

Seminar: Verdi

Required Purchases

Verdi, Il trovatore [Ricordi Opera Vocal Score Series].

Verdi, Un ballo in maschera [G. Schirmer Opera Score Editions].

Verdi, La forza del destino [Ricordi Opera Vocal Score Series].

Julian Budden, The Operas of Verdi 2: From Il trovatore to La forza del destino (Oxford, 1979).

Gabriele Baldini, The Story of Giuseppe Verdi: Oberto to Un ballo in maschera [trans. of Abitare la battaglia, 1970], trans. Roger Parker (Cambridge, 1980).

If you do not read Italian you may wish to purchase:

William Weaver, Seven Verdi Librettos [the best "literal" translation of Trovatore and Ballo--although the poetic layout of the Italian text is completely unreliable]

The Premises and Procedures of this Course

The principal aim of this class--both in the class sessions with the Section 1 students and in the separate, Section 3 seminars--is to provide an introduction to middle-Verdian structures--and by extension, to confront the problems involved in analyzing ottocento opera in general. By the end of the course you should "know what to look for" (or what to listen for) in this repertory, and you should be able to apply these methods on your own. The Section 3 students will also receive an introduction to some other fundamental problems of Verdi research (critical editions, disposizioni sceniche, and so on). And, as usual, the Section 3 students will be involved with issues of article-analysis, scholarly argument, etc.

The classroom sessions (twice a week with the Section 1 students) will be primarily concerned with problems of analysis and structure. What are the issues that Verdi faced as a mid-nineteenth-century composer of operas, and what do his strategies tell us about the way in which we might try to understand the music? Principle No. 1: No analysis for the sake of analysis only (as an abstraction, or a mere demonstration of one's analytical technique). [Related] Principle No. 2: All analysis should be undertaken in pursuit of a larger point "beyond mere technique." Normally, in Verdi, this would be to demonstrate how the chosen structure serves to produce or amplify musical or dramatic "content"--how structures and generic interactions and deformations yield expressive "meaning."

Our chief method will be to determine what the present state of the scholarly "conversation" is with regard to Verdian analysis--to read the most important analytical writings about Verdi and to try to "go beyond" them in class sessions and individual seminars.

Please Note: On a session-by-session basis, the course will proceed at its own natural pace, not according to that of a pre-ordained grid. After an introductory session or two we shall spend most of our class-time discussing as a group the structures of Il trovatore and Un ballo in maschera. You will be preparing for these discussions by outside listening, reading, and your own analytical work. You will be expected to participate in class discussion on the basis of this outside work, and you will be expected to produce structural "diagrams" of some of these pieces. **The course presupposes a graduate-level ability in musical analysis. If you lack this ability, you should not be taking this course** (and I would recommend that you remedy this deficiency as soon as possible).

Additional "Seminar" Sessions for Section 3 students only: We shall meet once a week for about 90 minutes in order to discuss your reading of materials from a supplementary bibliography, provided on pp. 5-7 below. In the last few weeks of the course you will be asked to make one or more presentations to the seminar-group concerning the structure of an individual number in La forza del destino. You will not be required to take the "Section 1" Final Exam.

Class may be cancelled on Wednesday, 25 October (National AMS Meeting: Austin TX-- you should attend)

Office hours: 11-1 Mondays. 158 Ferguson. (office tel. 624-0385)

THE BASIS OF THE EVALUATION PROCEDURES

- 50% QUALITY OF COURSE PARTICIPATION. Evidence of involvement--attendance, preparation (reading and listening), quality of assigned structural "diagrams," participation in class discussion, response to questions, evidence of retention of material, demonstrated ability to grasp an assigned reading and to submit it to an analysis and critique, etc.
- 50% QUALITY OF (ONE OR TWO) PRESENTATIONS AND (ONE) FINAL PAPER (not less than 16 pp. in length (not counting endnotes), typed, double-spaced, well-written, in Writing about Music format). THE PRESENTATIONS WILL BE GIVEN TO THE SEMINAR DURING THE FINAL FOUR WEEKS OF THE COURSE; YOUR FINAL PAPER WILL BE BASED ON ONE OF YOUR PRESENTATIONS. THE PAPER IS DUE AT THE TIME OF THE SECTION 1 FINAL EXAM (which you are not taking).

