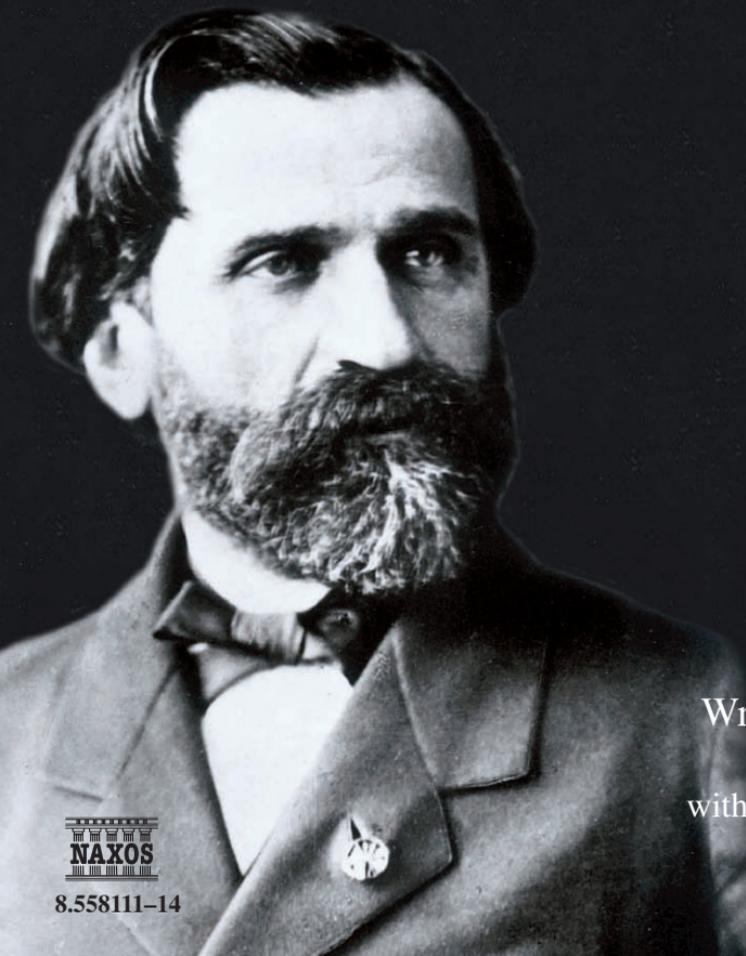


L I F E A N D W O R K S



Giuseppe
Verdi

Written and narrated by
Jeremy Siepmann
with Freddie Jones as Verdi



8.558111-14

Preface

If music is ‘about’ anything, it’s about life. No other medium can so quickly or more comprehensively lay bare the very soul of those who make or compose it. Biographies confined to the limitations of text are therefore at a serious disadvantage when it comes to the lives of composers. Only by combining verbal language with the music itself can one hope to achieve a fully rounded portrait. In the present series, the words of composers and their contemporaries are brought to life by distinguished actors in a narrative liberally spiced with musical illustrations.

The substantial booklet contains an assessment of the composer in relation to his era, an overview of his major works and their significance, a graded listening plan, a summary of recommended books, a gallery of biographical entries on the most significant figures in his life and times, and a calendar of his life showing parallel developments in the arts, politics, philosophies, sciences, and social developments of the day.

Jeremy Siepmann



Portrait of Giuseppe Verdi by Achille Scalessi, 1858; courtesy AKG

Giuseppe
Verdi
(1813-1901)

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The full spoken text can be found at:
www.naxos.com/lifeandworks/verdi/spokentext

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| 1 | Aida: Grand March and Triumphal Chorus
Slovak Philharmonic Chorus / Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra / Oliver Dohnányi
Background, childhood, and youth | Naxos 8.550241
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| 2 | La Traviata: Brindisi ‘Libiam ne’ lieti calici’
Monika Krause, soprano / Rannveig Braga, mezzo-soprano / Yordy Ramiro, tenor
Peter Ostwald, tenor / Pavol Maurery, baritone / Jozef Špaček, bass / Slovak Philharmonic Chorus
Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra / Alexander Rahbari | 2:54
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| 4 | Overture to ‘Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio’
Hungarian State Opera Orchestra / Pier Giorgio Morandi | 3:17
Naxos 8.553018 |
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| 13 | The revolution of <i>Macbeth</i> and a return to safer ground | 4:32 |
| 14 | Overture to ‘I masnadieri’ | 4:30 |

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16	The revolutions of 1848	8:38
17	Overture to ‘La battaglia di Legnano’ Hungarian State Opera Orchestra / Pier Giorgio Morandi	3:58 Naxos 8.553089
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Miriam Gauci, soprano / BRT Philharmonic Orchestra / Alexander Rahbari Naxos 8.550606
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Alessandro Cosentino, tenor / Domenico Trimarchi, baritone / Roberto Servile, baritone
Franco De Grandis, bass / Chorus and Orchestra of the Hungarian State Opera / Will Humburg Naxos 8.660050–51
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Cast

Freddie Jones – Verdi

Elaine Claxton – Streponi, Barbieri-Nini, Stolz

David Timson – Reporter, Censor, Berlioz, Zannari

Steve Hodson – Bishop, Lessona, Critic, Mariani, Husband, Martinelli, Minister

Charles Simpson – Muzio, Cambiaggio, Boito

Jeremy Siepmann – Narrator

Frederick Charles (Freddie) Jones has appeared in over sixty feature films (including those directed by David Lynch, Fellini, Eastwood, and Schlesinger). Many classic television roles include Claudius in *The Caesars*, for which he earned the Golden Nymph Award at the Monte Carlo Television Festival. He has given solo radio performances and appeared on stage with the Royal Shakespeare Company. His interpretation of Sir in *The Dresser* was particularly well received.



Elaine Claxton has worked extensively in the theatre, including London's Royal National Theatre where she appeared in *The Children's Hour*, *The Machine Wreckers*, and *Richard II*. She has twice been a member of the BBC Radio Drama Company, during which time she participated in over 200 broadcasts. She also appears in *Lady Windermere's Fan* for Naxos AudioBooks.



David Timson studied acting and singing at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He has performed in modern and classic plays through the UK and abroad, including *Wild Honey* for Alan Ayckbourn, *Hamlet*, *The Man of Mode*, and *The Seagull*. Among his many television appearances have been roles in *Nelson's Column* and *Swallows and Amazons*. For Naxos AudioBooks he has recorded, to date, five volumes of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, and directed *Twelfth Night* as well as playing Feste. On Naxos, he takes the part of the Narrator in Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*.



After training at the Central School of Speech and Drama, **Steve Hodson** joined Michael Elliot at the Exchange in Manchester for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Peer Gynt*, and *Catch My Soul*. The next stop was Yorkshire Television for a three-and-a-half year stint on *Follyfoot*. This was followed by television series such as *Angels*, *The Legend of King Arthur*, and *All Creatures Great and Small*, all interspersed with hundreds of radio plays. He has directed plays by John Crowen, Schiller, and Bulgakov. On stage he has appeared in *Death and the Maiden*, *The Railway Children*, and as George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*



Charles Simpson won the Carleton Hobbs Radio Award in 1989 and the Best New Actor in Radio award at the Radio Times Comedy and Drama Awards in 1992. His television credits include *The Bill*, *Kavanagh QC*, and *Soldier Soldier*. His theatre work includes *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Tempest* for the English Shakespeare Company, and *The Blue Angel* at the Gielgud Theatre. He also reads the part of Freddie Eynsford Hill in *Pygmalion* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Though long resident in England, **Jeremy Siepmann** was born and formally educated in the United States. Having completed his studies at the Mannes College of Music in New York, he moved to London at the suggestion of Sir Malcolm Sargent in 1964. After several years as a freelance lecturer he was invited to join the staff of London University. For most of the last twenty years he has confined his teaching activity to the piano, his pupils including pianists of worldwide repute.

As a writer he has contributed articles, reviews, and interviews to numerous journals and reference works (including *New Statesman*, *The Musical Times*, *Gramophone*, *BBC Music Magazine*, and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*), some of them being reprinted in book form (Oxford University Press, Robson Books). His books include a widely acclaimed biography of Chopin (*The Reluctant Romantic*, Gollancz/Northeastern University Press, 1995), two volumes on the history and literature of the piano, and a biography of Brahms (Everyman/EMI, 1997). In December 1997 he was appointed editor of *Piano* magazine.

His career as a broadcaster began in New York in 1963 with an East Coast radio series on the life and work of Mozart, described by Alistair Cooke as ‘the best music program on American radio’. On the strength of this, improbably, he was hired by the BBC as a humorist, in which capacity he furnished weekly satirical items on various aspects of American life.

After a long break he returned to broadcasting in 1977 and has by now devised, written, and presented more than 1,000 programmes, including the international award-winning series *The Elements of Music*. In 1988 he was appointed Head of Music at the BBC World Service, broadcasting to an estimated audience of 135 million. He left the Corporation in the spring of 1992 to form his own independent production company.

Historical Background: The Nineteenth Century 1

Overview

The nineteenth century, especially in Europe and North America, was an era of unprecedented change, peppered, inevitably, with wars and revolutions of almost every kind and at every level of society. The continuing advance of the Industrial Revolution, while far from abolishing poverty, brought new wealth to an ever-expanding middle class. Factories proliferated throughout Europe, soon exceeding the supply of indigenous raw materials and thereby intensifying the impulse towards colonisation. The British Empire increased its dominions dramatically, Africa was carved up by Britain and other European colonists, and, despite increasing unease, the slave trade continued, though its days were numbered. It was outlawed throughout the British Empire in 1807, but it was not until 1870 that the last slave was shipped to the Americas. Alarmed by European expansionism, China and Japan attempted to shut out the West altogether. But empire-building went on apace within Europe itself, never more dramatically than during the Napoleonic Wars (1799–1815), which had the incidental effect of igniting in countries from Italy to Russia a fervent nationalism that was to flourish throughout the century. In 1848, revolutions broke out all over Europe, and Marx and Engels published their epoch-making *Communist Manifesto*. Revolutions in Latin America resulted in a spate of new countries whose territorial disputes led to wars with each other. Of more lasting significance, in

world terms, were the Crimean War (1853–6), in which Russia, Turkey, France, Austria, Piedmont, and Sardinia scrambled for territory as the Ottoman empire began to collapse; the American Civil War (1861–5), which brought slavery to an end in the United States; the Austro-Prussian War (1866), which followed Bismarck's dissolution of the German Confederation and led to the creation of the modern German state and the Austro-Hungarian Empire; the series of conflicts that led to the establishment of modern Italy in 1871; the Franco-Prussian War over European leadership (1870–71); and the Russo-Turkish War for control of the Balkans in 1877. In 1837 Queen Victoria began her sixty-three-year reign in Britain, presiding over the most widely spread empire ever known, encompassing more than a quarter of the world's lands and people, while seeing the monarchy itself steadily reduced to a mere symbol as increasing numbers became educated and acquired the right to vote.

By the time of Victoria's death in 1901, the world had changed more dramatically than in any previous century: absolute monarchies had become the rare exception rather than the rule; workers in many countries had achieved conditions and rights beyond the dreams of their grandparents; literacy rates had quadrupled; trades unions were established and recognised in Germany, Britain, and France; the Civil Rights Act had made citizens of all American blacks; socialist parties had been formed and recognised in many countries; child labour had been largely eradicated; women's rights had become a front-line issue; and more than twenty-eight million people had cut their links with Europe and emigrated to America, contributing to the emergence of the United States as one of the world's greatest industrial and political powers.

Science and Technology. As in the previous century, human knowledge had expanded to an unprecedented degree. When Joseph Lalande published his catalogue of 47,390 stars in 1801, he heralded a century of astronomical discovery both literal and figurative, not least on the medical front. The single greatest advance in medicine was undoubtedly the discovery by Pasteur and Koch that bacteria and viruses lead to infection, resulting in mass immunisations against more

than twenty diseases, including such rapacious killers as smallpox, tuberculosis, and cholera (the last having claimed more than 16,000 people in London alone in 1849). Other landmarks include the discovery of quinine as a cure for malaria; the introduction in 1847 of ether as an anaesthetic, which with increased use of antiseptics resulted in unprecedented advances in surgery; and the invention of the X-ray in 1895, which revolutionised the diagnosis of illnesses and injuries, thereby saving and prolonging millions of lives.

Also belonging to the nineteenth century are the invention of steel; the birth and development of railways, both above and below ground, with incalculable effects on almost every branch of civilisation (and warfare); the discovery and widespread dissemination of electricity as a major power source; the advent of the telephone, the bicycle, the washing machine, and the typewriter; the gramophone, and the transmission of radio waves; and the oil drill. Indeed, towards the end of the century, electricity and oil were challenging the supremacy of coal and steam as the principal power sources of machines, leading to the internal combustion engine (hence also the motor car and the manufacture of plastics and artificial rubber).

Arms played a key part in most economies. By the middle of the century, the Krupp works at Essen, in Germany, had become the world's leading arms manufacturers, producing the first all-steel gun as early as 1850. In 1853 Samuel Colt, inventor of the single-barrelled pistol, revolutionised the small-arms business in the USA, working also on submarine mines and telegraphy; Richard Gatling, a trained physician, contributed to death and destruction in the American Civil War with his monstrous ten-barrelled gun, a precursor of the Maxim machine gun of 1882, firing 1,200 shots a minute.

Agriculture, easily sidelined by the achievements of the Industrial Revolution, experienced revolutions of its own, with breeding experiments leading to ever bigger crops and fatter animals. Cyrus McCormick invented his reaping machine in America in 1831, heralding a new

age of mechanised harvesting. Justus von Liebig's *Chemistry in its Application to Agriculture* inaugurated the age of scientific farming and the use of artificial fertilisers in 1855. Agricultural colleges began to proliferate around the middle of the century, and by the last quarter of the century refrigerated ships began plying the Atlantic, leading to worldwide food markets, long before the establishment of domestic refrigerators.

Trade. In the 1840s Britain's adoption of a free trade policy (no customs duties) helped to establish London as the centre of world trade, with the pound sterling as the dominant currency. By the 1870s many other countries introduced import levies as a means of protecting their own industries from economic imperialism. Regular steamship services were established between California and the Far East, and gun-running became a worldwide industry. On the domestic front, the invention of tinned foods and the advent of department stores in the second half of the century transformed the daily lives of countless housewives and domestics.

Ideas. As may be expected in a time of such ferment, the century was rich in philosophers, though the ideas which had, and continue to have, the most impact came from other quarters. Philosophically, the high ground was held by the Germans, much as the French had held it in the previous century. The great names are Hegel (1770–1831), Schopenhauer (1788–1860), and Nietzsche (1844–1900), all of whom were much concerned with music in one way or another. Nor should one forget the Danish Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855). Hegel argued that consciousness and the world of external objects were inseparable aspects of a single whole, and that truth is discoverable only through a dialectic process of contradiction and resolution – a thoroughly rationalist idea with clear parallels in the concept of sonata form. Schopenhauer took a more pessimistic view, one more in keeping with the preoccupations of the Romantics, in which the irrational will is seen as the governing principle of our perception, dominated by an endless cycle of desire and frustration, from which the only escape is aesthetic contemplation.

His thinking had a powerful effect on both Wagner and Nietzsche, who rejected established concepts of Christian morality. Nietzsche proclaimed that ‘God is dead’ and postulated the ideal of the *Übermensch* or ‘Superman’, who would impose his self-created will on the weak and the worthless – a view fully in keeping with the gargantuan nature of the Romantic ego, with its roots in the controlling powers of the industrial revolution and the spate of scientific discoveries which granted man an ever greater mastery of his environment.

Kierkegaard, the founder of existential philosophy, was fundamentally out of step with these ideas, taking what was in many ways a specifically Christian stance and arguing that no amount of rational thought could explain the uniqueness of individual experience or account for the existence of God, which could be understood only through a leap of faith. His suggestion that not only God but exceptional individuals stood outside the laws of morality, however, did not endear him to the established church.

The man who did more than anyone else, however, to undermine the basic tenets not only of Christianity but of all creationist religions was neither a philosopher nor a theologian, but a scientist. Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution, first set out in 1859 in *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, have never lost their explosive power. Less revolutionary, but also explosive, were the ideas of Sigmund Freud (1865–1939), widely known as the father of psychoanalysis. Although his greatest influence and fame belong to the twentieth century, the essence of his approach was defined in the nineteenth, when he first developed his theories of the unconscious and infantile sexuality. His basically anti-religious stance, treated in his book *The Future of an Illusion*, was a distinctly nineteenth-century product. Another far-reaching idea in nineteenth-century non-philosophical thought (non-philosophical in the strictly academic sense) arose from an increasingly widespread concern with natural justice. The Quakers were the first European community formally to espouse the notion of sexual equality, but it was such pioneering individuals as Mary Wollstonecraft, Emmeline Pankhurst, and Susan B. Anthony who really put the issue of women’s rights on the political agenda.

The Arts. In the realm of literature it was the century of the novel, in which such writers as Dickens, Zola, Hugo, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky managed both to absorb and entertain, and to lay bare the realities of life for the mass of society who suffered rather than benefited from the effects of the Industrial Revolution. Others, like Thackeray, Austen, Stendahl, George Eliot, and Flaubert, dealt in various ways with the lives, fantasies, and pretensions of the upwardly mobile middle class. Timeless issues of love, death, disappointment, and adventure were memorably explored by Sir Walter Scott, the fantastical E.T.A. Hoffmann, the three Brontë sisters, Joseph Conrad, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Hoffmann, Conrad, Chekhov, Andersen, and Maupassant proved themselves masters of the short story, and Wilkie Collins introduced a new genre, the detective novel. Meanwhile, dramatists like Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, and Shaw brought a new realism to the theatre. It was also the century of the great Romantic poets: Goethe, Wordsworth, Heine, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Pushkin. Of these, Goethe, Byron, Heine, and Pushkin had the greatest impact on composers, prominent amongst them Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, Berlioz, and Tchaikovsky. Later poets of importance include Baudelaire, Verlaine, Tennyson, and Gerard Manley Hopkins.

In the world of painting and sculpture, the greatest figures in the earlier part of the century included Goya; Constable, who heralded a new wave of landscape painters; Ingres, a natural classicist born into a century of Romanticism, who had much in common with Chopin, though not friendship; the arch-Romantics Géricault and Delacroix, whose obsession with the distant past arose from a characteristically Romantic distaste for the present; and the staggeringly original J.M.W. Turner, whose work foreshadowed the development of the French Impressionist school in the latter half of the century. The Impressionists Monet, Degas, Manet, Renoir, all of whom strove to represent nature and to capture the changing effects of light and movement, mixing their colours on the canvas rather than on the palette, were succeeded by the so-called post-Impressionists (Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, and Seurat), who subscribed to no particular school or technique but sought a more objective, less spontaneous and evanescent style than the

Impressionists. Among sculptors, Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) stood in a class of his own – a Romantic, a realist, and a master of his craft with few rivals. (The largest sculpture in the world, however, was the Statue of Liberty, presented by France to the United States in 1884.)

At the end of the century came a new family of styles known as Art Nouveau, of which Aubrey Beardsley, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Gustav Klimt were prominent though very different exponents. Equally influential in the realm of architecture, it largely rejected traditional Western notions of symmetry, drawing much of its inspiration from the prints and buildings of Japan and reflecting a widespread hunger among Western artists for a fundamental regeneration of the creative impulse. This ranged from the highly decorative to the boldly simple.

In the realm of dance, ballet underwent some important transformations, including the introduction of tights, calf-length white dresses, and toe-shoes. The technique of female dancers was developed at the expense of the male, who was reduced to a largely supporting role. In the modern repertoire, the most typical examples of Romantic ballet at its best are *La Sylphide* (1832) and *Giselle* (1841).

Architecture. Nineteenth-century architecture in Europe and America reflected both the Romantic obsession with the past and the industrialists' concerns with practicality and economy. Public buildings tended for most of the century toward an ever more massive grandiosity, drawing on a wide variety of styles ranging from the distant to the recent past, often within a single building. A famous example, from 1835, are the neo-Gothic Houses of Parliament in London. Housing for the working class, however, bore many of the hallmarks of present-day factory-farming, consisting in the main of terraced brick houses – small, crowded, lacking in the facilities that today we take for granted, and of a soul-numbing sameness. With the advent of steel, property developers discovered that a high density of housing, office, and work space could be achieved by building upwards instead of outwards, thereby economising on land and cost to themselves. Thus the skyscraper began its dominance of the urban landscape. The most

famous of all, however, the Eiffel Tower in Paris (built for the great Paris Exhibition of 1889), had no practical function whatever, beyond being a tourist attraction and a demonstration of modern building technology.

