working hours and to try and fit in professional development as well as her normal duties. Clare drew attention to the fact that Janet's situation is not unique and most Celtic librarians in the UK work part-time hours, whilst caring for a highly specialised and demanding audience. Additionally, given the lack of e-resources and the type of publishers in the field, they rely heavily on donations to strengthen their collections.

Karen Langdon (Document Supply Supervisor, Radcliffe Science Library, Bodleian Libraries) highlighted how language skills are most important for librarians (including those who are not subject specialists) even in science. Although most of the recent scientific literature is in English, some historic material, reports and bulletins from foreign societies and publishers are not. Additionally, the readership in Oxford has an international flair and therefore interacting with readers requires, at least, some basic knowledge of foreign languages.

The Conference then moved on to more technical topics: foreign language cataloguing, open access, and electronic resources.

Janet Ashton (West European Languages Team Manager British Library) explained how the British Library West European Languages cataloguers are highly skilled professionals, often with native or degree-level knowledge of languages needed for cataloguing books in both humanities and sciences and also to support the library in other areas, like European projects, reference and research activities, exhibitions and even communications with foreign publishers!

Andrea Del Cornò (Italian Specialist, The London Library) gave an overview of the London Library's past, highlighting the cosmopolitan character of its collections and readership, requiring staff at all levels to possess good language skills applicable right through from selection to cataloguing, to reader services.

David Lowe (Head of European Collections, University of Cambridge) talked about the impact that the new RDA standard had on the cataloguing team at Cambridge University: it was overall a time-demanding but positive exercise. He feels that RDA is more suitable to certain types of foreign language material, but it has made cataloguing a more complex job. Cataloguers need to have greater language skills to achieve a better understanding of the resource they are cataloguing, authority work has expanded greatly and therefore language skills are still most certainly needed in libraries.

Kate Williams (Academic Support Librarian, University of Warwick) talked about the changing role of the subject specialist librarian. Subject specialists are typically taking on more language subjects and are having to develop new skills like teaching, training and

IT. Her experience at Warwick is one of a switch from collections and subjects expertise to information, liaison and pedagogical expertise.

Dr Johanneke Sytsema (Subject Consultant, Linguistics Dutch and Frisian, Taylor Institution Library, Bodleian Libraries) discussed the current situation on Open Access: this is becoming a requirement for an increasing percentage of publicly funded research and funding bodies. There are two alternative systems: the Gold Route, whereby authors need to pay to publish an article, and the Green Route, whereby articles are deposited following a peer review and published after an embargo period (and therefore cannot be published in certain journals). The Green Route is more financially viable and is being advocated by many universities across Europe, but there are concerns that the situation is creating a divide between tenure and non-tenure academics and it is making publishing in prestigious journals more difficult.

Janet Zmroczek (Head of European Studies, The British Library) presented 'Europeana', a digital library funded by the European Commission and the European Ministers of Culture that functions as a single access point to millions of digitised object from Europe's museums, libraries and archives. Among the resources available (under the Creative Commons Licence) are: 'Europeana Newspapers', the largest provider of European newspapers with full text data search, 'Judaica Europeana', about digitised Jewish heritage in Europe and 'Europeana 1914-1918', with large amounts of material about the First World War centenary anniversary.

Kate Lindsay (First World War Digital Collections, Academic IT, University of Oxford) presented the work carried out to contribute to 'Europeana 1914-1918', collecting memories and objects and digitising them to be made available on open access using The Oxford Community Collection Model. It has been a hugely popular and successful project - which included a number of road-shows - and continues with training and advising on the ongoing digitisation.

Dr Robert McNamee (Director Electronic Enlightenment Project, Oxford) presented the Electronic Enlightenment Project, which involves digitising and creating critical editions of exchange of letters during the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century to help explore further the Enlightenment period. Thirty-seven European countries are involved and the aim is to acquire new material and include translations in several languages.

Following additional tours, it was agreed unanimously that the Conference had been useful, pleasant and instructive. We said farewell on this high note until the next forthcoming WESLINE.

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