TOPICS: You will be given (or in some cases, may choose) a complete, individual number from La forza del destino. Explain how this piece functions in terms of structural, expressive, and dramatic content. The presentation/paper may involve structural or stylistic comparisons with other works that we have looked at in class. In preparation for the paper you will want to investigate what other writers have said about the movement that you have chosen. For Forza you may have to investigate the issue of differing versions of the same number (since Forza is a "revised" opera). Depending on the number of students in the seminar you may have either one or two presentations.

NB: If somebody else is "presenting" a number from Forza for the class, you are responsible also to have done some preparation for that number, in order to respond to the presentation: you should have listened to the piece three or four times, done a poetic analysis, begun a musical analysis, read Budden, jotted a few things into your score, etc. At any given session we may have two or three presentations.

LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS

The following is the list of works that will be assigned during the quarter. We shall move through the list as the quarter progresses.

1. Paradigmatic examples of structures and genres (supplementary listening to clarify the structural and generic models): excerpts from other operas, other composers.

NB: to be assigned, as needed, in class.

2. Il trovatore (complete)

- 3 from Les Vêpres siciliennes:

Opening of Act II (includes Procida's "Et toi, Palerme")

From Act III: Montfort's "Au sein de la puissance"

Opening of Act V (includes opening chorus, then two "couplets"--Hélène's Sicilienne, "Merci, jeunes amis" and Henri's "La brise souffle au loin")

- 4 Un ballo in maschera (complete)

5. La forza del destino (complete)

6. (If time): selections from other Verdi operas.

READING ASSIGNMENTS: SECTION 1

(Slight modifications may occur as the quarter proceeds)

In addition to reading the items below, as assigned in class, all students are expected to prepare for each upcoming "analytical" session by familiarizing themselves thoroughly with the piece (or "number") in question and by assessing in a preliminary way its basic structures. Students will be called upon in class to demonstrate what they have prepared by way of analysis. Attendance is mandatory and expected, but if you have not prepared, do not come to class.

1. Gabriele Baldini, The Story of Giuseppe Verdi. At least:

- a) pp. 1-90 (through Ernani)
- b) pp. 109-25 (Macbeth)
- c) pp. 135-53 (Paris, Giuseppina Strepponi)
- d) pp. 203-08 (biographical interlude)
- e) pp. 209-30 (Il trovatore)
- f) pp. 245-71 (Un ballo in maschera)

2. Julian Budden, The Operas of Verdi 2: From Il trovatore to La forza del destino.

- a) pp. 57-112 (Il trovatore)
- b) pp. 1-32 ("The Collapse of a Tradition")
- c) pp. 33-56 ("Formation of the Mature Style")
- d) pp. 359-424 (Un ballo in maschera)
- e) other (brief) excerpts that shed light on the assigned listening.

3. Librettos for Trovatore and Ballo (in translation if necessary: William Weaver's translations are the best: DO NOT RELY ON THE TRANSLATIONS IN THE VOCAL SCORES!!!)

4. Martin Chusid, A Catalog of Verdi's Operas:

- a) pp. 160-63 (Il trovatore)
- b) pp. 28-33 (Un ballo in maschera)

5. Glance at:

- a) Disposizione scenica for Un ballo in maschera (photocopy on reserve)
- b) The Critical Editions and Critical Commentary for Rigoletto and Ernani (published jointly by the University of Chicago Press and G. Ricordi & C.)
- c) Franco Abbiati, Verdi, 4 vols. (vols. 2 and 3 are on reserve; they cover the years 1849-1865 and 1865-1876)
- d) Robert Moreen, Princeton dissertation (1975), "Integration of Text Forms and Musical Forms in Verdi's Early Operas" (photocopy: reserve)

ADDITIONAL READING: SECTION 3 SEMINAR

(slight modifications are possible)

A tentative plan: at the time of this writing, it appears that the additional reading may be divided thus:

Seminar Sessions:

Week I

Introduction to the Seminar and:

Robert Moreen. "Integration of Text Forms and Musical Forms in Verdi's Early Operas," Ph.D. Dissertation (Princeton, 1975), pp. 1-76.

[You will want to get the basic idea in the first two weeks and return to this thesis in subsequent weeks.]