Music. Never has an art known greater changes in so relatively short a time than music in the nineteenth century. When the century began, Beethoven was only thirty, Schubert only three. Haydn (sixty-eight) was still at the height of his powers. When the century ended, Debussy's revolutionary *Prélude a l'Après-midi d'un Faune*, often cited, even today, as 'the beginning of modern music', was already seven years old, and Schoenberg (twenty-six), Ives (also twenty-six), Bartók (nineteen), and Stravinsky (eighteen) were all fully active. In between, the end of the Classical era and the dawning of Romanticism could be seen in the maturest works of Beethoven and Schubert, whose symphonies, sonatas, and chamber music reached previously undreamt-of proportions and expanded classical forms to their outermost limits; harmony underwent unprecedented transformations, including the progressive dissolution of traditional tonality by Liszt, Wagner, Debussy, Mahler, and Ives; the piano attained its full maturity and became the world's most popular and commercially successful instrument; the art of orchestration became a front-line issue, thanks to the pioneering work of Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner; and nationalism became a driving force, especially in Russia (Glinka, Mussorgsky, Borodin, and Balakirev), Bohemia (Dvořák and Smetana), Spain (Albéniz and Granados), Scandinavia (Grieg and Sibelius), Poland (Chopin), Hungary (Liszt), Italy (Verdi), and America (Gottschalk and Ives). There was a major shift from the relative objectivity of the Classical era to the intensely emotional and formally self-generating outpourings of the Romantics. Illustrative programme music achieved a popularity never approached before or since, and the cult of virtuosity became a dominant feature, thanks largely to Paganini and Liszt. The specialist (i.e., non-composing) performer became the rule rather than the exception – such figures were scarcely to be found in the previous century – and musical schools and conservatories became

commonplace. Despite this, the discipline of counterpoint, hitherto amongst the most highly prized of musical attributes, fell into widespread disuse, though it plays an important part in the music of Liszt, Wagner, Brahms, and Richard Strauss. In the works of Schubert, Lanner, Weber, and the Strauss family, the waltz became the most popular form of the century, closely followed by the Victorian after-dinner ballad. In general, forms polarised, from the millions of piano miniatures and character pieces, to the gargantuan music dramas of Wagner, the sprawling symphonies of Bruckner and Mahler, and the extravagantly coloured symphonic works of Richard Strauss. Quite apart from Wagner, it was the century of grand opera. Long (five acts), spectacularly staged, complete with ballet and special effects, its most prominent exponents were Meyerbeer, Auber, Halévy, Massenet, Spontini, and Verdi. It was also the century of comic operetta, exemplified by the entertainments of Gilbert and Sullivan, Offenbach, and Johann Strauss. Late in the century came the sometimes grimly realistic *verismo* school of opera, foreshadowed by Bizet's *Carmen* but most famously manifested in the works of Puccini, Mascagni, and Leoncavallo.

2 Verdi in His Time

‘Italy’, said the Austrian Prince Metternich as late as 1847, when Verdi was thirty-four, ‘is a geographical expression’ – a peninsula, but not a country. Bound by a common language, its people had for centuries been the pawns of occupying powers or warring factions. True national unity could hardly be said to have existed since the collapse of the Roman Empire late in the fifth century AD, when the country had been overrun by a sequence of invaders, falling eventually under the rule of the wonderfully named Ostrogoths and Lombards. The Lombards themselves fell to Charlemagne, who became Emperor of the West in 800. Subsequently there arose a collection of self-governing republics whose history was dominated by the struggle between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. By the start of the fourteenth century, five major powers vied for supremacy: the city-states of Milan, Florence, and Venice, the Papal States, and the kingdom of Naples. The fifteenth century saw successful invasions by France and Spain, with Milan and Naples falling under Spanish rule, Spain later becoming the dominant power before being replaced in the early eighteenth century by the Austrians. Naples then returned to Spanish rule under the Bourbon dynasty, while Sardinia fell to the dukes of Savoy.

Not until the late eighteenth century was there anything approaching unity in Italy, and then it was under France, whose installation of the ideals of the French Revolution was to be felt through much of the nineteenth. With the fall of Napoleon in 1814, the year after Verdi’s birth,

further fragmentation ensued. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, at which Metternich played a prominent part, the Italian peninsula was divided between Austria, the Papacy, the kingdoms of Naples and Sardinia, and four smaller duchies. Lombardy, Venetia, and the principality of Trento fell under the dominion of Francis I of Austria, and were thus incorporated into the Habsburg Empire, as were the regions of Parma (in which Verdi was born), Modena, Genoa, and Florence. The Pope regained his domain in central Italy. Apart from Piedmont, which went to the highly reactionary King Victor Emmanuel I of Savoy, the new Italy was almost entirely in Austrian hands, its disposition masterminded by Metternich in Vienna. Between 1815 and 1848, Metternich was the most powerful influence for conservatism in all Europe, and his suppression of liberal and nationalist movements did much to precipitate the revolutions which swept across the continent in 1849. As Italian discontent mounted in both extent and intensity, Metternich imposed increasingly severe police measures, among them the strict and widespread censorship which was to prove one of the commonest banes of Verdi's creative life. Nor was it confined to Metternich's principal sphere of influence.

The censorship in Naples, like the Papal censorship in Rome, was if anything even more troublesome to Verdi than that in Venice or Milan. Banned was anything that could be interpreted as ridicule or even criticism of those presently in authority, or kings and emperors of any age. Any mention of the church was dangerous, including the use of any single word that had sacred or political associations of any kind: the famous soprano Giuditta Pasta once narrowly escaped arrest and imprisonment in Naples for having spoken the word 'libertà' on stage. In the aftermath of an assassination attempt on Napoleon III, the prohibitions extended, unbelievably, to: the mention or portrayal of any ruler; the setting of an opera in any period later than the Middle Ages; the depiction of balls, masked or otherwise; any murder on stage; any form of or reference to adultery; firearms of any kind, and so on. In the case of *Un ballo in maschera*, nearly three hundred of its eight hundred and eighty-four lines were altered, many more cut altogether, and still more gratuitously added without consultation. Verdi wrote in fury:

I ask whether the management's drama has in common with my own

The title? – No,

The poet? – No,

The period? – No,

The place? – No,

The characters? – No,

The situations? – No,

The drawing of lots? – No,

The ball? – No.

A maestro who respects his art and himself neither could nor should dishonour himself by accepting, as the text for music written to quite another programme, these grotesqueries that violate the clearest principles of dramatic art and degrade an artist's conscience.

But the differences between Verdi's time and our own were hardly confined, of course, to things political. At the time of his birth, ninety per cent of Italians were illiterate, the great bulk of them landless labourers, many of them living in hunger, even on the border of starvation. Verdi's lifelong description of himself as 'a peasant', however, was manifestly untrue. His forbears on both sides were minor landowners, and he received a very reasonable education, far beyond the reach of any farm boy. Apart from Milan and one or two other urban centres, Italy, due in part to its chronically fragmented history, lacked the powerful and thriving middle class which had transformed the social, artistic, and industrial lives of England, France, Austria, and Germany. For all but the aristocracy, education, by long tradition, lay largely in the hands of the church. But by the time of Verdi's childhood, the church, too, had fallen on hard times. After the establishment of ostensibly independent republics, much of its land had been confiscated and sold. But the beneficiaries, consistent with the biblical principle 'to them that hath shall be given', were neither the peasantry nor even petty landowners and minor tradespeople like the Verdi clan but those who were already comfortably off.

As befits the birthplace and capital of Roman Catholicism, Italy's population has been

traditionally devout, and Verdi's parents were no exception. But the legacy of French occupation and the bequests of French Revolutionary ideals had sowed dissension in the ranks, not only amongst large sections of the peasantry but amongst the cultured and well-to-do in the towns and big cities. Verdi's childhood and youth were spent with a foot in each camp, but while much of his early education was *in* the church (which his father served in a secretarial capacity) it was not *of* the church (his main teacher, Ferdinando Provesi, was the organist at the parish church of Busseto but was not himself a believer). In addition, his patron, 'second father', mentor (and later father-in-law), Antonio Barezzi, was an admirer of the lately vanquished Napoleonic regime and was openly hostile to the clergy – an attitude emulated by his protégé through most of his life.

Musically speaking, Italy, in many ways the cradle of western musical art and the birthplace of opera, had been curiously unaffected by developments to the north, especially in the Austro-German lands. Whereas from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century, Italian influences (Palestrina, Monteverdi, Corelli, Vivaldi, Alessandro Scarlatti, etc.) had flooded western Europe and had a decisive effect on the styles of the Baroque and Classical eras, there seems to have been little reciprocity in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The great reforms of Gluck (with Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, one of the four great pillars of the so-called Classical era) had had no impact on Italian opera. Where Gluck had sought to achieve melodies of 'a beautiful simplicity' (designed to form an indissoluble unity of poetry and song), to work with his librettists towards ever more natural and credible plots, and to strive for a total integration of music and drama, Italian opera continued to function primarily as a vehicle for great singers, and as a showcase of the art of singing itself. Orchestration played a generally subservient, 'accompanimental' role, plots were frequently of an unreality and complexity bordering on the incomprehensible, and style regularly (though not invariably) triumphed over content.

The best of the contemporary Italian operas during Verdi's boyhood and youth came from

Rossini (1792–1868), Bellini (1801–1835), and Donizetti (1797–1848) and particularly in the case of Bellini exemplified the so-called *bel canto* style (literally, ‘beautiful song’), which greatly influenced a number of northern composers, by no means all of them operatic (Chopin, for instance). For Rossini, the requirements for a great operatic singer were three: 1) a naturally beautiful voice that was even in tone throughout its range, 2) careful training that encouraged effortless delivery of highly florid music (this being a prime requirement in pre-Bellinian opera generally), and 3) a mastery of style that could be taught only by listening to the greatest Italian singers. When he later bewailed the loss of this much-prized art, he would have had to lay at least some of the blame at Verdi’s doorstep. Many others did, and not only in Italy.

When Verdi came of age, Italian opera was at its lowest ebb. Rossini, though still very much alive, had long since retired, Bellini was dead, and Donizetti had ceased composing and was confined to an asylum for the insane in which he spent the last four years of his life. Verdi was born into a revolutionary age, to which the politically and socially mutilated Italy stood silent witness. He would give it a voice that would resound around the world, but, certainly to begin with, this was not his purpose. Passionately Italian as he was, and deeply sympathetic to the hopes and dreams of the movement known as the *risorgimento* (literally, ‘resurgence’), he had no political agenda, and when later, as the noblest and most famous symbol of Italian unification, he was elected to the national parliament, he made a most reluctant politician. Nor, with a very few exceptions (most notably *La battaglia di Legnano*), did he seek out or solicit nationalistic librettos. In fact the opera that gave Italian nationalists what became in effect their unofficial anthem, *Nabucco* (‘Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves’), is set in Jerusalem; his most popular opera of all, *Aida*, is set in Egypt; *Macbeth*, of course, in Scotland; *La Traviata* in Paris; *Falstaff* in England, and so on.

Verdi was that rare beast in music: a truly popular revolutionary. But how some of the critics loved to hate him! Thus the critic of the *Gazette Musicale de Paris* in 1853: ‘*Rigoletto* is the weakest of all Verdi’s works. It lacks melody. This opera has hardly any chance of being kept in

the repertoire.’ (!) And Monsieur P. Scudo, writing in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, again in Paris: ‘Monsieur Verdi is a musician of decadence. He has all the required defects, the violence of style, the incoherence of ideas, the crudity of colours, the impropriety of language.’ Nor did he fare better with the London critics. The eminent English windbag, Henry Fothergill Chorley, for instance: ‘Time increases our conviction that in England and France the operas of Signor Verdi only pass because there is nothing else, and that the first more elegant and gracious Italian composer who arrives can sweep them away to the limbo of forgotten frenzies.’ But Chorley makes an interesting point. There *was* nothing else. Not one of Verdi’s contemporaries in Italy came within shouting distance of his stature and achievement. He stood virtually alone. His Italian competitors, if they can be called that, form between them a monument to obscurity. Who today has ever heard even the names, much less the music, of Alberti (not he of the ‘Alberti bass’), Battista, Germano, Grondona Libani, Mancini, Marchetti, Monti, Montuoro, Morales, Perelli, Petrella, the Ricci brothers, Sampieri, Seneke, Tancioni, Vera, Vezzossi, or Zecchini? True, there was Boito, later Verdi’s collaborator, whose *Mefistofele* is still occasionally performed, and dedicated operaphiles may know names such as Mercadante and Pacini; but just compare this with a list of Italy’s most prominent composers from the previous century, which would include Albinoni, Cavalli, Corelli, Geminiani, Manfredini, the Marcellos (Benedetto and Alessandro), Monteverdi, Paisiello, Pergolesi, Tartini, the Scarlattis (Alessandro and Domenico), Torelli, and Vivaldi, all of whose works are still in the standard repertoire.

If the public was ahead of the critics during much of Verdi’s lifetime, certainly in the earlier part of his career, the critics’ misgivings are nevertheless easy to understand. Following on directly from the cult of *bel canto*, it is hardly surprising that his operas struck many as coarse, and even brutal. Nor, at first, was Verdi even thinking of changing the course and history of Italian opera. Neither culturally nor environmentally was he born to refinement. The unforced, aristocratic elegance and mellifluous beauty of sound that characterised Bellinian opera had very little counterpart in Verdi’s psychological and aesthetic make-up, certainly to begin with. He

may not have been the peasant he pretended to be, but he grew up in a place and in an atmosphere far removed from urban sophistication and *politesse*. While the wealthy, precociously urbane, and prodigiously gifted Felix Mendelssohn was writing symphonies for his own private orchestra at the age of twelve (as well as corresponding with Goethe and other luminaries), Verdi grew up in the world of provincial brass bands – and their relatively crude, ‘military’ style and sound are much in evidence in his early operas (many of which feature a real brass band, either on stage or in the wings). Orchestral refinement and command he certainly acquired by the time of his greatest masterpieces, but it was a long time coming. Nor was his critical reputation enhanced by the fact that his melodies, unprecedented in their popularity, were soon being cranked out on barrel-organs throughout Italy, and beyond. Another key factor in his success is the fact that, almost uniquely amongst great composers up to that time, he never condescended to ‘the common man’ (even such a robust, plain-speaking, down-to-earth composer as J.S. Bach couldn’t resist making fun of yokels and country-bumpkins, any more than Vivaldi, Mozart, and Beethoven could). Unsurprisingly, it was not a critic but a musician who best identified the true secret of Verdi’s early success. Georges Bizet, who, after all, knew something about opera himself (*Carmen* is still the most popular opera ever written), wrote: ‘Verdi has marvellous bursts of passion. True, his passion is often brutal, but it is better to be passionate that way than not at all. His music may sometimes exasperate, but it is never boring.’

Despite the impression given by Rossini and critics such as Chorley, the decline of *bel canto* could hardly be blamed entirely on Verdi. It was, in part, a natural consequence of the increased size and variety of the standard opera and symphony orchestras, which required voices of unprecedented power if they were not to be drowned out or excessively strained by the sheer volume of orchestral sound. This, in turn, was a natural symptom of the taste for extravagance which was a defining characteristic of the Romantic era. So, too, was the new premium put on feeling – not the cult of excessive sensibilities which flourished in eighteenth-century Germany, but an overwhelming glut of sheer, raw emotion, on an often epic scale. The expression of

extreme emotions is incompatible with an aesthetic of ideal beauty. Fury, lamentation, anguish, euphoria, hysteria (mass or individual), savage lust, terror etc. are not best served by loveliness of sound. Verdi was the first great composer actively to espouse ugliness if it would appropriately enhance conviction and vividness of character. Thus he pointedly opposed a great singer, whom he strongly admired, for the role of Lady Macbeth, rejecting in her precisely those qualities which made her a great singer (see CD 1, track 13). This was indeed unprecedented, misunderstood, misrepresented, and widely deplored. Here, too, we see the incorruptible integrity of Verdi's commitment to artistic and dramatic truth.

In still another respect Verdi was unique in his time. He was the first great composer to turn the domestic tragedy of quite ordinary people into a fit subject for the operatic stage – first in two of his less successful (but by no means uninteresting) operas, *Luisa Miller* (1849) and *Stiffelio* (1850), later in the now-classic *La Traviata* of 1853. Hitherto, and very particularly in the age of nineteenth-century romanticism, tragedy had been heroic in character, drawing heavily on classical mythology, historical events, biblical and legendary figures, etc., and had often been given a spectacular setting (a speciality of Grand Opera as developed in Paris, mainly by Giacomo Meyerbeer). Verdi was by no means the first to portray ordinary people in everyday settings, but he was the first to exclude any hint of comedy from his so-called 'bourgeois' operas and bring them dependably to an unmistakably tragic close. Indeed between the dismally failed *Un giorno di Regno* at the beginning of his career and *Falstaff* at the end of it, comedy rates scarcely a look-in in any of Verdi's operas (a notable exception being *La forza del Destino* from 1862).

The abiding popularity of tragedy, gloom, violence, deceit, torture, and mass killing is a perennial puzzle, nowhere better exemplified in music than in the works of Verdi, perhaps the most pessimistic and doom-laden great composer in history. Had his operas been mere plays instead, almost all of them would have long since sunk into oblivion. What gives them their holding power is the continuous outpouring of inspired melody, the vitality, grandeur,

tenderness, colour, and, in most cases, the straightforwardness of the music itself – this plus its sincerity, which has been widely sensed even by listeners with no idea of what is being said, planned, done, or alluded to on stage. Ultimately, as with all great art, its appeal resists analysis. What raises the best of his music to the highest artistic level, however, is the extent to which the drama – and the development and interaction of the characters – is contained in the music itself. Its apparent straightforwardness can be misleading. The more carefully one listens to what goes on behind, beneath, and around the great melodies, the more the libretto itself recedes into the background. To the time-honoured claim that one can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, one can justifiably retort, 'Oh no? What about Verdi?'

This is not to say that the librettos Verdi set are uniformly bad. Those by Boito for the late masterpieces *Otello* and *Falstaff* are masterly in the extreme, and some of Piave's are more than creditable. But in general Verdi's literary judgement was surprisingly poor. This has often been put down to his very modest schooling, which in fact was far less modest than legend would have it. The truth is that he was very much better read than many other composers (including Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven), and for all his professed 'hatred of everything that stinks of a school' and his famous claim that 'in my house there is hardly a note of music', the range of his musical knowledge and tastes was very wide. Though he continually described himself as an 'unlearned' composer, educated mainly in the school of experience, his private library contained much of the German repertoire, from Bach to Brahms (including Bach's B minor Mass, partitas, chorale preludes, and the whole of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*; the complete string quartets of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven; Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, several of Handel's oratorios; the Requiems of Mozart, Cherubini, and Brahms, etc.), music by Gounod, Bizet, Saint-Saëns, Smetana, Dvořák, and Berlioz (*Benvenuto Cellini*, *La Damnation de Faust*, and the *Roman Carnival Overture*, as well as the *Traite d'instrumentation*), and much else besides. The fact that he effectively denied any such sophistication in public may be construed as a feature of his single-minded determination to restore the reputation of Italian music to its former glory, and,

more, to demonstrate its independence of foreign models. While privately admiring much in Wagner's music (Wagner never returned the compliment), he deplored Wagner's influence, especially on Italian composers. In fact, his own pronouncements were in many ways very similar in outlook, and hardly less revolutionary – as when he wrote in 1852 (the time of *Il Trovatore*):

If in operas there were no more cavatinas, no more duets, no more trios, no more choruses, no more finales, and if the whole opera were one single piece, I would find that more reasonable and right. For this reason I tell you that it would be a good thing if, in the beginning of this opera, the chorus could be left out (every opera begins with a chorus); if Leonora's cavatina could be left out; and we begin right off with the Troubadour's song, and make one single act out of the first two acts; for these isolated pieces and the changes of scene... make me feel that they are numbers from a concert rather than an opera.

The nineteenth century was the first great century of the newspaper, and thus the first in which professional critics became powerful arbiters of public taste. To these, Verdi was magnificently indifferent, or so he appeared. 'You are wrong,' he wrote to a friend,

to defend *Un ballo in maschera* from the attacks of the press. You should do as I always do: refrain from reading them, and let them sing what tune they please... For the rest, the question is this: Is the opera good or bad? If it is good and they have not thought so owing to their prejudices etc., one must let them have their say and not take it to heart.

And to another: 'As for the newspapers, does anybody force you to read them?... The day of justice will come, and it is a great pleasure for the artist, a supreme pleasure, to be able to say: "Imbeciles, you were wrong!"' Fortunately for Verdi, that day came well before his death at the age of eighty-seven in 1901. But probably not even he, let alone the 'imbeciles' in question, could have known at that date just how spectacularly wrong they were.

3 The Major Works and Their Significance

With the sole exception of the Requiem, all Verdi's major works are operas, but by no means all his operas are major works. At the same time, very few are entirely negligible. What most of them have in common is unevenness of quality. Like Haydn, another blazing genius, Verdi was in some respects a slow developer. If Haydn had died at the same age as Mozart or Schubert – thirty-five and thirty-one, respectively – we might have heard of him but he would have been a peripheral figure, even in the history of the eighteenth century (comparable, perhaps, with Dittersdorf or Leopold Mozart). One of the most exciting aspects of Verdi's career is precisely its development. In each of his major works, many of them separated by relatively minor ones, he makes some significant advance, be it in the realm of orchestration, harmony, word-setting, characterisation, dramatic pacing, the creation and enhancement of atmosphere, and so on. It therefore seems sensible to consider them in the order in which they were written.

Nabucco (1842) was preceded by two other operas, *Oberto* (1839) and *Un giorno di Regno* (1840) (or three if one counts *Rocester*, which was never produced and vanished without trace). If it were by any of Verdi's contemporaries, it would probably not be regarded as a major work, if indeed it were remembered at all, but its significance in Verdi's career, and to a certain extent in the history of Italian nationalism, is undeniable. It was Verdi's first great success, spreading

his name and reputation throughout Italy, and it may be the only opera in history to be known today exclusively for a single chorus – the so-called ‘Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves’, ‘Va, pensiero, sull’ali dorate’, which was taken up as a kind of unofficial anthem of the nationalist *risorgimento* (literally, ‘resurgence’). Its continuing popularity today, however (long since worldwide), is based entirely on its musical merits. For all its unevenness, *Nabucco* already reveals Verdi’s exceptional knack for writing memorable melodies, his total avoidance of caricature in his characterisations, his masterly use of the chorus, which plays a vital role throughout the opera, and, despite strong echoes of Rossini and Bellini, an intense and individual imagination which puts a very personal stamp on the opera as a whole. No Italian opera composer of the time was writing music of such invigorating energy and fire, and the crudities of orchestration, which also mar his next two operas, were easily forgiven. In its biblical grandeur, however, *Nabucco* stands alone amongst Verdi’s early operas.

Macbeth (1865). If Verdi’s next few operas, *I Lombardi*, *Ernani*, *I due Foscari*, *Giovanna d’Arco*, *Alzira*, and *Attila*, were relatively conventional (though several contain at least some music of exceptional quality), the same could hardly be said of *Macbeth*. This extraordinary but still little-known work was an astonishingly bold attempt to shake free of the conventions which had brought Italian opera to such a low ebb at the time of Verdi’s entry on the scene. Until Verdi’s example here, the success of an opera depended on the degree to which it gave the singers a chance to show off their voices and vocal technique. Characterisation and dramatic conviction, indeed dramatic effect of any kind, scarcely got a look-in. In *Macbeth*, based on Shakespeare’s famous play, Verdi came close to anticipating the epoch-making ‘music dramas’ of Wagner. He made quite unprecedented demands of the singers, he actively discouraged beautiful singing in roles (Lady Macbeth, for instance) or circumstances for which he deemed it inappropriate, and he involved himself in problems of production and interpretation to a then unheard-of degree. As so often with Verdi, the first production resulted in a host of amendments,

revisions, additions, and deletions, and by 1857 the opera was significantly altered, though still of uneven quality. Outstanding additions included Lady Macbeth's aria 'La luce langue' and the sleepwalking scene in Act IV, which brings characterisation, atmosphere, freedom of form, and dramatic truth to a level beyond anything even Verdi had achieved to date.

Of the next six operas (*I masnadieri*, *Jérusalem* (a re-write for the Paris Opéra of *I Lombardi*), *Il corsaro*, *La battaglia di Legnano*, *Luisa Miller*, and *Stiffelio*), *Luisa Miller* is the only one to have achieved serious attention in modern times. *La battaglia di Legnano*, however, whatever its musical shortcomings may be, was significant because it represents, in spectacularly tub-thumping fashion, the summation and conclusion of Verdi's overtly nationalistic operas. It was first produced in Rome, within a fortnight of the city's proclamation as a republic in 1849, to tumultuous acclaim, and for a long time it was *de rigueur* for the short fourth act to be repeated. As one writer has put it: 'After hearing it, the audience's only desire can have been to go out and die for their country.'

Luisa Miller (1849), however, is a very different affair. Based on a play by Schiller, *Kabale und Liebe*, it marks Verdi's first attempt at basing an opera not on some historical legend or the exploits of a great hero but on a simple domestic tragedy – a radical move at the time. Despite a good deal of substandard music and conventional melodrama in the first three acts, it signals, particularly in the extraordinary final act, a new degree of refinement and intimacy which was to reach its first full bloom in *La Traviata* four years later, and a still greater willingness to overturn convention than that evidenced in *Macbeth*. Many of the traditional, set forms are broken up in favour of a continuous flow dictated entirely by the needs and nature of the drama. Again there are Wagnerian parallels, but in fact Verdi was finding his way quite independently. Not one of Wagner's operas was heard in Italy until 1871.

Rigoletto (1851) is the earliest of Verdi's operas to find a permanent place at the very centre of the repertoire. It scored a stunning success at its first performance in 1851 and, figuratively

speaking, has never looked back. From the moment he first read Victor Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse*, Verdi was convinced that it was the best material ever to come his way and he determined at once to make an opera of it. The original play had caused a scandal at its first production in Paris in 1832, so Verdi can hardly have been surprised at the extent of his own struggles with the censors. Indeed the very choice of the work would seem to have been deliberately provocative. Musically, theatrically, and historically, *Rigoletto* was widely recognised as Verdi's greatest achievement to date. In dramatic effect, atmosphere, colour, and characterisation, it represented a new highpoint for Italian opera – the characterisation of the tragic, hunchbacked jester of the title was of unprecedented intensity and power. Hideous to behold, psychologically complex, and by no means immediately sympathetic, the character of the 'hero', Rigoletto, was something absolutely new in the history of Italian opera. Also remarkable, and distinctively Verdian, is the fact that we find in the character of the assassin Sparafucile a real (albeit dark) sense of humour, giving a welcome balance to the overall grimness of the plot. Famous highpoints include the tenor aria 'La donna è mobile', Rigoletto's scene with the courtiers (dominated by his aria 'Cortigiani, vil razza dannata'), the duet for Rigoletto and Sparafucile, the quartet in the last act, the storm scene, with its use of a wordless backstage choir, and the final duet.

Verdi was now on a winning streak. *Rigoletto* was quickly followed by two operas whose fame and popularity were if anything still greater: *Il Trovatore* (The Troubadour) and *La Traviata* (loosely, 'The Fallen Woman').

Il Trovatore (1853), although it was a tear-away success from the start, has won its reputation against the odds. The plot and libretto range from the ludicrous to the incomprehensible, the characterisation in general is surprisingly inferior and often inconsistent with the words, the format and style often revert to the very type of 'singers' opera' that Verdi had previously seemed determined to overcome, and the accompaniments are often little better than orchestral strumming. Yet the opera as a whole moves so fast, and with such unflinching lyrical ardour, such emotional fervour and intensity, that all else ultimately falls by the wayside. Its most

popular numbers, often presented as free-standing concert or recording items, include the tenor arias ‘Ah! sì, ben mio’ and ‘Di quella pira’, the famous ‘Anvil Chorus’, the baritone arias ‘Tutto è deserto!’ and ‘Il balen del suo sorriso’, and the soprano arias ‘Tacea la notte placida’ and ‘D’amor sull’ali rosee’.

La Traviata, which had its premiere less than two months after *Rigoletto*, failed miserably to begin with, as Verdi had predicted it would, owing to the poor quality of the singers. Its glory days, which have never ceased, began with its second production, fourteen months later in Venice. Today it is almost certainly the best-loved of all Verdi’s operas. Like *Luisa Miller*, *La Traviata* is a domestic tragedy. Concerning the love between a well-born young gentleman, Alfredo, and the beautiful but dying courtesan Violetta, it derives from the famous play *La Dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Dumas (fils), which Verdi had seen in Paris. Apart from its then scandalous content, the original audience was apparently affronted by the very thought of an opera in contemporary dress, so for many years the action was transferred to an earlier century, though interestingly the heroine herself continued to appear in dresses of the latest fashion, often festooned with diamonds. This plus the corpulence of the supposedly consumptive Violetta in the first production made the opera a subject of derision in certain circles, even after the Venetian revival of 1854. Musically, it marks a further increase in the trend toward greater refinement first noted in *Luisa Miller*. Verdi’s rapidly advancing orchestral sophistication, too, is evident from the very beginning of the prelude, whose high, divided violins invite comparison with Wagner’s *Lohengrin* – which, as it happens, Verdi never heard until 1871. Here we also find Verdi’s greatest use so far of recurring motives, most notably the various appearances of the so-called ‘Traviata theme’ in different guises. The extended scene in Act II between Violetta and Alfredo’s father, Germont, further develops the continuous, flowing style pioneered in *Luisa Miller* and *Rigoletto*. Favourite numbers include the famous *brindisi*, or ‘drinking song’, ‘Libiamo ne’ lieti calci’, Violetta’s ‘Follie! sempre libera’, and Germont’s aria ‘Di Provenza il mar’, but perhaps the artistic highpoint of the opera comes in the climactic scene in Act II, in

which Violetta and Alfredo meet briefly, just after she has promised his father, under duress, that she will end their relationship.

Verdi's next three operas, *Les Vêpres siciliennes* (The Sicilian Vespers), *Simon Boccanegra*, and *Aroldo* (an adaptation of *Stiffelio*), have never even inched toward true popularity, and while there are notable things in each, few musicians would think to rank them with his major works. Not so the next one, however, dating from 1858. Here, too, true popularity has eluded it, but it commands more than mere respect.

Un ballo in maschera (A Masked Ball) brought Verdi once again into sharp conflict with the censors. In the immediate aftermath of an attempt on the life of Napoleon III, they were vigilant to a fault, demanding such wholesale changes as to destroy the whole character of the opera. Verdi refused to co-operate and, in spite of threatened arrest and claims of enormous damages by the operatic management in Naples, he succeeded in cancelling his contract, on the condition that he return to Naples in the autumn to mount a revival of *Simon Boccanegra*. Verdi transferred his attentions to Rome, where the opera now came under the scrutiny of the Papal censors, as a result of which the setting was changed from eighteenth-century Sweden to seventeenth-century Boston, Massachusetts, of all unlikely places. Although the music itself owes traceable debts to Meyerbeer, it has a distinctly Verdian feel to it, and continues the move to ever more elegant, richer textures and a steadily more sophisticated command of orchestration. This is another of those operas where Verdi's genius repeatedly triumphs over a mediocre plot and text, so much so that it would lose little if given in the concert hall rather than the theatre. And never had Verdi more deftly balanced high tragedy and gaiety (even humour), grandeur and intimacy.

In the wake of *Un ballo in maschera* (pronounced 'Maskera'), Verdi became increasingly if rather reluctantly involved in national politics, and told a number of friends that he was thinking of retiring as a composer. Heavy expenditure on his estate at Sant' Agata however, with a corresponding drop in revenue, persuaded him in 1861 to accept a commission from St Petersburg in Russia.

La forza del destino (The Force of Destiny) has often been criticised for its excessive gloom, yet here we find Verdi using humour as never before. Indeed so far from being understated or used as an occasional spice, it has seemed to some commentators to interfere with the progress and power of the tragedy which is the main burden of the opera. Or perhaps not quite the main burden: Verdi himself said in one of his letters that he regarded the parts of the gypsy Preziosilla and the comic monk Fra Melitone, both outwardly secondary roles, as perhaps the most important in the opera (interestingly, Fra Melitone's particular style of declamatory melody anticipates that of Falstaff in Verdi's final opera, written more than thirty years later). But he certainly had more than a few second thoughts about the work, and radically revised it in 1869. With its great length, its crowd scenes and the sheer variety of its characters and situations, it undoubtedly sprawls, but those who dismiss it as an unworkable, kaleidoscopic panorama of incompatible theatrical effects do it a disservice. In Verdi's mind, it was very much an opera of ideas and he was very particular as to how it was presented. He also poured into it some of his most impressive music, including Leonora's arias 'Pace, pace, mio Dio' and 'Madre, pietosa Vergine', and a whole sequence of outstanding duets, several of which have escaped the opera house and have enjoyed an independent life in concert halls and on record ('Invano, Alvaro', 'Le vergine degli angeli', and 'Nè gustare m'è dato', to name but three). In these, Verdi follows the traditional pattern of alternating solos, with the voices joining together only in the final section. As in *La Traviata*, only more so, Verdi again makes notable use of recurring motifs associated with particular characters (another Wagnerian trait, dare one say it).

With his next opera, the longest and most problematical of all his works, we approach the period of Verdi's highest maturity.

Don Carlos (1867, rev. 1887) contains some of Verdi's greatest music, but not even his most impassioned admirers would claim it as anything like a perfect work of art. Writing for the Paris Opéra seldom brought out the very best in him, owing partly to the difficulties he invariably encountered there at the productions stage, but due, too, to his striving in most of his Parisian

works for the degree of spectacular theatrical grandeur achieved in the runaway hits of Paris's favourite operatic showman Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864). In the case of *Don Carlos* Meyerbeer's influence resulted in some of the least Verdian and least convincing music in the opera. Its length alone is enough to prevent its ever becoming a popular opera, but it contains perhaps the most interesting and complex characters Verdi ever created (with the single possible exception of *Otello*), and much else that he never surpassed, such as the famous scene with Philip II of Spain and the aged Grand Inquisitor, which directly influenced Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. In 1883 the opera was revised in an attempt to shrink it to less monumental proportions, but while the operation was a success the patient almost died, what with the removal of the entire first act (bar a single aria which was transplanted) and numerous other excisions. In 1887 a third version was made, with the first act restored and other music cut, but no wholly satisfactory version has ever been achieved. Unlike such popular works as *Rigoletto*, whose music can be thoroughly enjoyed (though not properly understood) without reference to libretto or plot, *Don Carlos* is a true music drama in which circumstance, motivation, and character are so deeply interwoven with the music itself that no such separations are possible.

Aida, Verdi's next opera (1871), was written for Cairo, not Paris, but here Verdi's Meyerbeerian leanings reach their fullest vindication. Though not unflawed, this is Grand Opera as good as it gets, but apart from the panoply of grandeur the ghost of Meyerbeer is nowhere to be felt. This is pure Verdi, at his most epic and colourful. The spectacle is always justified by the drama, the characterisation is masterly (though less subtle and penetrating than in *Don Carlos*), and the sense of atmosphere is perfectly judged, its exoticism chiming nicely with Verdi's remark that while 'copying reality may be good, *inventing* reality is better'. His 'invented' reality is like Mozart's in its grasp of paradox, of the indivisibility of human experience, in which happiness, hope, and rapture are inextricably bound up with our capacity for sadness, despair, and pain. In *Aida* Verdi enables us to sense, if not actually to experience, that complexity of emotion, that outwardly impossible blend of opposites which is beyond the power of words to express

concisely – but not beyond the power of music. And to turn to the purely musical, if such a thing exists, his melodic invention and harmonic resource are of a richness, variety, and subtlety whose consistency here is unsurpassed in any of his earlier works. Notable highlights include the tenor arias ‘Celeste Aida’ and ‘Morir! si pura e bella’, the soprano arias ‘Ritorna vincitor’, ‘Qui Radames verrà’, and ‘O patria mia’, and the duet ‘La fatale pietra’.

Verdi’s next work – the only one of his masterpieces never intended for the opera house – is widely held to be flawless.

The **Requiem Mass** (1873), written in honour of the great writer Alessandro Manzoni (see CD 4, track 2), is a colossal achievement, and the most consistent in quality of all his works to date. Quips about its being ‘Verdi’s greatest opera’, however, are more witty than illuminating. Yes, the work is undeniably dramatic, even theatrical at times, but so is the mighty text to which it is set. True, too, that in tone and spirit it bears little resemblance to any previous work ostensibly meant for liturgical purposes, but its sincerity, its cleanness of soul, if you like, is as absolute as its technical mastery, its inspired spirituality, and, despite its length, its economy. For the first time in his entire output, not a note is wasted or misplaced. His treatment of soloists, chorus, and orchestra alike is exemplary – and one has only to go back to the early operas to see, in the most dramatic perspective possible, the enormous distance travelled by this artist whose genius, to begin with, far outstripped his ability to express it. But then genius, like intelligence, can grow. Quite regardless of his technical abilities, Verdi’s imaginative power was manifestly greater at the end than at the start of his career – unlike Brahms, Mendelssohn, Bach, and Schubert, who seem (to borrow a phrase from Schumann) ‘to have sprung fully armed like Minerva from the head of Zeus’. To compare Verdi’s handling of the orchestra in his early works with his use of it here is an object lesson in the art of instrumentation, and the art of learning by doing. Nothing, even amongst its immediate forbears, prepares us for the absolute mastery of form we find throughout the Requiem. From here to the very last note of his final opera, *Falstaff*, Verdi’s command of his art, where his new works are concerned, is positively Olympian. Yet fully fourteen years were to

pass before he completed his next, penultimate, masterpiece – years in which he busied himself with revisions of earlier works, most particularly *Don Carlos*.

Otello (1887), based on Shakespeare's play *Othello*, was conceived, with Arrigo Boito, who fashioned the text, as early as 1879. It was to be another five years, however, before Verdi started on its composition. There were endless discussions, submissions, and further discussions of the libretto, but when at last he did begin to compose it went relatively quickly (though not by the standards of his 'years in the galleys' when he was turning out operas at the rate of two a year). The result was the greatest opera of his career, in the context of which *Aida*, like all the others, looks like mere preparation. The most famous excerpts, naturally, are the great arias and duets (for many, the love duet at the end of Act I is the most beautiful thing Verdi ever wrote), but one of the work's most extraordinary features, not so easily excerptible, is the degree to which the unsurpassed characterisation is achieved in the recitatives, mellifluous and dramatic by turns, which bind the whole thing together. Nowhere before, in the writing of recitatives, had Verdi achieved such a consistently masterful blend of flexible vocal lines, alive to every detail of mood and verbal accent, with a totality of musical conviction fit to hold the listener's interest even without the words. With the partial exception of his next and last opera, no work of Verdi's comes closer to a Wagnerian abandonment of traditional operatic conventions, with their sequences of set-pieces, yet nothing in this opera could be mistaken for Wagner. The work is, indeed, the ultimate vindication of Verdi's insistence that opera ('music drama') could develop in parallel with Wagner's achievements while remaining faithful to specifically Italian, non-Germanic principles and traditions. True, much of *Otello* could be described as 'heightened recitative', à la Wagner, allowing far fewer breaks for applause than Verdi's audiences were used to, yet the opera as a whole adheres to most of the conventions of Italian opera, as, for instance, in Iago's *brindisi* (drinking song), the quartet in which the characters express conflicting emotions (here Verdi matches even Mozart), and the traditional concerted finale (ditto). Above all, however, for all its brilliantly conceived orchestration, *Otello* is, in the last analysis, and in

the best sense, a singer's opera. Wagner was always more interested in the orchestra, and in the principles of symphonic development, but Verdi deplored this, saying, flat-footedly, 'opera is opera and symphony is symphony'. 'And never the twain should meet,' he might have added. *Otello*, in fact, stands in a direct line of descent not from Wagner but from *Luisa Miller* and *Rigoletto*.

Verdi's last opera, completed in his eightieth year, took the musical world entirely by surprise. For a start, there was his age. More surprising still, however, was the fact that it was an out-and-out comedy. Comedy? From Verdi? The great tragedian?

Falstaff (1893), like its predecessor, originated with Shakespeare and was adapted by Boito, who in *Otello* had given Verdi his best-ever libretto. With *Falstaff* he matched it. Both he and Verdi found themselves at the top of their form, and the old man showed no less quick a wit, no less agility of mind than his younger librettist. The fun they had is evident pretty well from start to finish. The sheer pace of the work is breathtaking. The quick-fire verbal exchanges, the mood shifts, the action, the bubbling vitality and human warmth of music and characters alike all contribute to a 'feel-good' opera which remains unique. Still more through-composed than *Otello*, it offers correspondingly fewer opportunities for applause, indeed the work is in many ways more like chamber music than an Italian opera. It's very much an ensemble piece, and to that extent very un-Italian. Singers addicted to the spotlight will generally give it a miss, but the rest of us can delight in it.

Verdi's last published music was the *Quattro Pezzi Sacri* (Four Sacred Pieces), embracing four originally free-standing choral works from his last years, the most outstanding of which, in every sense, is the substantial *Te Deum*, a fitting complement to the great Requiem and a magnificent farewell.

A Graded Listening Plan 4

With a composer as popular as Verdi a feature like this may seem unnecessary, but some of his major works are much more demanding than others and if you're new to his music there are probably better places to start than *Otello*, even if it is his greatest work. Nor would *Falstaff* – again, for all its greatness – be an ideal introduction for most people. There are many sincere Verdi lovers who find it hard to get on with, and if what you're looking for, first and foremost, is the big tunes, the glorious arias, the passionate duets, the great set pieces, then *Falstaff* may disappoint, at least at first. But so much depends on personal taste – and in the case of opera there are the sometimes opposing twin factors of music and plot to muddy the waters. Many of Verdi's operas contain much that is grim, violent, and disturbing. If, for instance, the very thought of burning at the stake (let alone its graphic description in words and song) turns your stomach, if you're deterred by the prospect of a whole act labelled 'Torture', if you become sleepless at the thought of being buried alive, then you'd be well advised to approach both *Il Trovatore* and *Aida* with caution, however splendid the music. Deaths, sometimes horrible, often needless, are almost as common in Verdi's works as those of his beloved Shakespeare. Perhaps the ideal point of departure is *La Traviata* – tragic, yes, but possibly the most consistently lyrical and touchingly romantic of them all. If that doesn't get to you, try *Rigoletto*, but be prepared for its almost exhausting intensity as well as its brilliant colour and vitality. My

own inclination would be to go to *Aida* next, then to *Il Trovatore*, followed by *Falstaff* (for light relief, interest, and a real change of character and pace) and then on to *Otello*. Add *La forza del destino* and you have the big six, as far as the marketplace goes. If you're still not hooked, then it may be that, just for the moment, Verdi is not for you. But if you are, and he is for you, then I suggest moving on to *Un ballo in maschera* before turning to the ever fascinating, perplexing, and thrilling *Don Carlos*. *Simon Boccanegra* is another 'problem' opera, but it contains some of Verdi's most remarkable music, and you should definitely investigate *Luisa Miller* too. Perhaps the best introduction of all, though, is to get hold of one of the many CD anthologies of famous arias and get accustomed to Verdi's overall idiom before plunging into any of the operas in their entirety.

Recommended Reading 5

As ever in this section, the rate and extent of deletions from the catalogue make life difficult, but public libraries provide an invaluable back-up, thus the following recommendations include some books which are most likely to be found *only* in libraries. The biggest one-volume book on Verdi, and the most exhaustively researched, is also the most likely to remain perennially in print, namely *Verdi: A Biography* by Mary Jane Phillips-Matz (Oxford University Press, 1993; ISBN 0-19-313204-4 (hardback); 0-19-816600 (paperback)). At 941 pages, it contains every fact about Verdi that the non-specialist reader could possibly hope to know, but those wanting any detailed discussion of the operas, or indeed of Verdi's music generally, will have to look elsewhere. Nevertheless, as a biography, this is a very distinguished work, easy to read, psychologically fascinating, splendidly objective, and blessedly free of special pleading. Liberal quotations from Verdi's correspondence and published statements, as from many of his friends, colleagues, critics, and enemies, give a suitably rich and sometimes perplexing portrait of a highly complicated man, vividly set in the context of his turbulent times. The book may be highly recommended to the general reader and to most musicians, but it should be noted that some experts have questioned the thoroughness and depth of the author's scholarship.

Readers looking for something less bulky and more musically informative can turn with confidence to Julian Budden's masterly *Verdi* (Dent 1985/Vintage Books 1987/Schirmer Books

1996; ISBN 0028646169) in the ever-reliable 'Master Musicians' series (established in 1935 and regularly updated and expanded ever since). Budden, one of the greatest Verdi authorities of our time and author of the monumental three-volume *The Operas of Verdi*, combines extraordinary erudition with a writing style at once elegant, pungent, and witty. He is equally readable when dealing with both the life and the music, combining scholarship with sympathy and imagination, and providing many fascinating insights into the character of the man and his music.

John Rosselli's *The Life of Verdi*, in Cambridge University Press's 'Musical Lives' series (ISBN 0521660114 (hardback); 052166957X (paperback)) is briefer than Budden's book, commendably painstaking, and deals interestingly with both the man and the music. The tone of the prose is more formal and scholarly than that of Budden or Phillips-Matz, and the documentation and references are exemplary, but some readers may find the book more informative than enjoyable.

Less scholarly, briefer than all of the above and relying, from the look of it, on secondary sources, Peter Southwell-Sander's *Verdi* in the 'Illustrated Lives of the Great Composers' series from Omnibus Press (ISBN 071190250X (paperback)) is a very good read, particularly strong in historical scene-setting, and copiously illustrated (a welcome bonus). As an introduction to Verdi and his world it can be highly recommended.

Sad to say, one of the best books on Verdi, and the first truly scholarly biography, certainly in English, has been out of print for many years, although it was published as relatively recently as 1962 and has hardly dated. *The Man Verdi* by Frank Walker is not a straightforward factual biography but rather a study of the man through his relationships with friends, colleagues, his home town of Busseto, and the women in his life. No book gives a more rounded, perceptive, or vital portrait of the man, much of it drawing heavily, and fascinatingly, on the voluminous correspondence of Verdi's second wife, Giuseppina Strepponi. Highly readable, almost compulsively engaging and enhanced by the author's profound knowledge of his subject, this is a book which should be perpetually in print yet which can be found with some difficulty even in libraries.

Also out of print at the time of writing is another excellent work, Charles Osborne's *Verdi: a Life in the Theatre* (London, 1987), but still more lamentably deleted from the catalogue is the same author's translation and presentation of *The Letters of Giuseppe Verdi* (London, 1971), although this is far from complete in its coverage. Woefully lacking, in print or out, is a complete edition of Verdi's letters in any language. Such a collection is, however, in progress at the National Institute of Verdi Studies in Parma, and is eagerly awaited. In the meantime, *The Verdi-Boito Correspondence*, edited by Marcello Conati and Mario Medici (University of Chicago Press, 1994 (ISBN 0226853047)) provides a vivid, interesting, and sometimes delightful picture of the composer in his later years.

6 Personalities

Appiani, Giuseppina (c.1797–?). Born Countess Strigelli. Maintained salon in Borgo Monforte, Milan. Close friend of Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi.

Arditi, Luigi (1822–1903). Italian conductor, composer, and violinist. Friend of Verdi. He conducted the premiere of Verdi's *Inno delle nazioni* in London (1862) and gave numerous Verdi premieres in Britain and the USA.

Arrivabene, Count Opprandino (1805–1887). Italian newspaper correspondent; editor of *Gazzetta di Torino* during first Italian parliament. Close friend and frequent correspondent of Verdi's.

Balestra, Luigi (1808–1863). Bussetan lawyer and poet. Arranged the legal separation of Verdi from his parents and served as intermediary between Verdi and his father when they would no longer speak to each other. He also provided the text for a revival of *Oberto* in Genoa and translated poems by Goethe subsequently set by Verdi.

Barbieri-Nini, Marianna (1820–1887). Italian soprano. Among the finest interpreters of early Verdi, she created the roles of Lucrezia in *I due Foscari* (1844), Lady Macbeth (1847), Gulnara in *Il corsaro* (1848), and wrote an interesting memoir of Verdi in rehearsal.

Barezzi, Antonio (1798–1867). Bussetan merchant and passionate musical amateur. He founded the Busseto Philharmonic Society and became Verdi's patron and father-in-law. He was also the dedicatee of Verdi's *Macbeth* and regarded by the composer as his 'second father'.

Basily, Francesco (1767–1850). Italian musician and educator. As head of the examining board at the Milan Conservatory, he rejected Verdi's application for entrance, but recognised his talent, forecasting a career as a 'creditable' composer.

Bellaigue, Camille (1858–1930). French critic and author. A friend of Boito, he corresponded with Verdi and published a book on him in 1912.

Boito, Arrigo (1842–1918). Italian poet and composer. He was Verdi's last and best librettist, providing the texts of *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff* (1893). He is also known for his opera *Mefistofele* (1868).

Bottesini, Giovanni (1821–1889). Italian composer, conductor, and double-bass virtuoso. He conducted the premiere of *Aida*, in Cairo in 1871.

Bülow, Hans von (1830–1894). Prodigious and influential German conductor and pianist. He was also the first husband of Wagner's second wife Cosima. Closely associated with Wagner in Munich in the 1860s, he settled in Florence after the break-up of his marriage, before moving to Meiningen, where he became a powerful exponent of Brahms. He wrote a notorious attack on Verdi's Requiem, which he later recanted, proclaiming the work a masterpiece of true genius.

Cammarano, Salvatore (1801–1852). Italian librettist. He provided the texts for Verdi's *Alzira*, *La battaglia di Legnano*, *Luisa Miller*, and *Il Trovatore* (also for Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*).

Carvalho, Léon (1825–1897). French impresario and manager of the Théâtre lyrique in Paris, where he arranged for a French version of Verdi's *La Traviata* (1864) and the composer's revision of *Macbeth* (1865). An enterprising impresario, he also oversaw the world premieres of Gounod's *Faust* and Berlioz's *Les Troyens à Carthage*.

Corticelli, Mauro. Italian theatrical agent and close friend of Giuseppina Strepponi. He worked briefly for Verdi at Sant' Agata, before being fired for financial misconduct, and was instrumental in the breach with the conductor Mariani (see below).

Draneht, Paul (1815–1894). Greek Cypriot (real name Pavlidis) and manager of the Cairo opera house. It was he who commissioned *Aida*.

Du Lode, Camille (1832–1903). French librettist and theatre manager. With Joseph Mery, he provided the text of *Don Carlos* and the French translations of *La forza del destino* and *Aida*. As manager of the Opéra comique in Paris, he arranged for the premiere of Bizet's *Carmen* in 1875.

Escudier, Léon (1821–1881). French publisher and impresario. He was Verdi's publisher in France and mounted the French premiere of *Aida*.

Faccio, Franco (1840–1891). Italian composer and conductor. A close friend of Boito, he conducted the Italian premieres of *Aida*, *Don Carlos*, *Otello*, and the revised version of *Simon Boccanegra*.

Frezzolini-Poggi, Erminia (1818–1884). Italian soprano. Much admired by Verdi, she created the role of Giselda in *I Lombardi* and the title role of *Giovanna d'Arco*.

Gallo, Antonio. Italian impresario, violinist, and bookseller. He mounted the revised *La Traviata* at his theatre in Naples in 1854.

Ghislanzoni, Antonio (1824–1893). Italian baritone, writer, and librettist. He provided the text for *Aida*, additional text for the revised *Forza del destino* and *Don Carlos* (1872).

Hiller, Ferdinand (1811–1885). German composer and pianist. As Director of the Lower Rhine Festival he invited Verdi to conduct his Requiem there in 1877.

Lanari, Alessandro (1790–1862). Famous Italian impresario, and manager of Giuseppina Strepponi. He mounted a production of *Macbeth* at the Teatro della Pergola in Florence.

Lucca, Francesco (1802–1872). Italian music publisher. He published Verdi's *Attila*, *I masnadieri*, and *Il corsaro* and shared the rights in *Nabucco* with Ricordi, his principal rival, selling out to Ricordi entirely in 1888.

Lumley, Benjamin (1811–1875). English impresario. As manager of Her Majesty's Theatre in London, he mounted the premiere of Verdi's *I masnadieri* and wrote an interesting account of the composer in his memoirs.

Maffei, Andrea (1798–1885). Italian poet and translator. A good friend of Verdi, he provided the text for *I masnadieri* and amendments to the libretto of *Macbeth*.

Maffei, Clara (1814–1886). Wife of the above. A celebrated Milanese saloniste, she corresponded with Verdi from the 1840s till her death and was instrumental in his introduction to Manzoni (see below).

Manzoni, Alessandro (1785–1873). Italian poet, novelist, and patriot. Verdi revered him above all other Italian writers of the day and composed his Requiem in Manzoni's memory.

Mariani, Angelo (1822–1873). The most prominent Italian conductor of his day, also a violinist and composer. He conducted the premieres of Verdi's *Aroldo*, and the revised *Forza del Destino*, and the first Italian production of the original *Don Carlos*. Although a close friend of Verdi's from 1857 to 1869, he was cruelly rejected and vilified by the composer following differences over a proposed Requiem in honour of Rossini, his reluctance to travel to Cairo to conduct the first performance of *Aida*, and his championing of Wagner, whom he introduced to Italian audiences with a performance of *Lohengrin* in 1871. Conniving in his rejection by Verdi was his long-term mistress, briefly his fiancée, the soprano Teresa Stolz (see below).

Mariette, Auguste-Edouard (1821–1881). French Egyptologist, who provided the plot of *Aida*.

Maurel, Victor (1848–1923). Distinguished French baritone. He created the title role of the revised *Simon Boccanegra*, Iago in *Otello*, and the title role in *Falstaff*. His book *Dix Ans de carrière* contains valuable information on the birth and first production of *Otello*.

Merelli, Bartolomeo (1795–1879). Italian impresario. Verdi's earliest influential champion, he commissioned and mounted *Oberto*, *Un giorno di regno*, *Nabucco*, *I Lombardi*, and *Giovanna d'Arco* at La Scala, Milan, but later forfeited the composer's friendship through the inadequacy of his productions.

Mery, Francois Joseph (1797–1865). French playwright. The author of *La Bataille de Toulouse* which furnished the basis of *La battaglia di Legnano*, he also collaborated on the libretto of *Don Carlos*.

Moriani, Napoleone (1806–1878). Famous Italian tenor. Despite persistent attributions to the impresario Merelli (see above), he was probably the father of Giuseppina Strepponi's illegitimate children, the source of much scandal and pain to Verdi's future wife.

Muzio, Emanuele (1825–1890). Italian composer and conductor. Verdi's only pupil, he revered his teacher to the point of idolatry and left much valuable anecdotal material on Verdi's early career. After composing two operas, he devoted himself entirely to conducting. Resident conductor at the Théâtre-Italien in Paris from 1870 to 1876, he gave the foreign premieres of several Verdi operas.

Nutter, Charles-Louis-Etienne (1828–1899). French librettist, translator, and archivist. He collaborated in the French translations of *Macbeth*, *Aida*, *La forza del destino*, and *Simon Boccanegra*. As archivist of the Paris Opéra, he left important information relating to *Don Carlos*.

Piave, Francesco Maria (1810–1876). Italian librettist. Verdi's most frequent collaborator, he provided the texts of *Ernani*, *I due Foscari*, *Macbeth*, *Il corsaro*, *Stiffelio*, *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Araldo*, *La forza del destino*, and the last act of *Attila*. He suffered a massive stroke in 1867 but lived on in a semi-vegetative state for another nine years.

Pirolì, Giuseppe (1815–1890). Italian lawyer and politician. Professor of law at Parma University and a deputy in the first Italian parliament, he was a close friend and correspondent of Verdi's.

Pougín, Arthur (1834–1921). French writer. His biography of Verdi, 1881, was translated into Italian and amplified by a highly unreliable account of Verdi's early years authorised by the composer himself.

Provesi, Ferdinando (c.1770–1833). Italian organist and teacher. Municipal music master, organist at the church of San Bartolomeo, and director of the Philharmonic Society at Busseto during Verdi's youth. Verdi was his pupil, then his assistant, and finally, after a mini-civil war, his successor as municipal music master.

Ricordi, Giovanni (1785–1853). Italian publisher. In 1808 he founded the publishing house that bears his name to this day. He published most of the operas of Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi, and founded the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* which continued to appear until the year after Verdi's death.

Ricordi, Giulio (1840–1912). Son and successor of Tito (see below). He enjoyed the most cordial relations with Verdi and was responsible for mounting all his Italian premieres from the revised *Forza del destino* onwards.

Ricordi, Tito (1811–1888). Son and successor of Giovanni. Although he was a close friend of Verdi, the composer often bewailed his laziness and inefficiency.

Ronconi, Giorgio (1810–1890). Italian baritone, who created the title role in Verdi's *Nabucco*.

Roqueplan, Nestor (1804–1870). Manager of the Paris Opéra at the time of Verdi's *Jérusalem*, he also commissioned *Les Vêpres siciliennes*.

Salvini-Donatelli, Fanny (1815–1891). Italian soprano. She created the role of Violetta in *La Traviata*, but her inappropriately matronly appearance contributed to the work's failure at its first production.

Sasse, Marie-Constance (1838–1907). Belgian soprano. She created the role of Elisabeth in Verdi's *Don Carlos*.

Scribe, Augustin Eugene (1791–1861). French dramatist and librettist. He wrote the play *Gustave III* which formed the basis of Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*.

Seven, Giovanni. Italian tenor. He created the role of the Prior of Milan in *I Lombardi*.

Solera, Temistocle (1815–1878). Versatile Italian librettist. He provided the texts for Verdi's *Nabucco*, *I Lombardi*, *Giovanna d'Arco*, and *Attila*, as well as refashioning the text for Verdi's first opera *Oberto* from a previous libretto.

Somma, Antonio (1809–1865). Italian lawyer and playwright. He contributed the libretto to Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*.

Stolz, Teresa (1834–1902). Austrian soprano. Having created the role of Leonora in the revised *Forza del destino* and the title role in the Italian premiere of *Aida*, she went on to sing the soprano solo in the first performance of the Requiem. Together with Maria Waldmann (see below), she appeared in many Verdi revivals. An intimate friend of both the Verdis, she was nevertheless widely believed to be Verdi's mistress, as she was previously the mistress and briefly the fiancée of the conductor Mariani (see above). No proof of this exists, but she remained perhaps Verdi's closest friend to the end of his days.

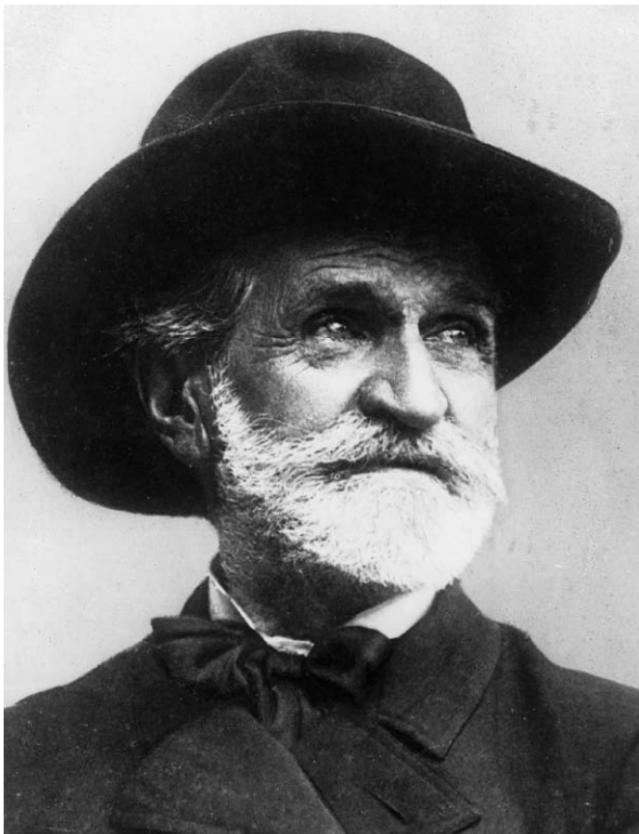
Strepponi, Giuseppina (1815–1897). Italian soprano. Verdi's second wife. A star in the late 1830s, her voice declined dramatically through over-straining. An important champion of Verdi's from his earliest career, she created the role of Abigail in *Nabucco*. During this period she was the mistress of the impresario Merelli (see above), widely but wrongly thought to be the father of her three illegitimate children. After retiring from the stage she moved to Paris where she taught singing. It was there that she became Verdi's mistress. They lived together for twelve years before finally marrying in 1859. Her influence on Verdi's personality was profound and her voluminous correspondence has left us with the most interesting and revealing portraits of her husband extant.

Tamagno, Francesco (1850–1905). Italian tenor. He created the role of Gabriele in the revised *Simon Boccanegra* and the title role of *Otello*. He was the only singer closely associated with Verdi who is documented in sound, having twice recorded the death scene from *Otello*.

Tamberlick, Enrico (1820–1889). Italian tenor. He was the prototype of the Italian 'tenor di forza' so much decried by Verdi's critics, and created the role of Alvaro in the original version of *La forza del destino*.

Varesi, Felice (1813–1889). Italian baritone, also renowned for the quality of his acting. He created the title roles of *Macbeth* and *Rigoletto*, and Germont in *La Traviata*.

Waldmann, Maria (1844–1920). Austrian mezzo-soprano. She sang the role of Amneris in the Italian premiere of *Aida* and was the mezzo-soprano soloist in the first performance of the Requiem, as well as in many revivals. She frequently appeared with Teresa Stolz in *Don Carlos*, *Aida*, and other Verdi works before retiring early and marrying into the aristocracy.



Portrait of Giuseppe Verdi, 1895; courtesy AKG

7 A Calendar of Verdi's Life

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1813	0	Births of Richard Wagner and Giuseppe Verdi; London Philharmonic Society founded; Rossini's <i>L'Italiana in Algeri</i> produced in Venice; waltz craze spreads throughout Europe; J.M.W. Turner paints <i>Frosty Morning</i> ; birth of the French composer Charles-Valentin Alkan
1814	1	Beethoven completes final version of his opera <i>Fidelio</i> ; Schubert (17) initiates his incomparable series of great Lieder with <i>Gretchen am Spinnrade</i> ; Irish composer John Field publishes his first nocturnes; Maelzel invents the metronome; Jane Austen publishes <i>Mansfield Park</i> ; Byron writes <i>The Corsair</i> ; birth of Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov
1815	2	Beethoven writes his Op. 102 cello sonatas and the cantata <i>Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt</i> , dedicated to Goethe; Schubert (18) composes two symphonies (Nos 2 & 3), four operas, two masses, and roughly 150 songs; advent of the 'Biedermeier' style in Vienna

Historical Events

Austria and Prussia declare war on France; ‘Battle of Nations’ at Leipzig; Wellington victorious at Vittoria; Simon Bolivar becomes absolute ruler of Venezuela; Mexico declares its independence; Anglo-American war continues in USA and Canada

Napoleon banished to Elba; Louis XVIII assumes French throne; Congress of Vienna opened; British burn Washington DC in Anglo-American war, which ends with the Treaty of Ghent; Hanover declared a kingdom; advent of gas lighting in Westminster, London; *The Times* of London printed on steam-operated press; first practical steam locomotive constructed in England; Pope Pius VII restores the Inquisition

Louis XVIII flees; Napoleon returns to France, initiating the ‘Hundred Days’, which ends with his banishment to St Helena after losing the Battle of Waterloo to Blücher and Wellington; England suffers post-war economic crisis; first steam warship built in the USA

Verdi’s Life

Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi born 9 October at Le Roncole, near Busseto (Parma), son of Carlo, innkeeper, and Luigia Uttini

Soldiers of the Holy Alliance pass through Le Roncole; Luigia hides with child Giuseppe in belfry

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1816	3	Beethoven completes Piano Sonata, Op. 101, and song-cycle <i>An die ferne Geliebte</i> ; Schubert (19) writes Symphonies Nos 4 & 5, another mass, a string quartet, most of his first opera and over 100 songs; Rossini (24) completes <i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i>
1817	4	Rossini completes <i>La gazza ladra</i> and <i>Cenerentola</i> ; Clementi publishes his influential book of piano studies <i>Gradus ad Parnassum</i> ; Schubert (20) writes many important songs, six piano sonatas, one symphony, and two 'Italian' overtures; Lord Byron writes <i>Manfred</i> ; Jane Austen publishes <i>Emma</i>
1818	5	Beethoven begins work on the 'Hammerklavier' Sonata, Op. 106 and <i>Missa Solemnis</i> ; Schubert completes Symphony No. 6; Rossini's <i>Mosè in Egitto</i> produced in Naples; Donizetti's <i>Enrico di Borgogna</i> produced in Venice; Jane Austen's <i>Persuasion</i> and <i>Northanger Abbey</i> published; Byron writes <i>Don Juan</i> ; John Keats writes <i>Endymion</i> ; Mary Shelley publishes <i>Frankenstein</i> ; Russian author Ivan Turgenev born
1819	6	Schubert composes his 'Trout' Quintet; Beethoven begins work on his Ninth Symphony; births of Offenbach and Clara Schumann (<i>née</i> Wieck) in Germany; first Sanskrit-English dictionary published; Byron writes <i>Mazeppa</i> , which is later to have a profound influence on Liszt; Keats writes <i>Hyperion</i> , Shelley <i>The Cenci</i>

Historical Events**Verdi's Life**

First German constitution granted by Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach; Argentina declares independence from Spain; Metternich opens Diet of German Federation; Java restored to Dutch Empire; Indiana becomes state of the USA; invention of the stethoscope

Riots in England against low wages; Erie Canal begun in USA; Simon Bolivar establishes independent government in Venezuela; Mississippi becomes state of the USA; Turkish government grants partial autonomy to Serbia; Evangelical Union formed by Lutheran and Evangelical Churches in Prussia

Chile declares independence; first professional horse-racing in the USA; Karl Marx born; Prussia abolishes internal customs; constitutions proclaimed in Bavaria and Baden; border agreed between USA and Canada; Illinois becomes state of the USA; first Atlantic crossing by steamship; Bessel's *Fundamenta Astronomiae* catalogues 3,222 stars; Berzelius catalogues molecular weights of 2,000 chemical compounds

East India Company establishes British settlement in Singapore; constitutions granted in Württemberg and Hanover; USA purchases Florida from Spain; Alabama becomes state of the USA; eleven killed, 400 injured in 'Peterloo' Massacre in Britain; freedom of the press established in France

First lessons under Don Pietro Baistrocchi

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1820	7	Beethoven completes his Piano Sonata in E, Op. 109; Schubert composes his melodrama <i>Die Zauberharfe</i> , and his several unfinished works of this year include <i>Lazarus</i> and the <i>Quartettsatz</i> ; Keats writes <i>Ode to a Nightingale</i> , Shelley <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> , Pushkin <i>Ruslan and Ludmilla</i> ; Venus di Milo discovered
1821	8	Weber's <i>Der Freischütz</i> staged in Berlin; Beethoven completes Piano Sonata in A flat, Op. 110; Schubert composes many Goethe settings; Goethe publishes <i>Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre</i> ; Constable paints <i>The Haywain</i> ; Keats dies at twenty-six; births of Baudelaire, Dostoevsky, and Flaubert
1822	9	Schubert composes his 'Unfinished' Symphony, 'Wanderer' Fantasy, Mass in A flat, and many songs; Royal Academy of Music founded in London; deaths of Shelley and E.T.A. Hoffmann; Pushkin writes <i>Eugene Onegin</i>
1823	10	Beethoven completes <i>Missa Solemnis</i> and Ninth Symphony; Schubert writes incidental music to <i>Rosamunde</i> , song cycle <i>Die schöne Müllerin</i> , and Piano Sonata in A minor, D784; Weber's <i>Euryanthe</i> staged in Vienna; Chopin (13) enrolls at Warsaw Lyceum; Erard builds the first 'double-escapement' piano, allowing increased rapidity of repeated notes; Oxford Union Society founded in England

Historical Events

Defeat and suppression of *Carbonari* in Naples; Revolutions in Spain and Portugal; Duc de Berry assassinated in France; in the 'Missouri Compromise' Maine enters USA as a free state, Missouri as a slave state; platinum discovered in Russia's Ural Mountains; Ampère establishes Laws of Electrodynamical Action

Napoleon dies; revolution in Piedmont; Victor Emmanuel abdicates Italian throne; Peru, Guatemala, Panama, and Santo Domingo declare independence from Spain; Reign of Terror in Greece and Turkey; first demonstration of sound reproduction; Faraday discovers and experiments with electromagnetic rotation

War between Greece and Turkey; Brazil gains independence from Portugal; first iron railroad bridge built in England; gas lighting installed in Boston, Massachusetts; Congress of Verona opened

Mexico becomes a republic; Switzerland refuses political asylum to refugees; Monroe Doctrine brings curtain down on further colonisation of North America by European powers; death penalty for more than 100 crimes abolished in England; Babbage attempts to build a calculating machine; Mackintosh invents waterproof fabric; rugby invented in England

Verdi's Life

His father buys him an old spinet; substitutes as organist of the Church of San Michele at Roncole

Engaged as organist at church of Roncole

He moves to Busseto, returning to Roncole to play for church services on Sundays and feast days. Begins schooling at the Busseto *Ginnasio*

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1824	11	Beethoven completes his String Quartet, Op. 127; Schubert writes <i>Death and the Maiden</i> and A minor string quartets, Octet in F, and <i>Grand Duo</i> ; births of Bruckner, Cornelius, and Smetana; National Gallery founded in London; Byron dies in Greco-Turkish war
1825	12	Beethoven composes his A minor quartet, Op. 132; Schubert writes 'Unfinished' Piano Sonata in C; birth of Johann Strauss II and death of Salieri in Vienna; Liszt's <i>Don Sanche</i> produced in Paris; Pushkin writes <i>Boris Godunov</i> ; death of the highly influential romantic writer 'Jean-Paul' (Johann Paul Friedrich Richter)
1826	13	First performance of Beethoven's String Quartet in B flat, Op. 130, with 'Grosse fuge' as finale, and composition of his last quartets, Opp. 131 & 135; Schubert writes his G major String Quartet and G major Piano Sonata; Mendelssohn (17) writes his <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i> Overture; Weber dies; Liszt publishes <i>Etudes en douze exercices</i>
1827	14	Beethoven dies (56); Schubert writes his two piano trios, his two books of Impromptus and his greatest song-cycle <i>Die Winterreise</i> ; Bellini's <i>Il pirata</i> staged in Milan; Chopin writes Variations on Mozart's 'Là ci darem la mano' (reviewed by Schumann with the famous phrase 'Hats off, gentlemen! A genius!'); death of William Blake; Nash designs Carlton House Terrace, Westminster, London

Historical Events**Verdi's Life**

Outbreak of First Burmese War; British capture Rangoon; Egyptian forces conquer Crete; Greco-Turkish War continues; Russia and USA sign frontier treaty; John Quincy Adams becomes President of the USA; Simon Bolivar declared Emperor of Peru; British workers granted the right to form unions; RSPCA founded in London

Crushing of Decembrist revolt in Russia; sacrilege becomes a capital offence in France; first passenger railway inaugurated in England; horse-drawn buses appear in London; Trades Union movement gains strength in England; Chinese tea roses first imported to Europe

Russia declares war on Persia; Burmese war ends; Pan American Congress held in Panama; Thomas Jefferson dies; first railway tunnel in England; University College, London and University of Munich founded; London Zoo established

Turks enter Athens in Greco-Turkish war; Russia, France, and Britain agree in Treaty of London to force truce on the Sultan of Turkey; Sultan rejects Allied moves; Russia defeats Persia; Peru secedes from Colombia; Plymouth Brethren founded in America; sulfur-tipped matches invented; screw-propeller for steamships invented in Austria; Ohm's Law of electrical currents formulated; aluminium first obtained from clay

Undertakes formal musical lessons with Ferdinando Provesi, organist at the Church of San Bartolomeo, municipal music master and director of the Busseto Philharmonic Society

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1828	15	Schubert composes last three piano sonatas, C major Quintet for strings, Mass in E flat, and <i>Schwanengesang</i> ; dies (31); Auber writes <i>La Muette de Portici</i> , Marschner <i>Der Vampyr</i> , Rossini <i>Le Comte Ory</i> ; Alexandre Dumas (père) writes <i>The Three Musketeers</i> ; death of Francisco Goya; Webster's American Dictionary published
1829	16	Chopin (19) composes most of his trail-blazing Etudes and makes his Viennese debut; Schumann (19) writes <i>Papillons</i> , Berlioz <i>Symphonie fantastique</i> , Rossini <i>William Tell</i> ; Mendelssohn (20) revives Bach's <i>St Matthew Passion</i> for the first time in 100 years; concertina patented; Lamartine elected to Académie française; births of Louis Moreau Gottschalk and Anton Rubinstein
1830	17	Chopin composes and performs his two piano concertos; Schumann (20) writes 'Abegg' Variations and Toccata in C; Mendelssohn (21) writes 'Reformation' Symphony, begins work on <i>The Hebrides</i> ; Liszt begins work on the <i>Revolutionary Symphony</i> ; Bellini writes <i>I Capuleti ed i Montecchi</i> , Donizetti <i>Anna Bolena</i> ; Balzac inaugurates his <i>Comédie humaine</i> ; Hugo writes <i>Hernani</i> , Lamartine <i>Harmonies poétique et religieuses</i> , Stendahl <i>Le Rouge et le Noir</i>

Historical Events

Wellington becomes Prime Minister of England; Russia declares war on Turkey; Liberal revolt in Mexico; Andrew Jackson elected President of the United States; Working Men's Party founded in New York; Baltimore and Ohio railway built in America; Uruguay becomes independent republic

Turkish-Russian war ended with the Peace of Adrianople; Turkey recognises independence of Greece; slavery abolished in Mexico; Venezuela secedes from Gran Colombia; Britain bans suttee (the traditional immolation of a widow with her dead husband) in India; first typewriter patented in America; first electromagnetic clock constructed; haemophilia identified; hydrotherapy invented

Abortive uprisings in Parma, Modena, and Piedmont; French conquer Algeria; July Revolution in Paris; Louis Philippe proclaimed 'Citizen King'; Ecuador secedes from Gran Colombia; military insurrection in Warsaw; Britain adds Mysore to its Indian empire; first sewing machine built in France; steam cars appear in London; Liverpool–Manchester railway opens in England; Joseph Smith founds Mormons in New York; stiff collars for men become widespread

Verdi's Life

Composes Overture for Rossini's *Barber of Seville* and Cantata *I deliri di Saul*

Applies unsuccessfully for the post of organist at Soragna; becomes Provesi's assistant in Busseto; composes *Le lamentazioni di Geremia*

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1831	18	Chopin arrives in Paris; Mendelssohn, in Italy, writes G minor Piano Concerto, begins work on 'Italian' and 'Scottish' Symphonies, and completes <i>The Hebrides</i> ; Bellini's <i>La sonnambula</i> and <i>Norma</i> staged at La Scala, Milan; Meyerbeer's <i>Robert le Diable</i> scores huge hit at Paris Opéra; Victor Hugo writes <i>Notre Dame de Paris</i>
1832	19	Mendelssohn writes the first book of his <i>Songs Without Words</i> ; Donizetti's <i>L'elisir d'amore</i> staged in Milan; death of Clementi; Japanese artist Andro Hiroshige publishes his series <i>53 Stages of the Tokaido</i> ; deaths of Goethe and Sir Walter Scott; Part II of Goethe's <i>Faust</i> published posthumously; births of French painters Gustave Doré and Edouard Manet
1833	20	Mendelssohn's 'Italian' Symphony performed in London; Brahms born in Hamburg, 7 May; Heinrich Marschner's Romantic opera <i>Hans Heiling</i> staged in Berlin; Liszt transcribes Berlioz's <i>Symphonie fantastique</i> for the piano and makes his first Schubert song transcriptions; first Venetian pictures by Turner go on exhibition at the Royal Academy in London; Balzac publishes <i>Eugénie Grandet</i> ; completion of the great German translation of Shakespeare, begun in 1794

Historical Events

Cholera epidemic ravages Europe; Russians crush Polish insurrection; slave revolt in Virginia, USA; James Garfield elected President of the USA; mass demonstrations in Switzerland; uprising in Lyons, France; Egypt conquers Syria; invention of telegraphy, electromagnetic induction, chloroform, and mechanical reaper; exact position of Magnetic North Pole established

Egypt defeats Turks in Syria; Mazzini founds 'Giovine Italia' to support the cause of Italian independence; advent of the Democratic Party in USA; mass demonstrations in Germany; Gladstone enters British politics; Britain occupies Falkland Islands off Argentina; first usage of the word 'socialism'; New England Anti-Slavery Society established in Boston; opening of first French passenger railway; first widespread use of friction matches

William IV grants new liberal constitution to Hanover; slavery abolished throughout the British Empire; Whig party established in USA; General Trades Union formed in New York; growth of charity bazaars in Britain; the 'scientist' coined in England; first magnetic observatory built in Germany; major meteor showers in America

Verdi's Life

Moves into the home of his patron Antonio Barezzi, merchant and President of Philharmonic Society; gives lessons to daughter Margherita, who is to become his future wife; applies for grant from Monte di Pietà for formal music study in Milan

Travels to Milan, where his application for admission to the Conservatory is rejected; advised to study privately in Milan, he begins lessons with Vincenzo Lavigna, composer and former *masetro al cembalo* at La Scala

Provesi dies; Giovanni Ferrari applies for post; Lavigna decides that Verdi requires a further year of formal studies; Verdi's sister Giuseppa Francesca dies

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1834	21	Schumann becomes editor of the <i>Neue Zeitschrift für Musik</i> , creates the imaginary League of David to wage war against latterday Philistines, and composes much of <i>Carnaval</i> and the <i>Symphonic Etudes</i> ; Berlioz composes <i>Harold in Italy</i> , based on Byron's <i>Childe Harold</i> ; Mendelssohn starts work on his oratorio <i>St Paul</i> ; Liszt composes <i>Harmonies poétiques et religieuses</i> ; Balzac publishes <i>Le Père Goriot</i> ; Victor Hugo's <i>Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> scores runaway success; Pushkin writes <i>The Queen of Spades</i> ; death of Samuel Taylor Coleridge
1835	22	Schumann's <i>Carnaval</i> , Piano Concerto in A minor, and Sonata in F sharp minor completed; Chopin writes <i>Andante spianato</i> and <i>Grande Polonaise</i> ; Mendelssohn appointed conductor of Leipzig Gewandhaus concerts; Liszt writes <i>Album d'un voyageur</i> ; Donizetti's <i>Lucia di Lamermoor</i> staged; birth of Saint-Saëns; death of Bellini (34); Heine's poetry banned in Germany; first stories of Hans Christian Anderson
1836	23	Mendelssohn completes <i>St Paul</i> ; Glinka writes trail-blazing nationalist opera <i>A Life for the Tsar</i> ; Meyerbeer composes <i>Les Huguenots</i> ; Dickens publishes <i>The Pickwick Papers</i> ; Gogol publishes <i>The Government Inspector</i> ; Alfred de Musset's autobiographical novel <i>Confession d'un enfant du siècle</i> completed

Historical Events

Spanish Inquisition officially ended after 500 years; Palmerston effects alliance of Britain with France, Spain, and Portugal; Abraham Lincoln enters politics in USA; East India Company's monopoly of Chinese trade abolished; increasing discord between China and Britain; one-horse, two-wheeled Hansom cabs appear in London; fire devastates British houses of parliament; amalgam of mercury alloy first used as fillings for teeth; Herschel begins first major survey of the southern stars

Sam Colt takes out patent for his single-barreled pistol and rifle in USA; Charles Chubb patents burglar-proof safe; first German railway opens; Melbourne (Australia) founded; first negative photograph taken; Halley's comet makes second predicted return; Texas asserts its right to secede from Mexico; Second Seminole War begins

People's Charter initiates national working-class movement in Britain; Texas becomes a republic; Arkansas becomes one of the United States; Davy Crockett killed at Alamo; in South Africa, Boer farmers inaugurate 'The Great Trek'; Natal, Transvaal, and Orange Free State founded; pepsin discovered; first cricket match played in England

Verdi's Life

Directs Haydn's *Creation* at Casino de' Nobili and is invited by the director of Filodrammatici to compose an opera; Ferrari appointed organist at Busseto; Verdi returns to Busseto to apply for the post of municipal music master and stays for the remainder of the year

Completes studies with Lavigna, returning permanently to Busseto; Lavigna recommends him for organist at Monza cathedral, but Verdi, bowing to public opinion, declines

Begins work on an opera, *Roccester*; examined for post of municipal music master of Busseto by the court organist at Parma and subsequently nominated; marries Margherita Barezzi; takes up duties in Busseto; composes *Il cinque maggio* and *Tantum ergo*, and completes his opera

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1837	24	Birth of Balakirev; deaths of Hummel and John Field; Berlioz: <i>Grand Messe des Morts</i> ; Chopin: <i>Etudes</i> , Op. 25; Mendelssohn: Piano Concerto in D minor, String Quartet in E minor; Schumann: <i>Dauidsbündlertänze</i> , Op. 6, <i>Fantasiestücke</i> , Op. 12; Liszt composes first version of the twelve <i>Transcendental Studies</i>
1838	25	Schumann completes <i>Kinderszenen</i> and Fantasia in C, Op. 17, and <i>Kreisleriana</i> , which he writes in three days; discovers Schubert's Symphony No. 9, which he sends to Mendelssohn; Berlioz <i>Benvenuto Cellini</i> ; Liszt <i>Etudes d'après Paganini</i> ; births of Bizet and Bruch; Dickens publishes <i>Oliver Twist</i> and <i>Nicholas Nickleby</i>
1839	26	Chopin <i>Twenty-four Preludes</i> , Op. 28, Second Ballade, and Third Scherzo composed; Schumann composes <i>Humoreske</i> , Op. 20, <i>Faschingsschwank aus Wien</i> , Op. 26; Mendelssohn conducts world premiere of Schubert's Symphony No. 9 and composes <i>Ruy Blas</i> Overture and D minor Piano Trio; births of Cézanne and Mussorgsky; Poe writes <i>The Fall of the House of Usher</i> ; Stendahl publishes <i>The Charterhouse of Parma</i>

Historical Events

Victoria becomes Queen; constitutional revolt in Canada; Ernst Augustus becomes King of Hanover; Morse Code invented; Michigan joins the USA; Martin van Buren elected eighth President of the United States; constitutional revolts in Canada; first Canadian railways opened

Victoria crowned; Boers defeat Zulus in Natal; death of Talleyrand; Richard Cobden establishes Anti-Corn Law League in England; 1440-ton steamship 'Great Western' crosses Atlantic in fifteen days; Audubon completes *The Birds of America*; the term 'sociology' coined in France

First British-Chinese Opium War; Boers found Republic of Natal; first bicycle constructed; Uruguay declares war on Argentina; Prussia restricts child labour to ten hours a day; baseball invented in USA; Cunard Line founded; Louis Blanc publishes *L'Organisation du travail*; Goodyear's discovery of vulcanisation inaugurates commercial use of rubber; Louis Daguerre reveals photographic invention named after him

Verdi's Life

Daughter Virginia born; fails in his attempt to get *Rocester* performed at Parma or Milan

Son Icilio Romano born; daughter Virginia dies; visits Milan to arrange for performance of *Rocester* and publishes *Sei romanze*; resigns as municipal music master in Busseto

Leaving Busseto with his family, he settles in Milan; two songs, *L'esule* and *La seduzione*, and *Notturmo a 3* are published and well reviewed; son Icilio dies; premiere of *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio* (probably a revised version of the unsuccessful *Rocester*) at La Scala, Milan; Merelli at La Scala commissions three more operas

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1840	27	Schumann's miraculous 'year of song'; he receives honorary doctorate from the University of Jena and marries Clara Wieck despite strong objections of her father; Mendelssohn composes and conducts his <i>Lobgesang</i> (Hymn of Praise); birth of Tchaikovsky in Russia; Donizetti's <i>La Fille du Régiment</i> staged in Paris; first harmonium constructed; births of Monet, Renoir, and Rodin in France; Lermontov writes <i>The Demon</i> and <i>A Hero of Our Time</i>
1841	28	Schumann completes his Symphony No. 1 'The Spring'; Chopin composes his Fantasia in F minor, Op. 49; Mendelssohn: <i>Variations sérieuses</i> ; Wagner: <i>The Flying Dutchman</i> ; Rossini's <i>Stabat Mater</i> premiered in Paris; Liszt transcribes Mozart's <i>Don Giovanni</i> , Bellini's <i>Norma</i> , and Meyerbeer's <i>Robert le diable</i> ; saxophone invented; births of Chabrier and Dvořák; Dickens publishes <i>The Old Curiosity Shop</i> ; first edition of the humorous periodical <i>Punch</i> published in London

Historical Events

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert are married; Afghan War ends with surrender to British; Lower and Upper Canada united by Act of Parliament; end of transportation of English criminals to New South Wales; moves to limit hours of child labour in England and America; Darwin publishes his *Zoology of the Voyage of the Beagle-Birds*; invention of artificial agricultural fertilisers; first surviving photograph taken; Nelson's Column built in Trafalgar Square

British proclaim sovereignty over Hong Kong; New Zealand becomes British colony; Lajos Kossuth becomes nationalist leader in Hungary; American slaves revolt en route to Louisiana and sail to freedom in Nassau; founding of *The New York Tribune*; first university degrees granted to women in America; discovery of hypnosis; first popular book on astronomy for the layman published

Verdi's Life

His wife Margherita dies of encephalitis as Verdi composes comic opera *Un giorno di regno*, whose total failure causes him to declare his retirement as a composer; Merelli affirms his confidence in Verdi by reviving *Oberto*

Attends revival of *Oberto* in Genoa; Merelli forces libretto of *Nabucco* on him; begins to compose again and by October *Nabucco* is finished; meets Giuseppina Strepponi, his second wife to be, and enlists her support in having it performed the following season

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1842	29	Glinka follows success of <i>A Life for the Tsar</i> with second nationalist opera <i>Ruslan and Ludmilla</i> ; Schumann writes his Piano Quintet and lesser-known Piano Quartet; Mendelssohn completes his 'Scottish' Symphony and founds Leipzig Conservatory; Wagner's <i>Rienzi</i> staged in Dresden; births of Boito and Massenet; New York Philharmonic founded
1843	30	Donizetti's <i>Don Pasquale</i> produced in Paris; Mendelssohn writes incidental music for Shakespeare's <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> ; Schumann's secular oratorio <i>Das Paradies und die Peri</i> performed in Leipzig; Dickens writes <i>Martin Chuzzlewit</i> and <i>A Christmas Carol</i> ; William Wordsworth appointed Poet Laureate

Historical Events

Riots and strikes in northern England; Boers establish Orange Free State; Opium War between Britain and China ends with Treaty of Nanking; rail link built between Boston and Albany in USA; Queen Victoria makes her first rail journey from Windsor to Paddington; first use of ether for surgical anesthesia; the term ‘dinosaur’ coined in England

Military revolt in Spain; Maori revolt against Britain; Morse builds first telegraph system from Washington to Baltimore; first propeller-driven crossing of the Atlantic; world’s first nightclub ‘Le Bal des Anglais’ opened in Paris; advent of skiing as a sport; first tunnel under the Thames built

Verdi’s Life

Triumphant success of *Nabucco* at La Scala, Milan; Verdi taken up by Milanese high society, appearing often at the salons of Clarina Maffei, Emilia Morosini, and Giuseppina Appiani, all of whom become lifelong friends; composes *Chi i bei di m’adduce ancora* for album of Sofia de ‘Medici; visits Rossini in Bologna; writes new ‘prayer’ for Venetian revival of *Nabucco*

Premiere of *I Lombardi alla prima crociata*; *Nabucco* mounted in Vienna; begins negotiations with La Fenice, Venice, for what will be *Ernani*; sees Strepponi in *Nabucco*; revival of *I Lombardi*

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1844	31	Schumann: <i>Scenes from Goethe's Faust</i> ; Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto in E minor; Chopin: Sonata in B minor, Op. 58; Berlioz publishes his treatise on orchestration; births of Rimsky-Korsakov and Sarasate; Dumas (père): <i>The Count of Monte Cristo</i>
1845	32	Wagner's <i>Tannhäuser</i> performed at Dresden; Mendelssohn composes C minor Piano Trio; Schumann completes Piano Concerto, Op. 54; first artistic photographic portraits taken; births of Gabriel Fauré and Charles Marie Widor; Prosper Mérimée writes <i>Carmen</i> (on which Bizet's opera was to be based); Balzac begins <i>Les Paysans</i> (completed in 1855); Poe: <i>The Raven</i> and other poems
1846	33	Mendelssohn's <i>Elijah</i> premiered at Birmingham Festival in England; Berlioz composes his dramatic oratorio <i>La Damnation de Faust</i> ; Liszt writes the first of his <i>Hungarian Rhapsodies</i> ; Schumann completes his Symphony No. 2 in C; Lortzing's opera <i>Der Waffenschmied</i> produced in Vienna; electric arc lighting introduced at Paris Opéra; Balzac publishes <i>La Cousine Bette</i> ; Edward Lear produces his <i>Book of Nonsense</i>

Historical Events

Treaty of Tangier ends French war in Morocco; military revolts in Mexico; birth of Nietzsche; USA-China peace treaty; weavers revolt in Silesia; YMCA founded in England; James Knox Polk elected President of the USA

Anglo-Sikh War; second Maori uprising against British rule in New Zealand; Swiss Sonderbund formed for the protection of Catholic cantons; new Spanish Constitution drafted; first transatlantic submarine cable; power loom invented in USA; first hydraulic crane constructed; rules of baseball codified; Engels publishes *The Condition of the Working Class in England*

First Sikh War ends with Treaty of Lahore; revolts in Poland; Austrian and Russian troops invade Krakow; USA declares war on Mexico; first sewing machine patented; Irish famine follows failure of potato crop; lock-stitch sewing machine patented; Evangelical Alliance formed in London; first laboratory of psychology founded in USA; Zeiss optical factory founded

Verdi's Life

Ernani premiered at La Fenice; Emmanuele Muzio begins studies with Verdi in Milan; Verdi directs *Ernani* with Stropponi at Bergamo; premiere of *I due Foscari* at Teatro Argentina, Rome; friendship with poet Ferretti and sculptor, Luccardi; at Rossini's request, writes a new aria for *Ernani*

Giovanni d'Arco premiered at La Scala; premiere of *Alzira* at San Carlo Theatre, Naples; buys Palazzo Dordoni in Busseto; in Paris, Léon Escudier acquires Verdi's French rights

Attila premiered at La Fenice; Verdi's health breaks down; cancels commitments and spends July at a spa in Recoaro, with poets Andrea Maffei and Giului Carnano; sadly witnesses the separation of Andrea and Clarinas Maffei; starts work on *Macbeth*

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1847	34	Mendelssohn dies (38); Schumann begins opera <i>Genoveva</i> and composes his piano trios; Flotow's opera <i>Martha</i> opens in Vienna; Charlotte Brontë writes <i>Jane Eyre</i> , Emily Brontë <i>Wuthering Heights</i> ; William Makepeace Thackeray's <i>Vanity Fair</i> published; Heinrich Hoffmann, a doctor from Frankfurt, publishes his classic cautionary tale <i>Struwwelpeter</i>
1848	35	Schumann completes <i>Genoveva</i> , Op. 81, begins incidental music for Byron's <i>Manfred</i> and the <i>Album for the Young</i> ; Wagner composes <i>Lohengrin</i> ; Liszt composes his <i>Consolations</i> and drafts the first two of his Symphonic Poems; Donizetti dies insane (51); births of Duparc, Parry, and Gauguin; founding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; Grimm publishes his <i>History of the German Language</i> ; Alexandre Dumas (fils): <i>La Dame aux Camélias</i>

Historical Events

USA captures Mexico City; Sonderbund War breaks out in Switzerland as Catholic cantons defend their union; Swiss railway opened between Zurich and Baden; first Roman Catholic working man's club established in Germany; British Factory Act sets ten-hour maximum on working day of women and children; Mormons found Salt Lake City in USA; discovery of evaporated milk

Revolts in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Milan, Venice, Rome, Parma, and Prague; serfdom abolished in Austria; Marx and Engels write *The Communist Manifesto*; Switzerland becomes federal union; Wisconsin becomes a state; Gold Rush in California; first convention for women's rights held in New York; first successful appendectomy performed; safety matches invented

Verdi's Life

In Florence for premiere of *Macbeth* at the Teatro della Pergola; departs for London with Muzio to compose *I masnadieri* for Her Majesty's Theatre, then to Paris for premiere of *Jérusalem* at the Opéra; Giuseppina Strepponi becomes his mistress

Completes *Il corsaro*; buys estate at Sant' Agata near Busseto; returns to Paris to be with Strepponi and composes *La battaglia di Legnano*; signs appeal to General Cavaignac to intervene in war on Italy's behalf; sends setting of *Suona la tromba* to Mazzini; premiere of *Il corsaro* in Trieste, in Verdi's absence

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1849	36	Chopin dies (39); Meyerbeer's <i>Le Prophète</i> produced at Paris Opéra; Otto Nicolai's opera <i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i> premiered in Vienna; Liszt: 'Book II', 'Italy' of his <i>Années de pèlerinage</i> ; Johann Strauss I dies (45); Dickens publishes <i>David Copperfield</i> ; Edgar Allan Poe dies (40)
1850	37	Foundation of Bach-Gesellschaft to publish the complete works of J.S. Bach in forty-six volumes (a project not completed until 1900); Schumann's <i>Genoveva</i> produced in Leipzig and poorly received; Schumann composes his Cello Concerto and many songs; Liszt Fantasia and Fugue, <i>Ad nos, ad salutarem undam</i> for organ, and symphonic poem <i>Heroïde funèbre</i> (first version); death of Wordsworth – Alfred, Lord Tennyson succeeds him as Poet Laureate; Turgenev writes <i>A Month in the Country</i>
1851	38	Schumann completes his Symphony No. 4 and many songs; Liszt completes first version of his symphonic poem <i>Mazeppa</i> ; Gounod's <i>Sappho</i> produced in Paris; death of J.M.W. Turner; Herman Melville publishes <i>Moby Dick</i> ; Nathaniel Hawthorne: <i>House of the Seven Gables</i> ; John Ruskin: <i>The Stones of Venice</i>

Historical Events

British defeats Sikhs in India; Venice surrenders to Austria; Britain annexes Punjab; Livingstone crosses the Kalahari Desert; Fizeau measures the speed of light; Amelia Bloomer sets out to revolutionise women's dress

Liberal constitution drafted in Prussia; Anglo-Kaffir War erupts; Taiping Rebellion in China; Austro-Hungarian customs union founded; insurance for the aged established in France; Royal Meteorological Society founded in London; University of Sydney established in Australia; invention of the Bunsen burner; first cast-iron railway bridge built in England

German Confederation recognised by Prussia; Cuba declares independence; *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon; Great International Exhibition held in London; first double-decker bus; Singer patents his continuous-stitch sewing machine; first appearance of *The New York Times*; gold discovered in New South Wales, Australia

Verdi's Life

L'Abandonnée, song, published in French periodical; premiere of *La battaglia di Legnano* in Rome; leaves Rome for Paris, February and returns with Giuseppina Strepponi to Palazzo Dordoni in Busseto, where she is ostracised as 'scarlet woman'; composes *Luisa Miller*, travelling with Barezzi to Naples for its premiere

Travels to Bologna for revival of *Macbeth*, then to Trieste for premiere of *Stiffelio*; experiences extreme difficulties with censorship over *Rigoletto*

Premiere of *Rigoletto*, Teatro La Fenice, Venice; settles parents at Vidalenzo and moves with Giuseppina to Sant'Agata; his mother dies, unleashing extravagant grief in her son; revivals of *Macbeth* and *Luisa Miller* in Bologna

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1852	39	Liszt writes <i>Hungarian Fantasy</i> for piano and orchestra; Schumann's <i>Manfred</i> performed in Leipzig; Irish composer-conductor Charles Villiers Stanford born; Dickens publishes <i>Bleak House</i> ; Alexandre Dumas (fils) bases a play on his earlier <i>La Dame aux Camélias</i> ; Harriet Beecher Stowe writes American classic <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ; Thackeray publishes <i>History of Henry Esmond</i> ; Paddington Station in London designed by Brunel and Wyatt
1853	40	Liszt completes Ballade No. 2 and Piano Sonata in B minor; Wagner (40) completes the text for his great tetralogy <i>The Ring of the Nibelung</i> ; Brahms (20) publishes his three piano sonatas; founding of Steinway's piano firm in New York; Matthew Arnold publishes <i>The Scholar Gypsy</i> , Charlotte Brontë <i>Villette</i> , and Nathaniel Hawthorne <i>Tanglewood Tales</i>
1854	41	Schumann attempts suicide and is thereafter confined in Eendenich mental asylum; Brahms composes his Four Ballades, Op. 10 and the first version of his Piano Trio in B minor, Op. 8; Berlioz's <i>L'Enfance du Christ</i> performed in Paris; Liszt: <i>A Faust Symphony</i> and symphonic poems <i>Orpheus</i> , <i>Festklänge</i> , <i>Les Préludes</i> , <i>Mazeppa</i> , <i>Tasso</i> , and <i>Hungaria</i> ; birth of German composer Engelbert Humperdinck; Tennyson writes <i>The Charge of the Light Brigade</i> , Henry David Thoreau <i>Walden</i>

Historical Events

Second Empire begins in France (to 1870); Louis Napoleon pronounces himself Emperor Napoleon III; Second Anglo-Burmese War breaks out; foundation of South African Republic; new constitution drafted for New Zealand; Duke of Wellington dies; Wells Fargo Company founded in USA; USA imports sparrows from Germany as defence against caterpillars; first salt water aquarium opened in London

Crimean War begins; Anglo-Burmese War ends; Britain annexes Mahratta State of Nagpur in India; telegraph network established in India; first railroad through the Alps; invention of hypodermic syringe; German family magazine *Die Gartenlaube* founded in Leipzig; Samuel Colt revolutionises the small arms business; largest tree in the world discovered in California

Siege of Sebastopol begins in Crimean War; first American-Japanese treaty; founding of Republican Party in USA; Pope Pius IX declares dogma of Immaculate Conception an article of faith; *Le Figaro* begins publication in Paris; Turin-Genoa railway opened; Heinrich Goebel invents first form of domestic electric light bulb

Verdi's Life

Signs contract with Paris Opéra, February; returns to Busseto, March; a further contract with La Fenice in Venice; Badare completes libretto for *Il Trovatore*; Verdi nominated by Louis Bonaparte as Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur; another contract, this time with the Teatro Apollo in Rome

Highly successful premiere of *Il Trovatore* at Teatro Apollo; premiere of *La Traviata* in Venice is a failure

Begins *Les Vêpres siciliennes* for Paris Opéra; travels to London to secure rights of *Il Trovatore*; triumphant premiere of revised *Traviata* in Venice; directs *Il Trovatore* at Théâtre-Italien in Paris

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1855	42	Berlioz's <i>Te Deum</i> performed in Paris; Liszt premieres his First Piano Concerto with Berlioz conducting, composes <i>Missa Solennis</i> , <i>Psalm 13</i> , the <i>Prelude and Fugue on BACH</i> , and many songs, and his first book of <i>Années de pèlerinage</i> published; Wagner makes his mark as conductor in a series of London concerts; Dickens publishes <i>Little Dorrit</i> , Dumas (fils) <i>Le Demi-monde</i> ; Tennyson: <i>Maud</i> and other poems; Anthony Trollope: <i>The Warden</i> ; Walt Whitman publishes <i>Leaves of Grass</i> , Henry Wadsworth Longfellow <i>The Song of Hiawatha</i>
1856	43	Schumann dies insane (46); Alexander Dargomijsky's opera <i>Russalka</i> produced in St Petersburg; Flaubert writes <i>Madame Bovary</i> ; births of George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, and Norwegian composer Christian Sinding; Carl Bechstein founds his piano factory; death of Heinrich Heine

Historical Events

Accession of Tsar Nicholas II in Russia; Russians surrender at Sebastopol; end of Taiping rebellion in China; cholera outbreak leads to modernisation of London sewers; bubonic plague breaks out in China; invention of printing telegraph; first iron steamer crosses Atlantic; tungsten steel developed; World Fair held in Paris; *The Daily Telegraph* begins publication in London

Austrian amnesty for Hungarian rebels of 1848; Britain establishes Natal as a crown colony; Anglo-Chinese and Anglo-Persian wars begin; Britain grants self-government to Tasmania; invention of cocaine; Neanderthal skull found in cave near Düsseldorf; Big Ben cast in London; Black Forest railway opens with forty tunnels; longest bare-knuckle boxing match in history (6 hours, 15 minutes)

Verdi's Life

Premiere of *Les Vêpres siciliennes*; remains in Paris to work on Italian translation of *Il Trovatore* with Emilien Pacini; again to London, to secure rights of *Vêpres*; returns to Busseto in time for Christmas

Travels to Parma to urge signing of international treaty to safeguard performing rights; receives title of Cavaliere dell'Ordine di S.S. Maurizio e Lazzaro from Victor Emmanuel II of Sardinia; signs contract for new opera at La Fenice; works with Piave on revision of *Stiffelio*; fails in his prosecution of the Théâtre-Italien in Paris for using pirated versions of his works, but signs contract for French version of *Il Trovatore* at the Paris Opéra

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1857	44	First performances of Liszt's <i>Faust</i> and <i>Dante</i> Symphonies, Second Piano Concerto, and B minor Sonata; Charles Hallé founds the Hallé Concerts in Manchester, England; birth of Edward Elgar; Victoria & Albert Museum founded in London; death of Glinka (54); Trollope publishes <i>Barchester Towers</i> ; Charles Baudelaire: <i>Les Fleurs du mal</i> ; George Borrow: <i>Romany Rye</i> ; Joseph Conrad born
1858	45	Berlioz completes his epic opera <i>The Trojans at Carthage</i> ; Offenbach's <i>Orpheus in the Underworld</i> produced in Paris; Liszt composes symphonic poem <i>Hamlet</i> ; Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, opened in London; New York Symphony Orchestra gives its first concert; Puccini born; Wilhelm Busch creates <i>Max und Moritz</i>

Historical Events

End of Anglo-Persian war; Indian mutiny against British rule; siege of Delhi; Garibaldi forms National Association for the unification of Italy; Tsar Alexander II begins emancipation of serfs in Russia; foundation of Irish Republican Brotherhood; transatlantic cable laid; speculation in American railroad shares triggers economic crisis in Europe; invention of the passenger lift

Prince William of Prussia becomes regent for insane Frederick William IV; Anglo-Chinese War ends; Britain declares peace in India; Ottawa becomes Canadian capital; Suez Canal Company formed; first electrical lighthouses built; Minnesota becomes American state

Verdi's Life

Le Trouvère premiered at Paris Opéra; returns to Busseto and signs contract with San Carlo Theatre, Naples; premiere of *Simon Boccanegra* at Teatro La Fenice; premiere of *Araldo* (a revised version of *Stiffelio*) at Teatro Nuovo, Rimini, conducted by Mariani; enraged by Neapolitan censorship of *Un ballo in maschera*

Censors return libretto of *Un ballo in maschera* altered into 'Adelia Degli Adimari'; Verdi rejects it and arranges for its production in Rome instead; wins suit to withdraw opera from Naples, on condition of reviving *Simon Boccanegra* in November; works on modifications to *Un ballo in maschera*

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1859	46	Gounod's <i>Faust</i> staged in Paris; Brahms completes Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor and Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor; Dickens publishes <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i> ; Tennyson writes <i>The Idylls of the King</i> , George Eliot <i>Adam Bede</i> ; Edward Fitzgerald translates <i>The Rubáiyat of Omar Khayyám</i> ; births of Seurat and Arthur Conan Doyle (creator of Sherlock Holmes)
1860	47	Brahms writes String Sextet in B flat, Liszt <i>Psalm 18</i> and Two Episodes from <i>Lenau's Faust</i> (including <i>Mephisto Waltz</i> No. 1); Franz von Suppé writes first-ever Viennese operetta <i>Das Pensionat</i> ; first modern Eisteddfod held in Wales; George Eliot writes <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> , Alexander Ostrovski <i>The Storm</i> , Wilkie Collins <i>The Woman in White</i> ; <i>Cornhill Magazine</i> founded in England under editorship of W.M. Thackeray; births of Mahler, Wolf, Paderewski, Chekhov, and James M. Barrie (author of <i>Peter Pan</i>)

Historical Events

Franco-Austrian War in Italy; German National Association formed, aimed at uniting Germany under Prussia; Bismarck becomes Prussian Ambassador to St Petersburg; Suez Canal begun; Charles Darwin publishes *The Origin of Species*; Anthropological Society founded in Paris; steamroller invented; Charles Blondin crosses Niagara Falls on a tightrope

Garibaldi takes Palermo and Naples and proclaims Victor Emmanuel II King of Italy; Abraham Lincoln elected President of the United States; South Carolina secedes from Union; Second Maori War breaks out in New Zealand; Lenoir constructs first practical internal combustion engine; first horse-drawn trams; British Open Golf Championships founded; advent of skiing as competitive sport

Verdi's Life

First use of Verdi's name as a political slogan, 'Viva V.E.R.D.I.': **V**[ittorio] **E**[manuele] **R**[e] **DI** [d'Italia] ('Long live Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy'); *Un ballo in maschera* premiered in Rome; elected honorary member of Accademia Filarmonica Romana; marries Giuseppina Strepponi after twelve years of living as man and wife; elected to represent Busseto in assembly of Parma provinces; travels to Turin to present petition for annexation to Piedmont and is made honorary citizen of Turin; meets Cavour

Little musical activity; manages his estates at Busseto; spends the winter in Genoa and the summer at Tabbiano spa; purchases rifles for the Busseto militia

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1861	48	Wagner's <i>Tannhäuser</i> causes scandal in Paris; Brahms writes <i>Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel</i> , Op. 24; Royal Academy of Music founded in London; Dickens publishes <i>Great Expectations</i> , Dostoevsky <i>The House of the Dead</i> , George Eliot <i>Silas Marner</i> , Vladimir Dahl <i>Dictionary of the Living Russian Tongue</i> ; births of Nellie Melba and Indian philosopher-poet Rabindranath Tagore; death of Elizabeth Barrett Browning
1862	49	Berlioz's <i>Béatrice et Bénédicte</i> staged in Baden-Baden; Liszt: Variations for piano on Bach's 'Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen' and the <i>Cantico del sol di San Francesco d'Assisi</i> ; Ludwig Köchel begins his monumental catalogue of Mozart's Works; Turgenev: <i>Fathers and Sons</i> ; Flaubert publishes <i>Salambo</i>
1863	50	Berlioz's <i>The Trojans at Carthage</i> and Bizet's <i>The Pearl Fishers</i> staged in Paris; Brahms appointed conductor of the Singakademie in Vienna; births of Pietro Mascagni (<i>Cavalleria Rusticana</i>) and the painter Lucien Pissarro; Manet paints <i>Déjeuner sur l'herbe</i> and <i>Olympia</i> ; deaths of Eugène Delacroix and W.M. Thackeray; University of Massachusetts founded in USA

Historical Events

Frederick William of Prussia succeeded by William I; emancipation of Russian serfs; start of American Civil War; Garibaldi triumphs at Gaeta; Italy declared a kingdom, with Victor Emanuel II at its head; Polish demonstrators massacred by Russian forces in Warsaw; USA introduces passport system; Mrs Beeton publishes *Book of Household Management*; linoleum invented; daily weather forecasts established in Britain

Bismarck becomes Prime Minister of Prussia; Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all American slaves; military revolt in Greece topples Otto I; Foucault measures speed of light; ten-barrel Gatling Gun invented

French capture Mexico City and declare Archduke Maximilian of Austria emperor; Lincoln delivers Gettysburg Address; civil war breaks out in Afghanistan; first railroad in New Zealand opens; roller-skating introduced in USA; Football Association established in London; construction of London Underground railway begun

Verdi's Life

Elected Deputy for Borgo San Donnino and attends opening of Italian Parliament; signs contract to write *La forza del destino* for St Petersburg opera; leaves for Russia in November but premiere is postponed

Leaves Russia for Paris; receives text of a cantata, *Inno delle nazioni*, to be performed at Her Majesty's Theatre in London; travels to St Petersburg for premiere of *La forza del destino*; receives Cross of Imperial and Royal Order of Saint Stanislas

La forza del destino mounted in Madrid; composes new romance for *Les Vêpres siciliennes*, performed 20 July at the Paris Opéra; summer in Busseto; composes song *Il Brigidin*

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1864	51	Brahms composes Piano Quintet in F minor, Op. 34; Bruckner writes his Symphony No. 0; Offenbach's <i>La Belle Hélène</i> mounted in Paris; birth of Richard Strauss; Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft founded in Weimar; Dickens publishes <i>Our Mutual Friend</i> ; Tolstoy begins <i>War and Peace</i>
1865	52	Wagner's <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> staged in Munich; Schubert's 'Unfinished' Symphony premiered forty-three years after it was written; Meyerbeer's <i>L'Africaine</i> produced in Paris; Suppé's <i>Die schöne Galatea</i> staged in Vienna; Brahms composes Horn Trio, Op. 40; <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> published; births of Dukas, Glazunov, Sibelius, Kipling, and W.B. Yeats
1866	53	Smetana's <i>The Bartered Bride</i> staged in Prague; Offenbach's <i>La Vie Parisienne</i> and Ambroise Thomas's <i>Mignon</i> produced in Paris; Brahms composes <i>Variations on a Theme by Paganini</i> ; Tchaikovsky writes his Symphony No. 1; Dostoevsky publishes <i>Crime and Punishment</i> ; Degas begins painting his <i>Ballet Scenes</i> ; Pierre Larousse publishes <i>Grand dictionnaire universel</i>

Historical Events

Ludwig II crowned King of Bavaria; Karl Marx founds First International Working Man's Association; Denmark cedes Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenberg in Peace of Vienna; Geneva Convention establishes neutrality of battlefield medical facilities; Lincoln re-elected; Nevada becomes a state; *Neue Freie Presse* founded in Vienna

Lincoln assassinated; American Civil War ends; Bismarck and Napoleon III meet in Biarritz; first carpet sweeper comes into use; first railway sleeping cars; laying of transatlantic cable completed; founding of the Salvation Army; Mendel enunciates the law of heredity; Massachusetts Institute of Technology founded in USA

Austro-Prussian War; Treaty of Vienna ends Austro-Italian War; Cretan rebellion against Turkish rule; 'Black Friday' on London stock exchange; dynamite and underwater torpedo invented; telegraph messages first sent over radio waves

Verdi's Life

Begins revision of *Macbeth* for Paris; elected member of the French Académie des Beaux-Arts

Premiere of revised *Macbeth* in Paris; dispute with Busseto authorities over new theatre; agrees to let it be named after him but refuses to set foot inside it; stands down from Parliament; signs contract with Paris Opéra for *Don Carlos*

Composes *Don Carlos* in Busseto, Paris, and Caunterets; arranges to rent apartment in Genoa in which to spend winter months, mainly on account of Strepponi, who found winter at Sant' Agata depressing

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1867	54	Verdi's <i>Don Carlos</i> , Bizet's <i>La Jolie Fille de Perth</i> , and Offenbach's <i>La Grande-duchesse de Gérolstein</i> staged in Paris; Johann Strauss II writes 'Blue Danube' Waltz; World's Fair in Paris introduces Japanese art to the West; Reclams Universalbibliothek, first of all paperback book series, begins publication; Ibsen writes <i>Peer Gynt</i> ; Zola publishes <i>Thérèse Raquin</i>
1868	55	Wagner's <i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i> ; Brahms's <i>German Requiem</i> receives its first full performance; Mussorgsky begins <i>Boris Godunov</i> ; Liszt completes his Requiem; death of Rossini; French Impressionism becomes a recognisable force in European art; Dostoevsky publishes <i>The Idiot</i> , Wilkie Collins <i>The Moonstone</i> , Louisa May Alcott <i>Little Women</i> ; birth of Maxim Gorky
1869	56	Wagner's <i>Das Rheingold</i> performed in Munich; Brahms publishes his <i>Liebesslieder Waltzes</i> ; death of Berlioz; Tchaikovsky's first opera <i>Voyevoda</i> staged in Moscow; Bruckner's Mass in E minor first performed; Flaubert publishes <i>L'Education sentimentale</i> , R.D. Blackmore <i>Lorna Doone</i> , Mark Twain <i>The Innocents Abroad</i> , Verlaine <i>Fêtes galantes</i> , Matthew Arnold <i>Culture and Anarchy</i>

Historical Events

Karl Marx publishes Vol. 1 of *Das Kapital*; Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy; Garibaldi begins march on Rome; USA purchases Alaska from Russia; Nebraska becomes a state in the USA; gold discovered in Wyoming; diamond fields discovered in South Africa; first bicycles manufactured; completion of railroad through Brenner Pass; invention of clinical thermometer

Prussia confiscates territory of King of Hanover; Disraeli becomes Prime Minister of Britain, resigns, and is succeeded by Gladstone; Shogunate abolished in Japan; impeachment of President Andrew Johnson in USA; skeleton of Cro-Magnon man found in France; invention of air brakes for steam locomotives; badminton invented

Ulysses S. Grant elected President of the USA; National Prohibition Party founded in Chicago; parliamentary system returns in France; Greece withdraws from Crete; Suez Canal opened; abolition of debtors' prisons in Britain; first postcards appear in Austria; Francis Galton publishes pioneering work on eugenics (the source of 'genetic engineering'); first nihilist convention organised in Switzerland

Verdi's Life

His father dies; premiere of *Don Carlos* in Paris; purchases apartment in Genoa; becomes honorary citizen of Genoa in April; Antonio Barezzi dies; travels to Paris with Giuseppina and Mariani for the Great Exhibition. Mariani conducts Italian premiere of *Don Carlos* at Bologna

Refuses Cross of the Crown of Italy because of Minister Broglio's attack on all Italian music since Rossini, May; meets his idol Manzoni in Milan; plans composite Mass to commemorate death of Rossini, and begins work on revision of *La forza del destino*

Revised version of *La forza del destino* premiered at La Scala, Milan; agrees to compose *Liberame* for Rossini-Requiem, June; nominated Cavaliere dell'ordine del Merito Civile de Savoia

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1870	57	Wagner writes <i>Siegfried Idyll</i> ; his <i>Die Walküre</i> produced in Munich; Tchaikovsky's Fantasy-Overture <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> performed in Moscow; Liszt writes <i>Funeral Music for Mosonyi</i> ; Delibes' <i>Coppélia</i> produced in Paris; Brahms's <i>Alto Rhapsody</i> published; Société Nationale de Musique founded in France; Keble College, Oxford founded; death of Dickens
1871	58	Brahms's <i>Schicksalslied</i> published; Saint-Saëns publishes his symphonic poem <i>Le Rouet d'Omphale</i> ; Royal Albert Hall opened in London; George Eliot publishes <i>Middlemarch</i> , Lewis Carroll <i>Through the Looking Glass</i>
1872	59	Bizet writes incidental music to Alphonse Daudet's play <i>L'Arlésienne</i> ; Brahms appointed Artistic Director of Vienna's Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde; Franck publishes <i>Les Béatitudes</i> ; Nietzsche writes <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , Jules Verne <i>Around the World in 80 Days</i>

Historical Events

Franco-Prussian War breaks out; revolt in Paris; proclamation there of Third Republic; Lenin born; Schliemann begins excavation of Troy; John D. Rockefeller founds Standard Oil Company in USA; Thomas Huxley publishes *Theory of Biogenesis*; doctrine of papal infallibility adopted at the First Vatican Council

German Empire established under Wilhelm I; Paris Commune established; Jehovah's Witnesses founded; Pope granted possession of the Vatican by Italian Law of Guarantees; bank holidays established in Britain; Darwin publishes *The Descent of Man*; invention of the pneumatic drill; first large luxury liner launched; great fire of Chicago; Stanley meets Livingstone in Africa

League of Three Emperors established in Berlin; civil war in Spain; Jesuits expelled from Germany; Three-Emperors' League forms alliance of Germany, Russia, and Hungary; former Confederates in American Civil War granted amnesty; Brooklyn Bridge opened in USA

Verdi's Life

Seeks French translations of Wagner's prose works; searching for new operatic subject, agrees to compose *Aida* for the Khedive of Cairo's new opera house; works with Ghislanzoni as librettist; declines directorship of Naples Conservatory in succession to Mercadante

Appointed honorary member of Società Filarmonica of Naples; forms part of committee in Florence to decide on reform of conservatories; concerns himself with casting and production of Egyptian and European premieres of *Aida*; attends *Lohengrin* at Bologna, conducted by Mariani; premiere of *Aida* at Cairo Opera House

Italian premiere of *Aida* at La Scala; directs revival in Parma; travels to Naples for revivals of *Don Carlos* and *Aida*; performance of partially revised *Don Carlos* in December

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1873	60	Brahms publishes <i>Variations on a Theme by Haydn</i> ; Bruckner's Symphony No. 2 performed in Vienna; Rimsky-Korsakov's opera <i>Ivan the Terrible</i> staged in St Petersburg; Liszt writes <i>Five Hungarian Folksongs</i> ; Carl Rosa Opera Company founded in England; births of Caruso, Chaliapin, Rachmaninov, and Reger; John Stuart Mill's autobiography published; Tolstoy begins <i>Anna Karenina</i>
1874	61	Mussorgsky's <i>Boris Godunov</i> produced in St Petersburg; Johann Strauss II writes <i>Die Fledermaus</i> ; Liszt completes <i>The Legend of St Cecilia</i> , <i>Hymne de l'enfant à son réveil</i> , and <i>Elegy No. 1</i> ; Brahms's <i>Hungarian Dances</i> published; Paris Opéra completed; births of Schoenberg, Holst, Gertrude Stein, and Robert Frost
1875	62	Birth of Ravel; death of Bizet (36), not long after disastrous premiere of <i>Carmen</i> ; Bruckner composes his Symphony No. 3; Gilbert and Sullivan's first operetta <i>Trial by Jury</i> produced in London; Piano Concerto No. 1 receives world premiere in Boston, Massachusetts; Mark Twain publishes <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> ; births of Albert Schweitzer, Thomas Mann, Rainer Maria Rilke, and John Buchan

Historical Events

Death of Napoleon III; Germans evacuate France after Franco-Prussian War; Germany adopts mark as unit of currency; financial panic in Vienna and New York; World Exhibition mounted in Vienna; the cities of Buda and Pest are merged to form capital of Hungary; famine in Bengal; first typewriters manufactured; early form of colour photography invented

Fiji Islands added to British Empire; first Postal Union established in Switzerland; pressure-cooking used for canning foods; first American zoo founded in Philadelphia; excavation of Olympia begun; civil marriage made compulsory in Germany; births of Churchill, Herbert Hoover, Weizmann, and Marconi

Bosnia and Herzegovina rebel against Turkish rule; rebellion in Cuba; Prince of Wales visits India; Public Health Act passed in Britain; religious orders abolished in Prussia; first swimming of English Channel; first roller-skating rink opened in London; Kwang Hsu becomes Emperor of China; Japanese law courts reformed

Verdi's Life

Revival of *Aida* at San Carlos; private performance of his only string quartet; Manzoni dies (88); Verdi proposes to the Mayor of Milan a Requiem in commemoration of the great writer

Conducts premiere of Requiem in Milan, then at La Scala and the Opéra comique in Paris; travels to London to arrange for performance the following year; moves into new apartment in Genoa; nominated Senator

Conducts Requiem again at the Opéra comique; receives Cross of the Legion of Honour; conducts Requiem at the Royal Albert Hall in London, and at the Hofopertheater in Vienna, closely followed by *Aida*; sworn in as Senator in Rome

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1876	63	Opening of the Festspielhaus at Bayreuth with first complete performance of Wagner's <i>Ring</i> cycle; Brahms's First Symphony premiered at Karlsruhe; Tchaikovsky: <i>Francesca da Rimini</i> , 'Rococo' Variations; Liszt's <i>Hamlet</i> premiered; births of Falla, Ruggles, Casals, and Bruno Walter; Mallarmé writes <i>L'Après-Midi d'un Faune</i> ; Henry James: <i>Roderick Hudson</i>
1877	64	Brahms's Second Symphony composed; first publication of Mozart's complete works begun; birth of Ernst von Dohnányi; Saint-Saëns composes <i>Samson et Dalila</i> ; Tchaikovsky's <i>Swan Lake</i> produced in Moscow; Liszt completes the third book of the <i>Années de pèlerinage</i> ; Rijksmuseum built in Amsterdam; Third Impressionist Exhibition mounted in Paris; birth of Raoul Dufy; Emile Zola publishes his <i>L'Assommoir</i> , Henry James <i>The American</i>
1878	65	George Grove begins his mammoth <i>Dictionary of Music and Musicians</i> ; Gilbert and Sullivan: <i>HMS Pinafore</i> ; Dvořák: <i>Slavonic Dances</i> ; Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto, Symphony No. 4, and the Opera <i>Eugene Onegin</i> ; Liszt starts work on the <i>Via Crucis</i> ; William Morris publishes <i>The Decorative Arts</i> ; Thomas Hardy: <i>The Return of the Native</i> ; births of John Masefield, Carl Sandburg, and Upton Sinclair

Historical Events

Serbia and Montenegro declare war on Turkey; new Ottoman constitution proclaimed; Korea becomes independent; invention of the telephone; World Exposition in Philadelphia, USA; founding of Deutsche Reichsbank in Germany; Schliemann excavates Mycenae; Johns Hopkins University established in Baltimore, USA; first Chinese railway completed

Russia declares war on Turkey, invades Romania, crosses Danube, and storms Kars; Bismarck refuses to intervene; Victoria proclaimed Empress of India; suppression of Satsuma rebellion in Japan; invention of the gramophone; first public telephones appear in USA; first All-England Tennis Championships held at Wimbledon; first observation of 'canals' on Mars

Attempt to assassinate Emperor Wilhelm I of Germany; Anti-Socialist Law enacted in Germany; beginning of Irredentist agitation in Italy to obtain Trieste and South Tyrol from Austria; anti-Semitic movement formalised in Germany; invention of the microphone; first electric street lighting; World Exhibition mounted in Paris; repeater rifle invented

Verdi's Life

Conducts *Aida* at Théâtre-Italien, and yet again the Requiem; String Quartet performed privately in Hotel de Bade and he decides to publish it

Conducts Requiem at Lower Rhine Festival; friendship with Ferdinand Hiller; visits Holland

Visits Monte Carlo in March, Paris in April and November; elected honorary member of Modena's Accademia di Scienze, Lettere e Arti in December

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1879	66	Brahms's Violin Concerto premiered in Leipzig; Tchaikovsky's <i>Eugene Onegin</i> staged in Moscow; Bruckner composes his String Quintet, Franck his Piano Quintet; Liszt composes <i>Missa pro organo</i> and <i>Ossa arida</i> , Suppé <i>Boccaccio</i> ; births of Bridge, Ireland, Respighi, and Karg-Elert; Henry James publishes <i>Daisy Miller</i> , Robert Louis Stevenson <i>Travels with a Donkey</i>
1880	67	Brahms: <i>Academic Festival</i> and <i>Tragic Overtures</i> ; Bruckner: Symphony No. 4; Tchaikovsky: <i>Capriccio italien</i> , '1812' Overture, and <i>Serenade for Strings</i> ; Gilbert and Sullivan: <i>The Pirates of Penzance</i> ; Guildhall School of Music established in London; Philip Spitta publishes his monumental biography of Bach; Dostoevsky: <i>The Brother Karamazov</i> ; Zola: <i>Nana</i>
1881	68	Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 2; Bruckner: Symphony No. 6; Tchaikovsky: <i>The Maid of Orleans</i> ; Offenbach's <i>Tales of Hoffmann</i> produced in Paris; Fauré: Ballade; birth of Bartók; death of Mussorgsky; Flaubert: <i>Bouard et Pécuchet</i> ; Henry James: <i>The Portrait of a Lady</i> ; D'Oyle Carte opera company builds the Savoy Theatre in London; birth of P.G. Wodehouse

Historical Events

British-Zulu War in South Africa; British forces occupy Khyber Pass; Alsace-Lorraine declared an integral part of Germany; Anti-Jesuit laws introduced in France; first telephone exchange opened in London; public allowed unrestricted entry to British Museum; births of Stalin, Trotsky, and Albert Einstein

Cape Parliament blocks moves toward federation in South Africa; Transvaal declares independence of Britain; France annexes Tahiti; Pasteur discovers cholera vaccine; game of Bingo developed from Italian ‘tombola’; electric lighting of New York’s streets; advent of commercial tinned foods; World Exhibition in Melbourne, Australia

Britain recognises independent Transvaal Republic; Austro-Serbian treaty of alliance; President James A. Garfield of the USA assassinated; political parties established in Japan; anti-Semitic pogroms in Russia; Canadian Pacific Railway Co. founded; flogging abolished in British armed forces; ‘Chat noir’, first of all cabarets, founded in Paris

Verdi’s Life

In Milan with Giulio Ricordi and Boito, he conceives, with Boito, the idea for *Otello*; conducts Requiem in benefit concert for flood victims; Boito sends synopsis of *Otello* libretto in September

Elected honorary member of Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde of Vienna; directs *Aida* in French at the Paris Opéra; nominated Grand Officer of the Foreign Legion, and Cavalier of the Great Cross of Italy; attends performance of *Ave Maria* and *Pater Noster* at benefit concert in Milan; receives revised libretto of *Otello*; begins revision of *Simon Boccanegra* in December

Premiere of revised *Simon Boccanegra* at La Scala; further work on libretto of *Otello*

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1882	69	Berlin Philharmonic founded; Debussy: <i>Le Printemps</i> ; Wagner: <i>Parsifal</i> ; Rimsky-Korsakov's <i>The Snow Maiden</i> staged in St Petersburg; Liszt composes his last Verdi transcription, from <i>Simon Boccanegra</i> ; Gilbert and Sullivan: <i>Iolanthe</i> ; births of Stravinsky, Kodály, Szymanowski, and Grainger; Robert Louis Stevenson writes <i>Treasure Island</i> , Ibsen <i>An Enemy of the People</i> ; births of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf
1883	70	Death of Wagner; Liszt writes <i>Am Grabe Richard Wagners</i> and <i>R.W. – Venezia</i> ; births of Webern, Varèse, and Bax; Bruckner completes his Symphony No. 7; Delibes' <i>Lakmé</i> produced in Paris; Chabrier composes <i>España</i> ; Metropolitan Opera House opened in New York; Royal College of Music founded in London; Nietzsche writes <i>Also sprach Zarathustra</i> ; death of Karl Marx
1884	71	Tchaikovsky's <i>Mazepa</i> produced in Moscow and St Petersburg; Bruckner: <i>Te Deum</i> ; Massenet's <i>Manon</i> staged in Paris; Mahler composes <i>Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen</i> ; first edition of Oxford English Dictionary; Mark Twain publishes <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> , Alphonse Daudet <i>Sappho</i> , Ibsen <i>The Wild Duck</i> ; birth of Sean O'Casey

Historical Events

British occupy Cairo; Irish republicans carry out terrorist murders; hypnosis first used to treat hysteria; Edison designs first hydroelectric plant; triple alliance between Austria, Germany, and Italy; three-mile limit for territorial waters agreed at Hague Convention; Bank of Japan founded; invention of the recoil-operated machine gun; World Exhibition held in Moscow

French capture Tunis; Britain withdraws from Sudan; reform of Civil Service in USA; Bismarck introduces sickness benefit in Germany; 'Buffalo Bill' Cody founds his 'Wild West Show'; first skyscraper built in Chicago; World Exhibition in Amsterdam; maiden run of the Orient Express

Germans occupy South-West Africa; Berlin Conference of fourteen nations on African affairs; London Convention on Transvaal; Gordon reaches Khartoum; divorce re-established in France; first practical steam turbine engine invented; tetanus bacillus discovered in Germany; birth of Harry S. Truman

Verdi's Life

In Paris to ensure copyright interests after death of Léon Escudier; plans four-act version of *Don Carlos*; begins revision of *Don Carlos* in September

Completes revision of *Don Carlos*

Premiere of revised *Don Carlos* at La Scala; begins *Otello*

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1885	72	Brahms's Fourth Symphony performed at Meiningen; Tchaikovsky's <i>Manfred</i> Symphony completed; Dvořák composes his Symphony in D minor, Op. 70; Johann Strauss's <i>The Gypsy Baron</i> produced in Vienna; Liszt writes <i>Hungarian Rhapsodies</i> Nos 18 & 19, <i>Bagatelle sans tonalité</i> ; Gilbert and Sullivan write <i>The Mikado</i> ; Franck: <i>Symphonic Variations</i> ; Richard Burton translates <i>Arabian Nights</i> ; Maupassant writes <i>Bel Ami</i> , Zola <i>Germinal</i> ; births of D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, and Sinclair Lewis
1886	73	Death of Liszt; Richard Strauss composes <i>Aus Italien</i> ; Dvořák completes his oratorio <i>St Ludmilla</i> for performance at Leeds Festival in England; invention of the celeste; Henry James writes <i>The Bostonians</i> , Rimbaud <i>Les Illuminations</i> , Stevenson <i>Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i> , Ibsen <i>Rosmersholm</i> , Frances Hodgson Burnett <i>Little Lord Fauntleroy</i>
1887	74	Death of Borodin; birth of Heitor Villa-Lobos; Bruckner composes his Symphony No. 8; Karl Goldmark's <i>Rustic Wedding</i> , Gilbert and Sullivan's <i>Ruddigor</i> , and Richard Strauss's <i>Aus Italien</i> written; Van Gogh paints <i>Moulin de la Galette</i> ; birth of Russian painter Marc Chagall; Strindberg's <i>The Father</i> produced; Thomas Hardy writes <i>The Woodlanders</i>

Historical Events

The Mahdi captures Khartoum; General Gordon killed; Britain withdraws from Sudan; Germany annexes Tanganyika and Zanzibar; Congo becomes official possession of Belgian king; Britain establishes protectorate over North Bechuanaland, Niger River region, and New Guinea; Cape Railroad reaches Kimberley; Benz builds single-cylinder engine for motor car; individuality of finger-prints established; Eastman manufactures coated photographic paper

Death of Ludwig II of Bavaria; Gladstone introduces Bill for Home Rule in Ireland; Bonaparte and Orléans families banished from France; First Indian National Congress held; British School of Archaeology founded in Athens; hydro-electric installations begun at Niagara Falls; American Federation of Labor formed; game of golf introduced in America

Queen Victoria celebrates Golden Jubilee; birth of Chiang Kai-shek; Zamenhof devises Esperanto

Verdi's Life

After an interruption, resumes composition of *Otello* in September

Completes *Otello*; premiere of final version of *Don Carlos* at the Teatro Municipale in Modena

Receives Great Cross of the Order of S.S. Maurizio e Lazzaro; premiere of *Otello* at La Scala; awarded honorary citizenship of Milan

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1888	75	Death of Eduard Marxsen; birth of Irving Berlin; Erik Satie composes his <i>Gymnopédies</i> ; Rimsky-Korsakov: <i>Sheherazade</i> ; César Franck: Symphony in D minor; Tchaikovsky completes his Fifth Symphony and composes his Fantasy-Overture <i>Hamlet</i> ; Gustav Mahler becomes musical director of Budapest opera; Gilbert and Sullivan's <i>Yeoman of the Guard</i> staged in London; Van Gogh paints <i>The Yellow Chair</i> , Toulouse-Lautrec <i>Place Clichy</i>
1889	76	Tchaikovsky composes his ballet <i>The Sleeping Beauty</i> , Richard Strauss <i>Don Juan</i> ; Gilbert and Sullivan's <i>The Gondoliers</i> produced in London; Dvůřák writes his Eighth Symphony, Mahler his Third; Van Gogh paints <i>Landscape with Cypress Tree</i> ; Alexander Gustave designs the Eiffel Tower; André Gide begins his <i>Journal</i> ; Mark Twain writes <i>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</i> ; Jerome K. Jerome writes <i>Three Men in a Boat</i> ; Anatole France publishes his <i>Thaïs</i> ; death of English poet Robert Browning
1890	77	Borodin's <i>Prince Igor</i> completed by Rimsky-Korsakov and posthumously produced; Tchaikovsky writes <i>The Queen of Spades</i> , Mascagni <i>Cavalleria Rusticana</i> , Richard Strauss <i>Tod und Verklärung</i> , Hugo Wolf his <i>Spanisches Liederbuch</i> ; births of Jacques Ibert and Frank Martin; deaths of César Franck and Vincent van Gogh; Ibsen writes <i>Hedda Gabler</i> , Tolstoy <i>The Kreutzer Sonata</i> , Wilde <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>

Historical Events

Accession of Kaiser Wilhelm in Germany; Aeronautical Exhibition in Vienna; Eastman perfects box camera; Dunlop invents pneumatic tyre

Austrian Crown Prince Archduke Rudolf commits suicide at Mayerling; birth of Adolf Hitler; advent of punch card system

Bismarck dismissed by Wilhelm II; Swiss introduce social insurance; global influenza epidemics; first entirely steel-framed building erected in Chicago; first moving-picture house established in New York

Verdi's Life

Composes *Laudi alla Vergine*; inauguration of hospital at Villanova sull'Arda, established and financed by Verdi

Composes *Ave Maria sulla scala enigmatica*; decides to write *Falstaff*; acquires site in Milan for another of his charitable projects, the 'Casa di Reposo' (Rest Home) for musicians

Completes Act I of *Falstaff*

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1891	78	Birth of Prokofiev; death of Delibes; Fauré writes song cycle <i>La Bonne Chanson</i> ; Rachmaninov composes his First Piano Concerto, Wolf his <i>Italienisches Liederbuch</i> ; Mahler completes his First Symphony; Thomas Hardy writes <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i> ; Sir Arthur Conan Doyle publishes <i>The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> ; Kipling writes <i>The Light that Failed</i> ; deaths of Arthur Rimbaud and Herman Melville
1892	79	Births of Darius Milhaud and Arthur Honegger; Dvořák composes his <i>Te Deum</i> ; Tchaikovsky's 'Nutmcracker' Suite is performed in St Petersburg; Leoncavallo writes <i>I Pagliacci</i> , Massenet <i>Werther</i> , Nielsen his First Symphony, Rachmaninov his wildly popular Prelude in C sharp minor, Sibelius <i>Kullervo</i> ; Toulouse-Lautrec paints <i>At the Moulin Rouge</i> ; Monet begins his series of pictures of Rouen Cathedral; Maeterlinck writes his drama <i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i> (later to become the basis of Debussy's only opera), Ibsen <i>The Master Builder</i>
1893	80	Puccini's <i>Manon Lescaut</i> and Humperdinck's <i>Hansel and Gretel</i> composed; Dvořák writes his 'New World' Symphony, Sibelius the <i>Karelia Suite</i> ; Tchaikovsky writes and conducts the premiere of his Sixth Symphony; deaths of Gounod and Tchaikovsky; birth of Cole Porter; Debussy writes his String Quartet; 'Art Nouveau' style begins in Paris; Anatole France writes <i>La Rotisserie de la Reine</i> , Oscar Wilde <i>A Woman of No Importance</i> ; death of Guy de Maupassant

Historical Events

Verdi's Life

Triple alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy renewed for twelve years; Pan-German League founded; beginnings of wireless telegraphy

Works slowly on composition of *Falstaff*

Germany and Britain agree on the Cameroons; Diesel patents his internal-combustion engine; first automatic telephone switchboard

Conducts prayer from *Mosè in Egitto* as part of Rossini centenary celebrations in Milan; finishes *Falstaff*

Founding of Labour Party in Britain; birth of Hermann Goering; Henry Ford builds his first car

Hugely successful premiere of *Falstaff* at La Scala; made honorary citizen of Rome, 14 April; attends *Falstaff* in Rome

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1894	81	Debussy: <i>L'Après-midi d'un faune</i> ; Sibelius: <i>Finlandia</i> ; Gustave Caillebotte's collection of impressionist paintings rejected by the Musée Luxembourg, Paris; Degas: <i>Femme à sa toilette</i> ; Kipling: <i>The Jungle Book</i> ; Zola: <i>Trilogy of the Three Cities</i> ; Engels publishes Karl Marx's <i>Das Kapital</i> , Vol. 3
1895	82	Tchaikovsky's <i>Swan Lake</i> is premiered in St Petersburg; Mahler: Symphony No. 2; Paul Hindemith born; Art Nouveau style dominates the art world
1896	83	Clara Schumann dies; Richard Strauss: <i>Also sprach Zarathustra</i> ; The last of Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operettas <i>The Grand Duke</i> performed in London; Chekhov: <i>The Sea Gull</i> ; <i>Die Jugend</i> and <i>Simplicissimus</i> , two important art magazines, launched in Munich
1897	84	Brahms dies; Mahler becomes conductor of the Vienna Opera; The first American comic strip <i>Katzenjammer Kids</i> begun by Rudolph Dirks; Rousseau: <i>Sleeping Gypsy</i> ; Pissarro: <i>Boulevard des Italiens</i> ; H.G. Wells: <i>The Invisible Man</i> ; Rostand: <i>Cyrano de Bergerac</i> ; Havelock Ellis: <i>Studies in the Psychology of Sex</i>

Historical Events

Accession of Tsar Nicholas II in Russia; Nikita Khrushchev born; German-Russian commercial treaty signed; Berliner uses horizontal gramophone disc instead of cylinder as a record of sound production

First public film show of X-rays; Marconi invents radio telegraphy; Isiolkovski formulates principle of rocket reaction propulsion; London School of Economics founded; Cardinal Vaughan lays foundation stone of Westminster Cathedral; King C. Gillette invents the safety razor; first US Open Golf Championship held

Nobel Prizes established; new evidence for the innocence of Dreyfuss suppressed in France; foundation of Zionism; first Alpine ski school opens in Austria; Klondike gold rush begins; discovery of helium and radioactivity

Germany occupies Kiao-chow in northern China; Zionist conference held in Switzerland; World Exhibition held at Brussels; Queen Victoria celebrates her diamond jubilee; Havelock Ellis: *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*

Verdi's Life

Attends *Falstaff* at Opéra comique; composes ballet for French version of *Otello*; attends premiere of French *Otello* at Paris Opéra; receives Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour

Plans the construction of Casa di Riposo in Milan; begins composition of *Te Deum*; performance of *Ave Maria sulla scala enigmatica* by students of Parma Conservatory

Works on *Te Deum* and *Stabat Mater*

Sends *Quattro pezzi sacri* to Ricordi for publication; Giuseppina Verdi dies

Year	Verdi's Age	Arts and Culture
1898	85	Toscanini appears at La Scala; Lewis Carroll dies; Mallarmé dies; Hemingway and Brecht are born; Henry James writes <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> , H.G. Wells <i>The War of the Worlds</i> , Wilde <i>The Ballad of Reading Gaol</i>
1899	86	Elgar composes 'Enigma' Variations, Sibelius Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Bruckner Symphony No. 5, Richard Strauss <i>Ein Heldenleben</i> ; Noël Coward born; André Gide writes <i>Le Prométhée mal enchaîné</i>
1900	87	Elgar composes <i>The Dream of Gerontius</i> , Puccini <i>Tosca</i> ; Picasso paints <i>Le Moulin de la Galette</i> , Cézanne <i>Still Life with Onions</i> , Renoir <i>Nude in the Sun</i> , Toulouse-Lautrec <i>La Modiste</i> ; Sigmund Freud publishes <i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i> ; Colette writes <i>Claudine à l'école</i> , Rostand <i>L'Aiglon</i> ; Nietzsche dies; World Exhibition in Paris
1901	88	Richard Strauss writes <i>Feuersnot</i> , Dvořák <i>Rusalka</i> , Ravel <i>Jeux d'eau</i> , Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 2, Bruckner Symphony No. 6; Ragtime develops in USA; Picasso's Blue Period begins; Walt Disney is born; Butler writes <i>Erewhon Revisited</i> , Kipling <i>Kim</i> , Mann <i>Buddenbrooks</i> , Strindberg <i>Dance of Death</i> ; Cabaret <i>Überbretti</i> founded in Berlin

Historical Events

US declares war on Spain over Cuba; Empress Elizabeth of Austria murdered; Pierre and Marie Curie discover Radium and Polonium; Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin builds his airship; Paris Métro opened

Philippines demand independence from USA; French court annuls Dreyfus judgement and orders retrial; Dreyfus given presidential pardon; Rutherford discovers alpha and beta rays; first magnetic sound recording; London borough councils established

Umberto I of Italy murdered; the Commonwealth of Australia is created; McKinley re-elected President of the USA; Max Planck formulates quantum theory; Browning revolvers manufactured; Fessenden transmits speech via radio waves; Cake Walk becomes the most fashionable dance; *The Daily Express* launched in London

Queen Victoria dies; Cuba becomes a US protectorate; Edmund Barton become first Prime Minister of Australia; President McKinley assassinated; J.P. Morgan organises US Steel Corporation; first British submarine launched; hormone adrenalin is isolated; Marconi transmits a radio message from Cornwall to Newfoundland; first motorcycle; Nernst postulates the Third Law of Thermodynamics

Verdi's Life

Stabat Mater, *Laudi*, and *Te Deum* performed in Paris and also at Turin Exhibition under Toscanini

Founds Casa di Riposo, December

Sketches music for Queen Margherita's prayer

Suffers fatal stroke, but lingers on for a week; dies 27 January

8 Glossary

aria	Solo song (also called ‘air’), generally as part of an opera or oratorio, though there are many free-standing Concert Arias and self-contained operatic <i>scenas</i> , of which most of the greatest are by Mozart. The form of an aria is a ternary design in which the third part duplicates the first, thus: A–B–A.
arietta	A shorter and simpler aria, usually lacking the middle section that characterises the ‘da capo’ aria
caballetta	A term with several meanings, it refers variously to a short, relatively simple aria with a reiterated rhythm, a song in the form of a rondo, often with variations, a recurring and progressively varied passage in a song or aria, and the concluding section of an elaborate operatic aria or duet.
canon	An imitative device like the common round (‘Frère Jacques’, ‘Three Blind Mice’, ‘London’s Burning’) in which the same tune comes in, overlappingly, at staggered intervals of time
cavatina	Basically synonymous with arietta. A short aria with one rather than three sections. In opera this term is generally preferred to ‘arietta’.
counterpoint	The interweaving of separate horizontal melodic lines, as opposed to the accompaniment of a top-line (horizontal) melody by a series of (vertical) chords

<i>da capo</i> aria	A substantial vocal piece in three sections, of which the last is a repetition of the first, thus: A–B–A
<i>grand opéra</i> (grand opera)	A form of grandiose and spectacular opera, generally dealing with famous historical events, movements, heroes, or biblical/legendary figures and featuring lavish scenery, costumes, stage machinery, and so on. A forerunner of the great Hollywood epics of Cecil B. de Mille, it is mainly associated with the Paris Opéra of the mid-nineteenth century, where its principal exemplars were Rossini, Donizetti, Gounod, Meyerbeer, Massenet, and Verdi. The term is also applied to such similar but non-French operas as Wagner's <i>Rienzi</i> .
harmony, harmonic	The simultaneous sounding of notes to make a chord; harmonies (chords) often serve as expressive or atmospheric 'adjectives', describing or giving added meaning to the notes of a melody, which, in turn, may be likened to nouns and verbs.
<i>Leitmotiv</i>	A theme used recurrently to identify and amplify a character, situation, or object, usually in opera – especially those of Wagner
libretto	The literary text of an opera or oratorio
music drama	A term coined by Wagner for an opera in which the literary, musical, visual, and dramatic are united on equal terms, making every element of the performance subservient to dramatic effect. To this end, he opposed the traditional division of opera into a sequence of 'numbers' (arias, duets, choruses, ensembles, etc.) and advocated the principle of 'endless' melody, achieving an uninterrupted flow of continuously expressive music, based on the use of <i>Leitmotifs</i> (or 'leading motives') associated with particular characters and situations. Verdi developed independently along similar lines in some of his own operas (he never actually heard any of Wagner's music until 1871, when he was almost sixty).

Producer: Jeremy Siepmann

Engineer and sound editor: Michael Taylor

Recording venues: Hats Off Studios, Oxfordshire; Motivation Sound Studios, London

Design: MAC Graphics

Cover picture: Giuseppe Verdi, c.1870; courtesy AKG

Published by Naxos Multimedia

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