Week II

Robert Moreen. "Integration of Text Forms and Musical Forms in Verdi's Early Operas," Ph.D. Dissertation (Princeton, 1975), complete.

Scott Balthazar, "Rossini and the Development of the Mid-Century Lyric Form," Journal of the American Musicological Society, 41 (1988), 96-125.

Gary Tomlinson, "Italian Romanticism and Italian Opera: An Essay in Their Affinities," 19th-Century Music, 10 (1986), 43-60.

Week III

Harold S. Powers, "'La solita forma' and 'The Uses of Convention,'" Acta musicologica, 59 (1987), 65-90.

Piero Weiss, "Verdi and the Fusion of Genres," Journal of the American Musicological Society, 35 (1982), 138-56.

Piero Weiss, "'Sacred Bronzes': Paralipomena to an Essay by Dallapiccola," 19th-Century Music, 9 (1985), 42-49.

Glance at:

Abramo Basevi: Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi (Florence, 1859)

(photocopies of selected chapters, including Il trovatore, are on reserve--this is the source of most of our models for Verdian analysis: an extremely important book)

Scott Balthazar, "Evolving Conventions in Italian Serious Opera: Scene Structure in the Works of Rossini, Donizetti, and Verdi, 1810-1850," Ph.D. Dissertation (Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1985) (photocopy on reserve)

Week IV

Pierluigi Petrobelli, "Towards an Explanation of the Dramatic Structure of Il trovatore," Music Analysis, 1 (1982), 129-41.

William Drabkin, "Characters, Key Relations, and Tonal Structure in Il trovatore," Music Analysis, 1 (1982), 143-53.

Roger Parker, "The Dramatic Structure of Il trovatore," Music Analysis, 1 (1982), 155-67.

James A. Hepokoski, review of Philip Gossett, 'Anna Bolena' and the Artistic Maturity of Gaetano Donizetti, 19th-Century Music, 12 (1988), 74-80.

Roger Parker, review of Philip Gossett, Anna Bolena and the Artistic Maturity of Gaetano Donizetti, Journal of the American Musicological Society, 41 (1988), 368-75.

James A. Hepokoski, "Genre and Content in Mid-Century Verdi: 'Addio, del passato' (La traviata, Act III)," Cambridge Opera Journal, 1 (1989).

Week V: Seminar on the New Verdi Critical Edition

Philip Gossett, "Toward a Critical Edition of Macbeth," in Verdi's Macbeth: A Sourcebook, ed. David Rosen and Andrew Porter (New York, 1984), pp. 199-209.

David Lawton, "The Autograph of Aida and the New Verdi Edition," Verdi Newsletter, 14 (1986), 4-14.

Look at:

The WGV editions of Ernani (ed. Claudio Gallico) and Rigoletto (ed. Martin Chusid): look at both the score and the introductions to them (notice Gossett's preface)—and look also the the critical commentaries.

Rigoletto: Ristampa anastatica dell'abozzo autografo (JAH: personal copy—for the seminar)

Falstaff: Autograph Score [facsimile] (JAH: personal copy—for the seminar).

Week VI:

Joseph Kerman, "Lyric Form and Flexibility in 'Simon Boccanegra,'" Studi verdiani, 1 (1982), 47-63.

Siegmund Levarie, "Key Relations in Verdi's Un ballo in maschera," 19th-Century Music, 2 (1978), 143-47.

Roger Parker and Matthew Brown, "Motivic and Tonal Interactions in Verdi's Un ballo in maschera," Journal of the American Musicological Society, 36 (1983), 243-65.

James A. Hepokoski, "Compositional Emendations in Verdi's Autograph Scores: Il trovatore, Un ballo in maschera, and Aida," Studi verdiani, 4 (1989).

Week VII

Peter Ross, "Amelias Auftrittsarie im Maskenball: Verdis Vertonung in dramaturgisch-textlichem Zusammenhang," Archiv für Musikwissenschaft, 40 (1983), 126-46

BEGINNING OF FORZA PRESENTATIONS

Weeks VIII-X

John Nádas, "New Light on Pre-1869 Revisions of La Forza del destino," Verdi Newsletter, 15 (1987), 7-29.

FORZA PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE.