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Verdi's *Don Carlo* as Monument

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Abstract: When Verdi's *Don Carlo* made its debut at La Scala in March 1868, it was hardly the latest operatic news; since its 1867 premiere at the Paris Opéra, it had been widely performed and written about. One aspect of the debates in the Milanese and the Italian press, however, deserves special attention: the depiction of the opera as a 'monument'. Although the work's astonishing length (compared to that of most of Verdi's previous operas) and the composer's increasing prestige as a national figure might both have been reasons for this impression of monumentality, there were clearly others. The article explores some of these reasons in relation to post-Unification urban renewal, the increasing success of *la musica dell'avvenire* and the beginning of a slow rediscovery of 'ancient' musical works. It argues that *Don Carlo* was thought of as a monument primarily because it was perceived as standing between the past and the future, and as such was the epitome of contemporary attitudes towards these temporal categories.

He cannot learn to forget but always remains attached to the past:
however far and fast he runs, the chain runs with him.[1]

Within the space of three weeks, in March 1868, two eagerly awaited operas by living Italian composers made their way onto the stage of La Scala, Milan, each causing an uproar: Arrigo Boito's *Mefistofele* and Giuseppe Verdi's *Don Carlo*. These performances were world and Milanese premieres respectively, one of the reasons for the generous space granted them both in the local press. Despite their markedly different levels of audience success – *Mefistofele* was a complete fiasco and was withdrawn after three nights, *Don Carlo* would go on to repeat performances at the next carnival season – both works raised doubts concerning their sheer length: they each lasted around five hours.[2] To be sure, most of the operas staged at La Scala during the winter 1867–1868 were large in scale: Rossini's *Guglielmo Tell*, Gounod's *Romeo e Giulietta* and Auber's *La muta di Portici* came along together

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Indianapolis, 1980), 8.

[2] *Mefistofele* had its premiere on 5 March 1868; *Don Carlo* on 25 March; see Pompeo Cambiasi, *La Scala 1778–1889: note storiche e statistiche* (Milan, 1889), 302–3. The version of *Mefistofele* now commonly performed is a second, shorter version dating from 1875. For the first performances and information about the first version, see Piero Nardi, *Vita di Arrigo Boito* (Verona, 1942), 249–320, and Jay Nicolaisen, 'The First *Mefistofele*', *19th-Century Music*, 1/3 (1978), 221–32. Premiered at the Paris Opéra on 11 March 1867 (as *Don Carlos*, and in French), Verdi's opera was first performed in Italy under Angelo Mariani's baton at the Teatro Comunale di Bologna on 26 October 1867 (in the Italian translation by Achille de Lauzières). Subsequent stagings took place in Turin (25 December 1867) and Rome (9 February 1868). For a list of performances in Italy and abroad, see Thomas G. Kaufman, *Verdi and His Major Contemporaries: A Selected Chronology of Performances with Casts* (New York and London, 1990), 497–527. I will mostly refer to the opera with its Italian title, except when the French version is explicitly invoked.

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with Verdi's more modestly sized *Un ballo in maschera*.[3] One could hardly think of a more 'monumental' season for an Italian theatre during that period. But even within this context, *Don Carlo* in particular struck many because of its astonishing proportions: depictions of the opera as a 'colossus' were found in abundance in the press reports.[4]

There is, however, a more arresting way in which Verdi's work was portrayed by Italian critics. On several occasions, as the opera became well known, journalists hailed it as an 'imperishable monument of art', one of 'the most distinguished musical monuments of the modern age'.[5] Alas, one looks in vain for an explanation of what exactly critics meant by 'monument' (they were, for once, rather less than voluble on this point). The most tempting explanations are, on the one hand, the opera's grandeur and extreme length (a legacy of the genre of *grand opéra*, in which *Don Carlo* is embedded); and, on the other, the nationalist tone with which musical debates, particularly those about Verdi, had come to be imbued by the end of the 1860s, in Italy as elsewhere. That *Don Carlo* was to stir up endless arguments between two factions – those who thought Verdi had 'remained himself' and those who believed he had surrendered to *la musica dell'avvenire* – was indeed clear from its very first Parisian performances in March 1867.[6] Many French journalists had accused Verdi of having become an imitator of Meyerbeer and Wagner, thus losing his individual character. The fact, moreover, that most of them regarded *Don Carlos* as a French rather than an Italian opera – hence the national importance of the Parisian premiere[7] – could only add to the political colour of the debates. On the Italian side, discussions were equally high pitched. Most critics sought, predictably given the composer's national status, to defend Verdi's

[3] See Cambiasi, *La Scala*, 302–3.

[4] In Milan as elsewhere: 'colossal creation' (*Il mondo artistico*, 29 March 1868, 1); 'colossal forms of musical epic' (*Il pungolo*, quoted from Supplemento al n. 13 della *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* [henceforth *GMM*], 1868, 3); 'grandiose score' (*GMM*, 5 April 1868, 108); 'colossal score' (*Il tergesteo*, quoted from *GMM*, 8 November 1868, 366); 'colossal opera' (*GMM*, 31 January 1869, 34); 'gigantic work' (*Il mondo artistico*, 25 April 1869, 3). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. I will provide the original Italian only when the quotation is of considerable length.

[5] 'a wonderful creation and an imperishable monument of art': a critic for *Il tergesteo*, quoted from *GMM*, 8 November 1868, 366; 'nobody any longer questions that *Don Carlo* should be numbered among the most distinguished musical monuments of the modern age': a critic for a performance in Brussels, quoted from *GMM*, 22 March 1868, 94; 'monument of the true progress of the Italian [musical] school': Sangiorgi, in *Monitore di Bologna*, 28 October 1867, 1–2, quoted from Luigi Verdi, ed., *Le opere di Giuseppe Verdi a Bologna*, (Lucca, 2001), 158; 'It is a superb work, a wonderful creation, an imperishable monument of art!': Corinno Mariotti, in *GMM*, 29 December 1867, 410.

[6] The expression *musica dell'avvenire* had been circulating in Italy since the late 1850s and was common in Milan around 1860. Wagner's music, with which the term was often associated, was first heard in Italy in the late 1860s in the form of a few overtures performed in Milan, followed by the famous Bologna performance of *Lohengrin* in 1871. Thus it was Wagner's writings, rather than his music, that mainly fuelled debates during the 1860s; see Carlos del Cueto, *Opera in 1860s Milan and the End of the Rossinian Tradition*, Ph.D. diss. (Cambridge University, 2011), 71–5.

[7] See Hervé Gartioux, ed., *Giuseppe Verdi, Don Carlos: Dossier de presse parisienne (1867)* (Heilbronn, 1997), 6–9, and Del Cueto, *Opera in 1860s Milan*, 181.

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latest work at all costs; but even the most supportive noticed that, for all the traditional set-pieces embedded in the score, his style had undergone deep transformations. Verdi's departure from conventional forms in various numbers, his use of rich orchestral colours and his *declamato* writing for the voices, were repeatedly pointed out as deviations from his country's musical tradition.

I should like, in my exploration of *Don Carlo*'s 'monumentality', first to ask to what extent Verdi's opera in late-1860s Italy may have aroused claims about monumentality for reasons of national pride. I will then explore a different possibility: that the word 'monument' might be an acknowledgment of well-definable aesthetic qualities. I will do so by examining two sets of nineteenth-century writings on music that can clarify whether musical monuments are characterised by particular stylistic aspects. Most of the time, monuments display their cargo of (apparently) unshakable solidity. What I should like to address here, however, is their historically contingent, and thus perpetually shifting, meaning. In the case of Verdi's last *grand opéra*, such meaning was not only tied to contemporary attitudes to the past, the present and the future, it was also remoulded by the composer in the years to come.[8]

Temporal frontiers

Soon after the first phase of Italian Unification came to an end in 1861, most Italian cities underwent rapid transformation.[9] Old buildings were pulled down and wider roads created to improve communications and circulation, and to address some of the problems caused by the rapid population growth.[10] In the process, commemorative plaques and monuments were inserted into the new urban landscape, ones intended to celebrate figures of local and national importance from both the recent and less recent past. While the peak in Italian monument-building came in the 1880s and 1890s, particularly during the various governments led by Francesco Crispi, some of these new objects in stone were already on display in the 1860s.[11]

[8] As is well known, *Don Carlo* exists in multiple forms. The main ones are the 1867, French, five-act version (translated into Italian by de Lauzières); the 1872 Italian edition (made for Naples and containing only two revised numbers); the 1884 four-act and the 1886 five-act versions, both first performed in Italian, premiered at Milan and Modena respectively. On the genesis of the opera and its various revisions, see Andrew Porter, 'The Making of *Don Carlos*', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 98 (1971–2), 73–88; Ursula Günther, 'La genèse de *Don Carlos*', *Revue de musicologie*, 58/1 (1972), 16–64; 60/1–2 (1974), 87–158; Günther, 'La genèse du *Don Carlos* de Verdi: nouveaux documents', *Revue de musicologie*, 72/1 (1986), 104–17; the preface to Ursula Günther, ed., *Don Carlos: Edizione integrale delle varie versioni in cinque e in quattro atti di Giuseppe Verdi* (Milan, 1980); and Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 3 vols. (repr. Oxford, 2002), vol. 3, *From* Don Carlos *to* Falstaff, 31–57.

[9] Venice and Rome would become part of the Italian Kingdom in 1866 and 1870 respectively.

[10] These works of urban renewal clearly echoed those started in Paris by Baron Haussmann in the 1850s. Paris was the model to which many Italian cities, particularly Milan, looked on their way to modernisation; see Elisabetta Colombo, *Come si governava Milano: politiche pubbliche nel secondo Ottocento* (Milan, 2005), 38–9.

[11] Francesco Crispi was Prime Minister in 1887–91 and 1893–6, during which time he persistently encouraged the cult of national heroes; see Christopher Duggan, 'Francesco Crispi, "Political Education" and the Problem of Italian National Consciousness, 1860–1896', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 2/2 (1997), 141–66, esp. 157–8.

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The case of Milan – the most industrialised Italian city and one of the first to be liberated – deserves close attention.

As early as 1859, the year the Austrians were expelled from Lombardy, a plan for restyling Milan's city centre was discussed by municipal authorities. At its core was the widening of Piazza Duomo through demolition of a number of old buildings, as well as the creation of a sumptuous Galleria that would connect the cathedral square with Piazza della Scala.[12] The Galleria was begun in 1865 under the direction of architect Francesco Mengoni, and opened in 1867 (although it would not be finished until 1878). Significantly, it was conceived as a tribute to Italy's first king, Vittorio Emanuele II, after whom it was named; twenty-five statues of illustrious Italians were placed within it to display Italy's achievements in art and science.[13] Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, and in subsequent years, monuments were also raised in various Milanese squares to the memory of Italians such as Cavour (1865), Cesare Beccaria (1871), Leonardo da Vinci (1872) and Alessandro Manzoni (1883). Further works in the town centre included the construction of the Stazione centrale, the Cimitero monumentale and the institution of the Museo patrio di archeologia.[14] Within only a few years, the old medieval centre was deeply transformed; in no other Italian city did the old and the new become so tightly intertwined.[15]

The aim of this wide-ranging plan of urban remodelling was twofold. On the one hand, Milan was rehearsing a vision of the Italian past; on the other, it was attempting by way of urban renewal to fulfil its ambition as the Italian capital of culture, progress and industrialisation. The city's reconstruction was, in short, a tool for renewing civic identity, for helping to shape an imagined national community as well as for displaying a proud commitment to European modernity.[16] The ambiguity of this project, which implied a strenuous defence of the past as much as projection towards the future, often emerged from writings of the period. As early as 1866, poet and composer Arrigo Boito raised his voice against the widespread demolition, exclaiming sarcastically: 'Zappe, scuri, scarpelli, / arïeti, martelli, / istrumenti di strage e di ruina, / l'impero è vostro! O tempi irrequïeti!'

[12] See Colombo, *Come si governava Milano*, 41–2.

[13] See Felice Venosta, *The Traveller's Guide of Milan and Its Environs, the Certosa near Pavia with a Description of Brianza and the Lakes*, trans. E. C. Cornaro (Milan, 1873), 47–8.

[14] See *Storia di Milano*, 16 vols. (Milan, 1953–62), 15, *Nell'Unità italiana (1859–1900)*, 387–455, esp. 395–424.

[15] See Colombo, *Come si governava Milano*, 37.

[16] Colombo underlines that the works of renovation had both practical functions (improving hygienic conditions and communications) and more subtle political and cultural aims; see Colombo, *Come si governava Milano*, 37–9. In his recent work on Bologna, Axel Körner has called for a re-examination of the traditional image of *fine secolo* Italy as 'a nation obsessed with its own traditions', indifferent to foreign debates about modernity. He has suggested that Italian cultural policies in the decades following Unification were often a means of engaging with the European experience of modernity in its aesthetic manifestation represented by modernism; see Axel Körner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy: From Unification to Fascism* (New York and London, 2009), esp. 2–3 and 264–6. The reference for an 'imagined national community' is, of course, to Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (rept. London and New York, 2006).

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('Hoes, axes, chisels, / battering rams, hammers, / instruments of massacre and devastation, / power is in your hands, oh restless age!').[17] A few years later, journalist Carlo Romussi was similarly distraught: 'a memory of the past disappears every day in the straightening of a street or the creation of space for a larger house'.[18] Yet alongside arguments drenched in nostalgia, one could hear very different sentiments, ones that read curiously today:

> [Milan] is not the archaeological necropolis [...] Milan is not scattered with gravestones pointing to its former greatness, but with those showing its present greatness; it does not have monuments to death...[19]

The remains of the past, in other words, were not always alluring: sometimes disparagingly referred to as *anticaglie*, they were often disdained as obstacles to the development of an efficient, industrial, truly modern city. The new identity of Milan, as well as of other Italian cities, would emerge from this contested ground.

In recent years, the role played by monuments, museums, archives and various practices of commemoration in the processes of nation-building and the construction of collective identities has received great attention from scholars in various fields. The key work is *Les Lieux de mémoire*, an extensive series of essays by French historians, edited by Pierre Nora between the 1980s and the early 1990s.[20] Under the umbrella term of *lieux de mémoire* are collected all those objects and sites, whether real or symbolic, in which the memory of a group seems to have 'crystallized' and through which a sense of identity is preserved.[21] Nora's highly influential project, which focuses on French nineteenth-century 'memory sites', rapidly gave rise to others that are similar (if less exhaustive) in scope; the category of *lieu de mémoire* has thus also been applied to the study of practices of collective memory in other countries.[22] This research marks a more general interest in memory studies that has continued since the 1970s. According to Nora, the attention paid during the last few decades to memory and history is the result not only

[17] Arrigo Boito, '"Case nuove" o le rovine di Milano' (1866), in Arrigo Boito, *Tutti gli scritti*, ed. Piero Nardi (Verona, 1942), 11. Similar shouts of dismay were heard in France and came from poets such as Baudelaire, Hugo and Bouilhet; see Arnaldo Di Benedetto, '"Case nuove" o le rovine di Milano', in *Arrigo Boito*, ed. Giovanni Morelli (Venice, 1994), 15–33.

[18] 'ogni giorno sparisce una memoria antica, per raddrizzare una contrada, per far luogo ad una casa più grande': Carlo Romussi, *Milano nei suoi monumenti* (Milan, 1875), 396.

[19] '[Milano] non è la necropoli archeologica [...] Milano non ha ad ogni piè sospinto le lapidi indicatrici della grandezza passata, ma quelle che indicano la grandezza presente; non ha i monumenti della morte...': Luigi Sacconi, *Auguri all'Italia ed omaggio a Milano* (Milan, 1870), 10. The obvious implied term of comparison here is Rome, a city burdened with the weight of its past.

[20] Most of the essays are available in an English translation in either of the two following editions: Pierre Nora, ed., *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de mémoire*, 4 vols., trans. Mary Trouille (Chicago, 2001–10), and Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms Of Memory: The Construction Of The French Past*, 3 vols., trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York, 1996–8).

[21] Nora himself uses the term 'crystallized' in his 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*', *Representations* 26 (1989), 7–24, 7.

[22] For Italy see, for instance, Bruno Tobia, *Una patria per gli Italiani: Spazi, itinerari, monumenti nell'Italia unita, 1870–1900* (Bari, 1991); Mario Isnenghi, ed., *I luoghi della memoria*, 3 vols. (Bari, 1996–7); and Ilaria Porciani, *La festa della nazione: rappresentazione dello Stato e spazi sociali nell'Italia unita* (Bologna, 1997).

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of twentieth-century political and economic crises, but also of what he has called the increasing '"acceleration" of history': the ever greater speed at which our world moves – a world in which the future appears ever less predictable, leading to an obsessive attachment to the past.[23]

However fruitful Nora's *lieu de mémoire* has proved in various research areas, it nevertheless now appears in need of some revision. Ann Rigney, in an article about the 1859 celebrations for the hundredth anniversary of Robert Burns' birth, calls attention to the 'performative turn' in memory studies during the last decade, with scholars increasingly shifting their focus 'from static "sites" to performances' of memory.[24] Nora's *lieu de mémoire*, owing both to the term itself and to the way the category has been used by historians, seems to suggest that monuments, museums and other 'memory sites' behave as containers carrying an unchanging memorial content – as tools for narrating over and over again the same story about the past. Possibly because of the very notion of *lieu*, which suggests rootedness and stability, or because most 'memory sites' are objects capable of withstanding the passing of time, Nora's term seems to overlook one point: that memory, whether individual or collective, is never static, but rather remoulds itself continuously.[25]

The fixity of the meaning often attributed to monuments and their like with respect to their action as memory and identity 'inducers' comes with a second difficulty: that of reconciling their more obvious function of presenting visions of the past with their simultaneous (but less evident) delivery of perceptions and concerns about the future. National monuments are a clear example of tools for remembrance, ones that have stimulated much scholarly attention. As early as the 1970s, German historian George L. Mosse, in his groundbreaking work on the new aesthetics of politics in the age of nationalism and the rise of the masses, described – in the German context – how the style and function of national monuments evolved in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Mosse, monuments served as tangible manifestations of the myths and symbols that sustained the nation; they were an integral part of a new, secular religion.[26] Only a few years later, in an article titled 'La "statuomanie" et l'histoire', Maurice Agulhon examined the explosion of monument building in France after the end of the *ancien régime*. Again, his attention fell on the political meanings and readings of the past conveyed by monuments at different stages of France's

[23] Nora, 'General Introduction', in *Rethinking France*, 1, *The State*, vii–xxii, here xviii. The increasing unpredictability of the future, as the modern, linear concept of time arises in the late eighteenth century, is also the main reason for the proliferation of 'memory sites' in the nineteenth century. On the modern concept of time, see Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1985).

[24] Ann Rigney, 'Embodied Communities: Commemorating Robert Burns, 1859', *Representations*, 115/1 (2011), 71–101, here 77.

[25] Of course, the model is more complicated: memory can remain static for a given period of time, and some aspects of it are more prone to change than others.

[26] George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (Ithaca and London, 1996), 7–8 and 50–51.

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nineteenth-century history.[27] Further work on monuments and commemorative practices has come from scholars in recent years.[28] Overall, however, the emphasis has remained on the ways in which these 'memory sites' – to continue with Nora's problematic expression – served political and ideological functions, asserting images of the past and shaping present collective identities.

I should like in what follows to explore some nineteenth-century Italian responses to Verdi's *Don Carlo* from a less steady perspective, in order to suggest that the reasons for and implications of depicting the opera as a monument were more complex. These included, among other things, an attempt to envision an Italian (musical) future. First, however, I need to examine briefly the more notorious construction of the *composer* as a monument. I shall do this by taking a closer look at 'the man Verdi' through the looking glass of some of his least perishable nineteenth-century representations.

Giuseppe Verdi: *l'uomo di pietra*[29]

Oui, c'est lui! C'est le fils de la Muse sévère,
Qui, sur tant de chefs-d'œuvre, éleva son *Trouvère*;
L'aigle des monts Alpins, l'aigle des hauts sommets;
Ces lignes où la force à la grâce est unie
Et qui brillent au front des hommes de génie,
Grâces à vous, Dantan, ne s'éteindront jamais!

Yes, it is him! It is the son of the rigorous Muse, / who elevated his *Trouvère* above so many other masterpieces; / the eagle of the Alps, the eagle of the high mountaintops; / those traits where force and grace are united / and that shine in the faces of men of genius, / thanks to you, Dantan, will never be extinguished!

So reads the opening stanza of a poem by François-Joseph Méry, composed in 1866 and entitled *Le Buste de Verdi*.[30] Méry, Verdi's collaborator in the preparation of the French *Don Carlos* libretto, goes on to describe the process through which sculptor Jean-Pierre Dantan infuses inanimate stone with life.[31] The final product

[27] Maurice Agulhon, 'La "statuomanie" et l'histoire', *Ethnologie française*, 8/1 (1978), 145–72.

[28] See, for instance, William Cohen, 'Symbols of Power: Statues in Nineteenth-Century Provincial France', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31/3 (1989), 491–513; Tobia, *Una patria per gli Italiani*; and Roland Quinault, 'The Cult of the Centenary, c. 1784–1914', *Historical Research*, 71/176 (1998), 303–23.

[29] 'Uomo di pietra' (in Milanese dialect 'omm de preja') is the name of an ancient Roman sculpture in Milan representing a man wearing a toga. Its location changed several times and the original head was removed and replaced with a new one in the Middle Ages. In the nineteenth century, the Milanese used to leave satirical political messages near the sculpture, a practice that gave its name to a satirical paper (*L'uomo di pietra*, 1856–9); see Francesco Ogliari, *Le statue di Milano* (Pavia, 2002), 45–7.

[30] The poem, dedicated to sculptor Jean-Pierre Dantan, was published in an article by Ralph, 'Une soirée chez Verdi', *L'Art musical*, 22 February 1866, 92–3, here 92. For an English translation of this article, see Marcello Conati, ed., *Encounters with Verdi*, trans. Richard Stokes (Ithaca, NY, 1986), 44–53.

[31] Verdi's second librettist for *Don Carlos* was Camille du Locle. News that the bust had been finished appeared in *L'Art musical* on 1 and 8 February 1866 (70 and 79). The latter issue also quoted comments on the sculpture by M. de Thémines (alias Achille de Lauzières), writing in *La Patrie*. The episode was thus clearly advertised in several French newspapers.

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looks so surprisingly alive that 'devant le modèle on s'écrie: Ils sont deux!' ('before the model one cries: There are two of them!'). The poem was written for a *soirée* organised by Verdi at his apartment on the Champs Elysées in Paris in February 1866. Unable to attend the gathering, Méry sent a letter with the poem, which was conceived as homage to both Verdi and Dantan. The latter had recently finished a bust of the composer, the reason for the celebrations at Verdi's home. According to later reports, the sculpture was displayed in the foyer of the Opéra only a few days after the premiere of *Don Carlos*.[32]

The significance of this 1866 bust to my argument lies in its invitation to reflect on ways in which, during the latter part of the nineteenth and especially in the early twentieth centuries, Verdi's image was increasingly expressed in imperishable materials (stone, marble and metal). One likely explanation is, of course, the broad significance the composer had gained as a national and political figure. By the time of Unification, in around 1860, Verdi was something like a national idol, Italy's greatest and most widely known artistic celebrity. What is more, his construction as one of the most potent symbols of Italian patriotism also began at about the same time. Such a process fed on narratives invented and fostered by the composer and his early biographers in the increasingly nationalist climate of the period, and gradually led to the routine association of his early operas with the awakening of Italian national consciousness in the 1840s and 1850s.[33] Put differently, as early as the 1860s, at a time when Italy was facing political and financial problems, and its international reputation was distinctly precarious, Verdi and his works were being accorded the awe and respect that national monuments are usually intended to awaken.

For the same reason, in subsequent decades Italians would raise monuments to Verdi also in a more literal sense. The proliferation, particularly in the early twentieth century, of Verdi medals and statues, as well as streets and squares named after

[32] See Arthur Pougin, *Vita aneddotica di Verdi* (repr. Florence, 2001), 121; Annibale Alberti, ed., *Verdi intimo: Carteggio di Giuseppe Verdi con il Conte Opprandino Arrivabene (1861–1886)* (Milan, 1931), 75; and Conati, *Verdi*, 48–9. Verdi himself commented on the bust in letters to Tito Ricordi (28 January 1866) and Arrivabene (16 February 1866); see Mary Jane Phillips-Matz, *Verdi: A Biography* (Oxford and New York, 1993), 509 and 853; and *Verdi intimo*, 68–9. Three copies of this bust, slightly different in size but all dating from 1866, are preserved at the Musée Carnavalet; see Philippe Sorel, 'Catalogue sommaire des œuvres sérieuses de Dantan Jeune conservées au Musée Carnavalet', in *Dantan Jeune: Caricatures et portraits de la société romantique*, Collections du Musée Carnavalet (Paris, 1989), 181–252, here 236.

[33] The traditional view of Verdi as a 'political' composer has received considerable musicological attention in recent years. For a revisionist perspective on Verdi reception in connection with the Italian Risorgimento, see Roger Parker, *"Arpa d'or dei fatidici vati": The Verdian Patriotic Chorus in the 1840s* (Parma, 1997), esp. 19–30 and 83–97; Mary Ann Smart, 'Liberty On (and Off) the Barricades: Verdi's Risorgimento Fantasies', in *Making and Remaking Italy: The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg (Oxford and New York, 2001), 103–18; and Peter Stamatov, 'Interpretive Activism and the Political Uses of Verdi's Operas in the 1840s', *American Sociological Review*, 67/3 (2002), 345–66. For a more or less strenuous support of the traditional view, see George W. Martin, 'Verdi, Politics, and "Va, pensiero": The Scholars Squabble', *The Opera Quarterly*, 21/1 (2005), 109–32 and Philip Gossett, '"Edizioni distrutte" and the Significance of Operatic Choruses During the Risorgimento', in *Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu*, ed. Victoria Johnson, Jane F. Fulcher and Thomas Ertman (Cambridge, 2007), 181–242.

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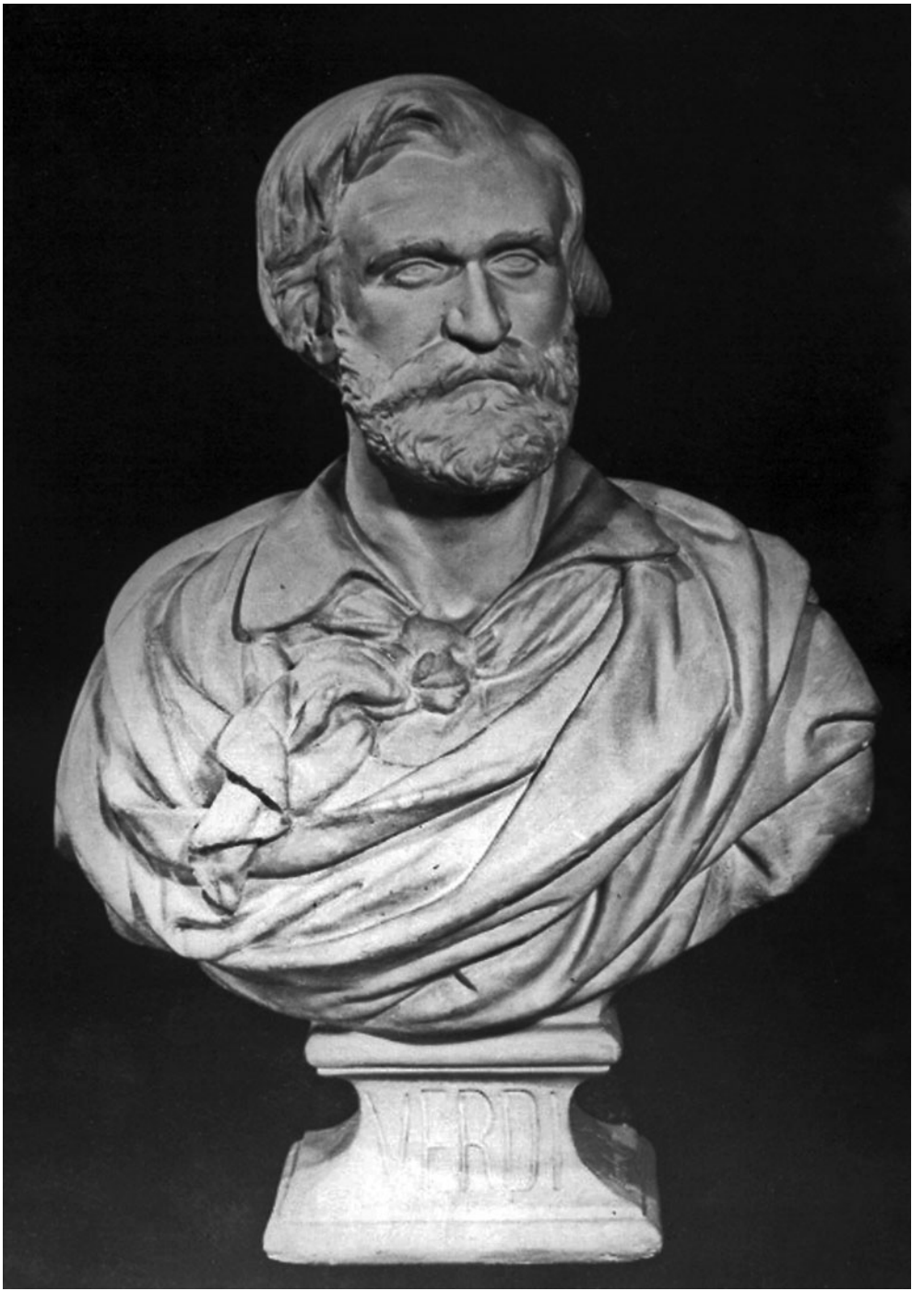


Fig. 1: Jean-Pierre Dantan, bust of Giuseppe Verdi.

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the composer, was certainly due to ongoing appropriation for nationalist agendas. The commemorative events that followed his death in 1901 and the centennial of his birth in 1913, most of which were organised independently by various Italian municipalities in competition with each other, often included the commission of a monument or the issuing of a medal for the occasion.[34] The most famous monuments built in Verdi's memory (such as the ones in Milan, Parma and Trieste) date from the first or second decade of the twentieth century.

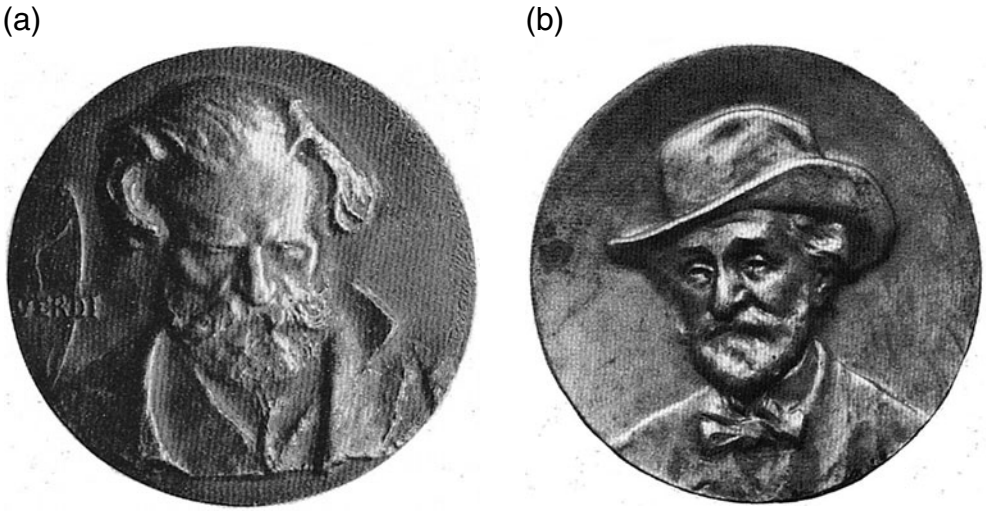


Fig. 2: Two Verdi metals; reproduced from Giampiero Tintori, 'Le medaglie verdiane nelle collezioni del Museo teatrale alla Scala', in *Atti del III° congresso internazionale di studi verdiani* (Parma, 1974), 587–606.

The number of Verdi busts, statues and medals dating from the nineteenth century, on the other hand, is surprisingly small.[35] Dantan's bust is a very early example. What is most striking, the sculpture was placed in the foyer of the Opéra (a French theatre!) immediately after the lukewarm premiere of *Don Carlos*.[36] The two most famous Verdi busts sculpted by an Italian artist – those by Vincenzo Gemito, one in terracotta, the other in bronze – date from 1873 and were produced on the composer's commission in Naples, as was a further one of his wife

[34] See Laura Basini, 'Cults of Sacred Memory: Parma and the Verdi Centennial Celebrations of 1913', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 13/2 (2001), 141–61, here 142–3. The sheer increase in the number of Verdi medals issued after 1901 is apparent in the collections described in Giorgio Nataletti-Antonio Pagani, 'Le medaglie di Giuseppe Verdi', in *Verdi: studi e memorie* (Rome, 1941), 401–82 and Giampiero Tintori, 'Le medaglie verdiane nelle collezioni del Museo teatrale alla Scala', in *Atti del III° congresso internazionale di studi verdiani* (Parma, 1974), 587–606.

[35] Among the earliest (not only Italian) tributes to Verdi of this kind are a few medals dating from 1850, 1867 and 1872. They are all reproduced in Nataletti-Pagani, *Le medaglie di Giuseppe Verdi*, 403–6.

[36] As is well known, the opera's premiere in Paris was hardly a success; it is usually described as a *succès d'estime*; see Julian Budden, *Verdi* (London, 1993), 96. Critics' responses overall reflected the national (besides musical) importance of the event. For a selection of press articles, see Gartioux, *Giuseppe Verdi, Don Carlos*.

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Giuseppina Strepponi. They were not intended, that is, for public display; instead, they were delivered directly to Verdi's home at Sant'Agata.[37]

More interesting still, when a few years later Milan dedicated a statue to its most famous (living) adopted son, the news aroused a good deal of debate. In April 1880, following the triumphant success of *Aida* at the Paris Opéra, a group of distinguished Milanese suggested celebrating Verdi in a solemn ceremony and dedicating to him a statue that would join those of Rossini and Donizetti in the foyer of La Scala.[38] The news appeared in various local newspapers and caused comment about the appropriateness of dedicating a monument to a living person. 'The idea of erecting a marble monument to an illustrious living man' – commented Dottor Verità (alias Leone Fortis) in *Il pungolo* – 'makes some shudder with dismay'.[39] While busts and statues of the living were already common abroad, the habit of solidifying into stone someone still breathing – the critic argued – remained unusual in Italy. Furthermore, the decision to produce such an enduring portrait implied that the person's fame was at an insuperable height, and unlikely to fade.[40] In 1880 Verdi did indeed meet (at least so it was claimed) this last condition; his artistic triumph in Paris provided the final impetus for the decision about solemn *onoranze*. However, immortalising the living composer and adding his statue alongside those of his buried predecessors felt problematic, all the more so given that a statue of Bellini was also commissioned, a few weeks later, for the same occasion. In October 1881, the year of Milan's National Industrial Exposition, the long-departed and

[37] See Frank Walker, 'Vincenzo Gemito and his Bust of Verdi', *Music & Letters*, 30/1 (1949), 44–55. As early as 1854, however, Tito Ricordi had commissioned a bust of Verdi from Vincenzo Luccardi. The sculpture was intended for Ricordi's house, although it remained exposed in the Ricordi shop for some time together with a bust of Rossini. Apparently, the Verdi bust was also displayed at the Rome Exposition that year. In 1859, by then unhappy with the sculpture, Luccardi decided to produce a new one, which, to Verdi's great regret, was damaged en route to Sant'Agata in 1860; see the correspondence in Laura Genesio, ed., *Carteggio Verdi–Luccardi* (Parma, 2008), 123–4, 130–33 and 138–42; and Frank Walker, *The Man Verdi* (London, 1962), 310–11.

[38] Paris did not hear *Aida* until April 1876, when the opera was first staged at the Théâtre Italien. The premiere at the Opéra took place on 22 March 1880; see Kaufman, *Verdi*, 530–31.

[39] 'La idea che si eriga un monumento marmoreo ad un illustre vivente mette i brividi dello sgomento a certuni': Dottor Verità [Leone Fortis], 'Arte italiana. La statua a Verdi', *Il pungolo*, 20–21 April 1880, 3. Similar comments can be read in an article from *L'illustrazione italiana*, 18 April 1880, 243, reproduced in Pierluigi Petrobelli, Marisa Di Gregorio Casati and Carlo Matteo Mossa, eds., *Carteggio Verdi-Ricordi: 1880–1881* (Parma, 1988), 244.

[40] 'Certo l'uomo illustre che deve essere tradotto in statua di marmo deve essere di una statura scultoria – moralmente parlando – [...] certo bisogna che la sua fama, che la sua gloria sieno ormai, per virtù propria, sottratte alla discussione contemporanea – che l'una e l'altra siano tali da rendere impossibile che nulla più le offuschi o le scemi' ('Of course the famous man whose portrait is made in marble needs have a statuesque stature – morally speaking – [...] of course his fame and glory need already to be certain to his contemporaries – and unlikely to fade'): Fortis, 'Arte italiana'. The most famous exception made for a living composer in Italy is that of Rossini, whose monument in Pesaro was built in 1864. On a much earlier example abroad, Louis-François Roubiliac's Handel monument in Vauxhall Gardens from 1738, see Suzanne Aspden, '"Fam'd Handel Breathing, tho' Transformed to Stone": The Composer as Monument', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 55/1 (2002), 39–90.

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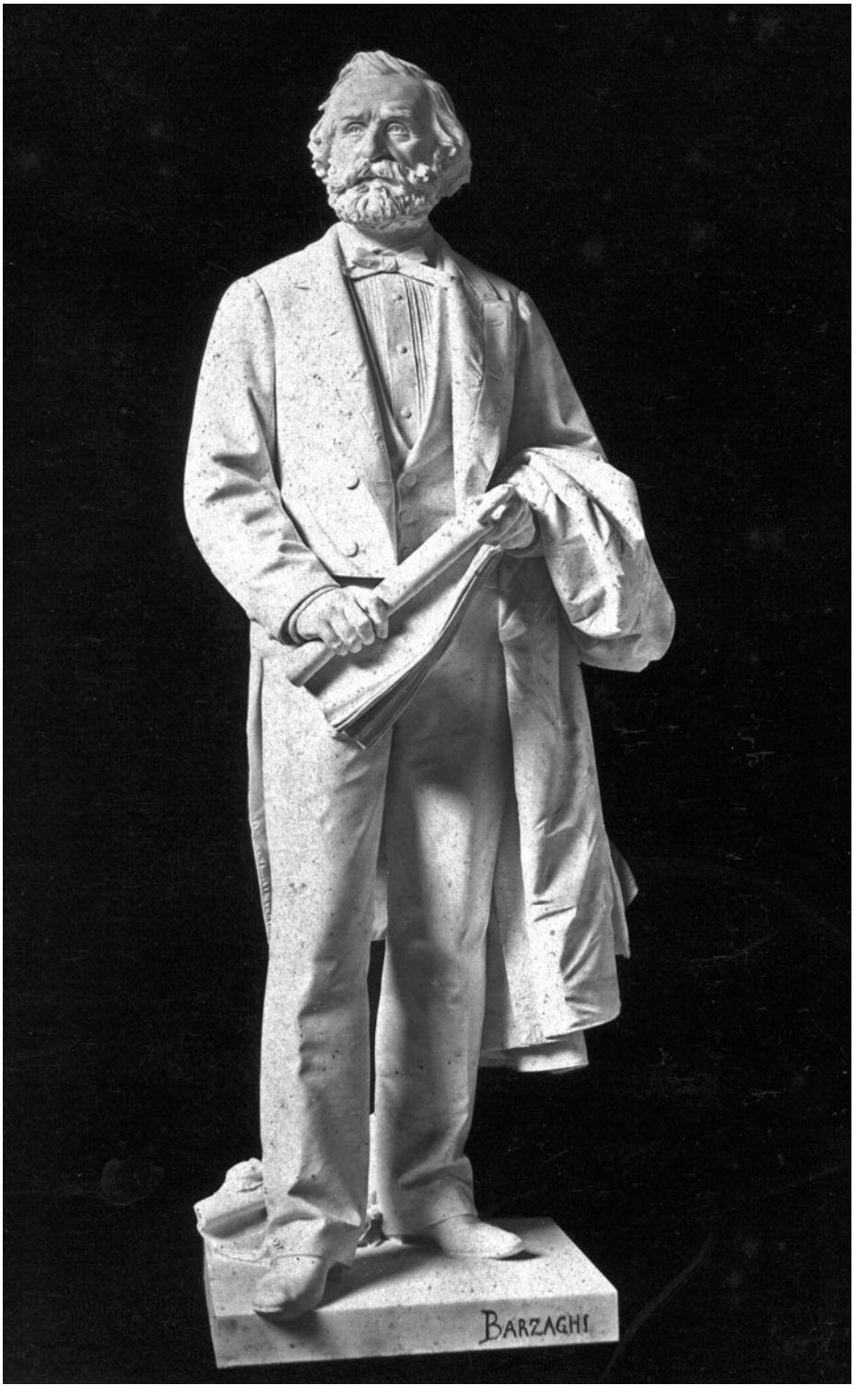


Fig. 3: Statue of Verdi (by Barzaghi) in the foyer of La Scala.

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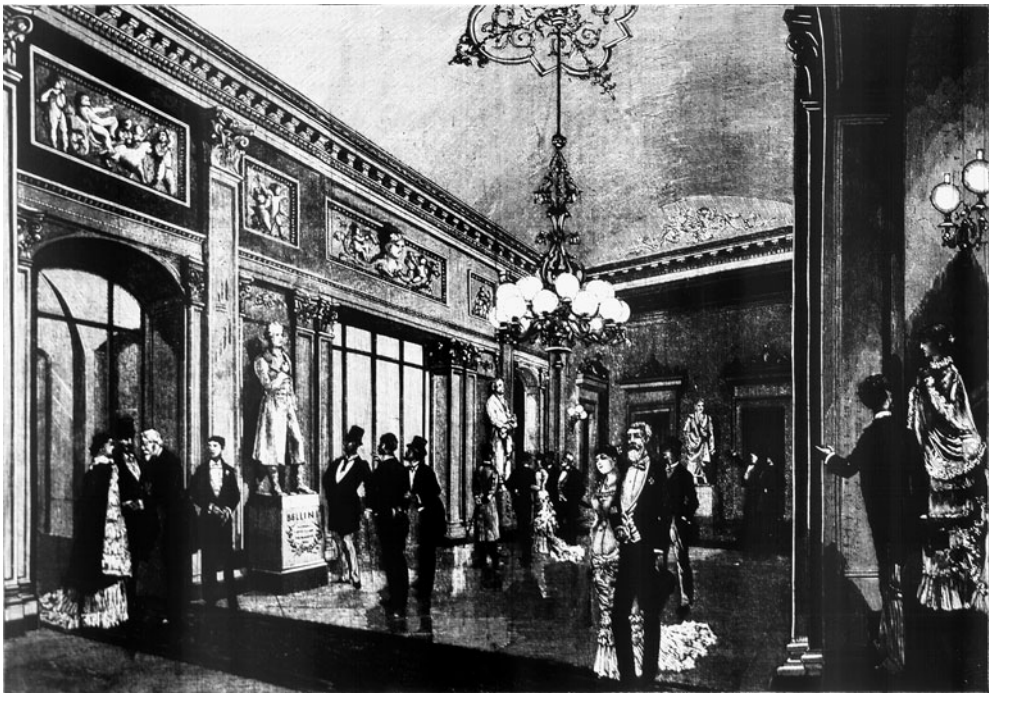


Fig. 4: The foyer of the Teatro alla Scala, with the new busts of Bellini and Verdi. Drawing by Antonio Bonamore, *L'illustrazione italiana*, 27 November 1881.

the alive-and-kicking came together to form the image of Italy's nineteenth-century music history.[41]

The 1881 Verdi (and Bellini) celebrations were in many ways local rather than national. Not only did the idea arise from a group of Milanese, but almost all the authorities at the statues' inauguration were from that city (with just one representative sent by the central government).[42] This is less surprising when we consider that most of Italy's post-1861 monuments to politicians, revolutionaries, artists and intellectuals who had glorified the nation were based on a municipal initiative and paid for through public subscription. It is nevertheless also true that once the statues of the four composers were reunited and visible in the foyer of La Scala, their significance was far from merely Milanese; nor did they stand exclusively for a national parade of artistic talents. The frozen figures of the 'four greats' also served a practical function: they were reminders, tangible models, of where Italian

[41] 'È parso che quei quattro sommi dovrebbero avere qualcosa da dirsi in fatto di arte, e che a metterli assieme non si farebbe che tradurre in marmo la storia della musica italiana del nostro secolo' ('It seemed that those four greats should have something to tell each other as to art, and that by bringing them together one would express through marble the history of Italian music of our century'): Fortis, 'Arte italiana'. The statue of Verdi was sculpted by Francesco Barzaghi, while that of Bellini by Ambrogio Borghi. For more on these events, see the letters and newspaper articles in *Carteggio Verdi–Ricordi: 1880–1881*, 31–4, 40–43, 94–8, 242–61 and 313–16.

[42] See *Carteggio Verdi–Ricordi: 1880–1881*, 243. The prefect was the representative sent by the Italian government; see *La perseveranza*, 26 October 1881, 2.

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music should develop in the future, and they appeared at a time when that future no longer seemed clear. 'The honours granted to a living maestro' – observed Lodovico Melzi, the president of the Committee for the celebrations – will encourage and advise the young, who are not always moved by tributes to those beyond the grave'.[43] In the circumstances of late nineteenth-century disputes between supporters and detractors of foreign or Italian music, modern portraits of composers could serve a hortatory function. The same function, as it happens, that on other occasions could be fulfilled by musical compositions.

Buried music

In May 1868 the Teatro Nuovo in Florence presented a work distinctly at odds with contemporary trends in the repertoire of most Italian theatres: Domenico Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto*. This two-act *dramma giocoso*, first performed in Vienna in 1792, achieved great success in Florence and was then revived elsewhere in Italy. Although these performances always took place in minor theatres, they provided a ready stimulus for critical debate.[44] On various occasions Cimarosa's opera, as well as other similarly 'ancient' works (to which the Cimarosa performances had drawn attention), were welcomed as 'monuments'.[45] The newness of the idea of reviving an old score, at a time when the operatic seasons in Italy consisted for the most part of either new works or the masterpieces of the four most popular nineteenth-century composers, did not go unremarked. Quite the opposite: it appealed to many. For more than one critic, the 'resurrection' of Cimarosa's opera could (and should) lead to the rediscovery of further works from Italy's operatic past, ones that had been forgotten in 'dusty archives' for too long.[46] It was not that such operas would become fashionable or sound attractively modern; to some ears *Il matrimonio segreto* now seemed as 'archaic and obsolete' as once it had seemed 'new'. (After all, even an opera like Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, in an operatic

[43] 'L'onore reso ad un maestro vivente sarà stimolo e guida ai giovani, che non sempre si commovono agli onori d'oltre tomba': Lodovico Melzi, speech printed in *La perseveranza*, 26 October 1881, 2.

[44] Performances took place in the summer and autumn 1868 at the Teatro Brunetti in Bologna, the Teatro Re in Milan, the Teatro Gallo San Benedetto in Venice and possibly in Bergamo; see Filebo, 'Critica e rassegna musicale', *Rivista bolognese di scienze, lettere, arti e scuole*, June 1868, 550–8; *Il mondo artistico*, 11 October 1868, 7; and *Il matrimonio segreto … riprodotto nel Teatro Gallo San Benedetto in Venezia l'autunno 1868*, printed libretto (Milan, n.d.).

[45] 'Cimarosa's opera *Il matrimonio segreto* is thus a monument of art and a majestic monument': Corinno Mariotti, in *GMM*, 6 September 1868, 289. See also Filippo Filippi's statement, quoted later.

[46] Filebo, 'Critica e rassegna musicale', 558. The 'resurrectional' idea was also common in France at around the same time. A rediscovery of the old operatic repertoire had been taking place there since the 1850s, while already in the first half of the nineteenth century early instrumental and choral music had become the object of a renewed interest; see Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York, 2005); and Flora Willson, 'Classic Staging: Pauline Viardot and the 1859 *Orphée* Revival', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 22/3 (2010), 301–26. On the changes in repertory and the formation of the music canon idea during the nineteenth century, see William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (Cambridge, 2008).

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centre such as Milan, was rarely performed in the second half of the nineteenth century.) [47] Rather, ancient scores were monuments first and foremost because they spoke of the age to which they belonged; they were traces of a world no longer in existence.

This new leaning towards the musical past was in line with trends summarised by Nietzsche in 1874 as the 'consuming historical fever' of his age.[48] Several, and not only those outside Italy, raised this point: 'Our century' – commented an Italian man of letters in 1869 – 'is idolatrous of the past. Tirelessly archaeological, it seeks the monuments of our fathers, strives to reassemble the remains of time, writes histories, critiques, biographies'.[49] In an address concerning the teaching of history, Pasquale Villari likewise argued: 'We are great restorers and repairers of the past [...] the past has somehow become sacred to us'.[50] Paradoxically, the more closely we approach the end of the century – an age captivated by the idea of the future, progress and modernity – the more an attentive knowledge of the past becomes apparent.[51] As far as the Italian musical scene was concerned, the last decades of the century were characterised not only by the increasing circulation of foreign works, particularly those of Wagner, and tense debates about *la musica dell'avvenire*, but also by a (very slow) rediscovery of older compositions. The Cimarosa performances of 1868 were only the beginning of a trend that would increase in subsequent years.[52]

[47] '[*Il matrimonio segreto*] era nuovo quanto ora ci apparisce arcaico e disusato siffattamente da trovarsi perciò troppo lontano dal gusto, dalle tendenze, dal progresso, dalle innovazioni tanto felicemente operate dai molti luminari che succedettero al fortunato allievo di Piccinni.' ('[*Il matrimonio segreto*] was once as new as it is now archaic and obsolete: too distant from the taste, the trends, the progress, the innovations so successfully brought about by the many luminaries that came after Piccinni's successful pupil.'): Mariotti, *GMM*, 6 September 1868, 289. For Mozart performances in Milan, see footnote 52.

[48] Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, 8. Hayden White has called attention to Nietzsche's critical views of nineteenth-century beliefs in history as an 'objective' or 'scientific' discipline. According to White, Nietzsche's historical thought corresponded to the beginning of the 'crisis of historicism' and the opening of the 'third' phase of the nineteenth-century historical imagination; see Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore and London, 1975), 40–41.

[49] 'Il nostro secolo è idolatra del passato. Archeologo instancabile, esso ricerca i monumenti de' padri, ricompone faticosamente le spoglie del tempo, scrive storie, critiche, biografie': Gustavo Strafforello, 'Saggi filosofici: Natura', *Rivista contemporanea nazionale italiana*, 17/58 (1869), 246–60, here 246.

[50] 'Noi siamo dei grandi restauratori e riparatori del passato [...] il passato stesso è come divenuto sacro per noi': Pasquale Villari, 'L'insegnamento della storia: discorso inaugurale per l'anno accademico 1868–69', originally printed in *La scienza del popolo*, 51/6 (1869), available at http://www.liberliber.it/mediateca/libri/v/villari/l_insegnamento_della_storia/pdf/l_inse_p.pdf (here 4, accessed 31 October 2012).

[51] Historical consciousness is a prerequisite of modernity since a 'modern' standpoint makes sense only insofar as it is differentiated from a position situated in the past; see Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA, 1990), 6.

[52] In Milan, particularly from the late 1870s, the forgotten eighteenth-century comic opera repertoire started to be rediscovered. Some theatres, such as the Santa Radegonda, were more prone than others to reviving this repertoire. In this respect, see the 'revivalist' proposal by Pompeo Cambiasi, originally in *GMM*, 12 April 1878, quoted in Raffaella Valsecchi, 'Teatri d'opera a

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'Agedness' was not, however, the only reason for Italian commitment to the Cimarosa revivals. According to some, 'ancient' scores were also to be encouraged because they could serve a pragmatic function: they could help combat the 'futuristic' trends increasingly followed by Italian composers writing under the influence of foreign music. Critic Filebo, for instance, in an article encouraged by the recent performances of *Il matrimonio segreto*, hoped that these revivals would inaugurate 'the long-awaited reform and restoration of Italian art'. They could, he thought, counterbalance perilous tendencies among modern composers, who were increasingly drawn by vocal and harmonic complexities blowing in from abroad.[53] In this respect, a few observations made by renowned critic Filippo Filippi, evidently of a different opinion, are telling. Filippi, a warm supporter of Verdi and increasingly of German music (especially Wagner), reacted against what he described as the 'ephemeral and exaggerated enthusiasm' aroused by the Cimarosa revivals:

> The audience are right to enthuse [...] but those who exaggerate by hailing as a miracle every single note, every single bar are wrong; while in good faith, I believe they shout and get worked up so much in order to hide their real and spontaneous boredom, to which they would have surrendered ten years ago, when there did not exist today's fever for reaction, this itch for anti-progress, to which everything serves as a pretext, even the respectable name of Cimarosa.[54]

Filippi's claim was that 'Cimarosa's opera can be admired only as a historical monument'. In other words, despite his alignment to the current vogue of depicting the work as monumental, he disliked such *anticaglie* – as he called the pre-Rossinian works that were fuelling so much debate during that period. Far from providing models for composers at the start of their careers, they should only serve, in his

Milano: 1861–1880', in *Milano musicale: 1861–1897*, ed. Bianca Maria Antolini (Lucca and Milan, 1999), 3–20, here 13–14. Music critic Francesco D'Arcais also encouraged revivals of 'ancient' Italian operas in Turin and Milan in the 1860s, many of which were in fact staged in Florence during those years; see Bianca Maria Antolini, 'Rappresentazioni rossiniane e dibattito critico in Italia nel decennio 1860–70', in *La recezione di Rossini ieri e oggi*, Atti dei convegni Lincei, 110 (Rome, 1994), 121–48, esp. 133–4. Mozart performances in Milan remained, however, extremely rare. *Don Giovanni* was the only Mozart opera staged (twice, in 1871 and 1881) at La Scala from 1836 until the end of the century. The most often performed Mozart opera, it appeared overall seven times on Milanese stages between 1861 and 1897; see Cambiasi, *La Scala*, 278–9, 304–5 and 308–9; and Raffaella Valsecchi and Bianca Maria Antolini, 'Cronologia sintetica delle rappresentazioni d'opera nei teatri milanesi: 1861–1897', in *Milano musicale*, 43–59. On the reception of two Mozart operas in Italy during the nineteenth century, see Pierluigi Petrobelli, '*Don Giovanni* in Italia: la fortuna dell'opera ed il suo influsso', *Analecta musicologica*, 18 (1978), 30–51, and Marco Beghelli, 'La precoce fortuna delle "Nozze di Figaro" in Italia', in Giacomo Fornari, ed., *Mozart: gli orientamenti della critica moderna, Atti del convegno internazionale, Cremona, 24–26 novembre 1991*, ed. Giacomo Fornari (Lucca, 1994), 181–224.

[53] See Filebo, 'Critica e rassegna musicale', 554–8, 558.

[54] 'Il pubblico ha ragione d'entusiasmarsi [...] ma hanno torto gli esagerati di gridare al miracolo ad ogni nota, ad ogni battuta, mentre in buona fede io credo che gridino e si scalmanino tanto per ingannare in qualche modo l'effetto reale e spontaneo dello sbadiglio, a cui si avrebbero abbandonato 10 anni fa, quando non c'era questa febbre di reazione d'oggidì, questa smania d'anti-progresso, a cui tutto serve di pretesto, anche il nome rispettabile di Cimarosa': Filippo Filippi, '*Il matrimonio segreto* e la musica prerossiniana', *Il mondo artistico*, 19 July 1868, 2–3, here 2.

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opinion, as documents of a past age.[55] Thus, once again, as in the aforementioned discussions that would arise about the statues of Verdi and Bellini in 1881, the potential didactic function of monuments came to the fore. This function also explains why monuments were so prone to becoming objects of contestation.

Another episode, at about the same time as the Cimarosa revivals, fostered the description of certain musical works in monumental terms: Rossini's death in Paris on 13 November 1868. The sad news spread quickly through Italy. Commemorative concerts and opera performances took place in many cities, and busts of Rossini were often placed onstage, almost as if to reassure the audience that the composer was still present.[56] Such sculptures, of course, provided only a surrogate for the recently departed man (who had already been granted a monument by his home town of Pesaro in 1864 and would have several others dedicated to him in subsequent years). Yet they had the advantage of seeming less ephemeral than all-too-human flesh.[57] Rossini nevertheless also came to be depicted, post mortem, as a musical monument. According to critic Francesco d'Arcais, his operas – of which only a few were still regularly performed at the time[58] – were 'eternal monuments that time has not managed to destroy, and that now shine more brightly than ever'.[59] What is more, when Verdi suggested that he and other Italian composers should write a composite Mass to be performed on the first anniversary of Rossini's death, the idea was immediately welcomed as an 'artistic monument', a 'monumental score', 'the most splendid monument than one could raise to Rossini's memory'.[60] Well before anyone could guess what it would sound like – the first performance was, as it happened, delayed by more than a century – the composition was added to the lengthening list of musical monuments.[61] For

[55] I take Filippi's use of the term 'historical' in Alois Riegl's sense: 'Everything that has been and is no longer we call *historical*'; Alois Riegl, 'The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin', *Oppositions*, 25 (1982), 21–51, here 21.

[56] Busts appeared at the Teatro Carcano in Milan, in Trieste and in a church in Genoa; see *GMM*, 22 November 1868, 380, and Carlo Matteo Mossa, 'Una "Messa" per la storia', in *Messa per Rossini: la storia, il testo, la musica*, ed. Michele Girardi and Pierluigi Petrobelli, Quaderni dell'ISV 5 (1988), 11–78, here 18. The idea that a composer had to attend the premieres or important performances of his works had still not been completely abandoned, not in Italy at least, and might have played a part in the proliferation of busts when he was not present.

[57] Andreas Huyssen has argued that a desire for permanence lies at the very heart of the need for the monumental, particularly in the nineteenth century, when an increasing awareness of the ephemeral had been arising; see Andreas Huyssen, 'Monumental Seduction', *New German Critique*, 69 (1996), 181–200, esp. 188 and 192.

[58] See Philip Gossett, 'Omaggio a (liberazione da) Rossini', in *Messa per Rossini*, 7–10, here 7–8.

[59] 'monumenti eterni che il tempo non valse a distruggere, e che ora risplendono di luce più viva che mai': Francesco d'Arcais, *L'opinione*, quoted from *GMM*, 22 November 1868, 379. It is interesting to observe, as Matthew Head has done for the German-speaking countries in an earlier period, how the practice of building memorials to composers developed hand in hand with a new way of thinking about their compositions, with the formation of a long-lasting music canon; see Matthew Head, 'Music with "No Past"? Archaeologies of Joseph Haydn and *The Creation*', *19th-Century Music*, 23 (2000), 191–217, esp. 197–8.

[60] D'Arcais, *L'opinione*, in *GMM*, 22 November 1868, 379; and *GMM*, 6 December 1868, 399 ('il più splendido monumento che si potesse erigere alla memoria di Rossini').

[61] For a thorough account of historical and musical aspects concerning the Mass, see *Messa per Rossini*.

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his part, Verdi seemed reluctant to make monumental claims. Although he did so on more than one occasion, he was quick to add that the Mass would only work as a monument if it adhered to precise conditions: that it should be performed in Bologna (the city in which Rossini had studied and lived for many years) on the anniversary of its dedicatee's death, and that immediately afterwards it should be locked away in an archive. In any other circumstances, it would be 'a mere work of art', 'a mere musical concert': an object lacking the sacral aura proper to monuments.[62]

The long debates spurred on in the musical press by the Cimarosa performances and the plans for Verdi's Rossini Mass point to something easily overlooked when we address the topic of monumentality: that monuments are less the result of accepted stylistic properties, defining the monumental as an aesthetic category, and more the product of a set of values and beliefs contingent on an historical-cultural context. This shift away from a definition of the monumental in aesthetic (or stylistic) terms towards a more historically imbued understanding clearly lies among the aims of Alexander Rehding's recent book on the topic. As the author warns early on, musical monumentality is deceptively self-evident: it seems to be entirely encapsulated in bombastic and overwhelming sound effects.[63] Time and again, Rehding attempts to overthrow this view, lending monumentality a significance that is more tightly bound up with historical processes and attitudes.[64] Overall, however, his project seems to remain suspended between, on the one hand, interpretations that draw on the historically contingent and, on the other, a latent attraction to purely aesthetic (and more absolute) accounts. This emerges, for instance, when Rehding defines nineteenth-century monumentality in music as residing between

> two distinct types of magnitude: one component, historical greatness, can be summarized under the modern keywords of collective memory and identity formation, while its other component, physical size, shows a marked tendency toward dramatic proportions (or even lack of any proportionality) that would elicit astonishment from its audiences.[65]

This second element, Rehding goes on to explain, is often linked with the feeling of the sublime. Even if we argued, however, that 'magnitude' has to do less with monuments' physical size than with their impact on the audience, such a claim remains problematic: and this because of the absolute terms of our discourse.[66]

[62] 'una semplice opera d'arte', 'un semplice concerto musicale': Verdi, letters to Camillo Casarini (10 November 1869) and Giulio Ricordi (18 November 1869), in Gaetano Cesari and Alessandro Luzio, eds., *I copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Milan, 1913), 217–19, here 217 and 218. For Verdi's wish that the Mass be locked away in an archive, see his proposal published in the *GMM*, 22 November 1868, 379.

[63] See Alexander Rehding, *Music and Monumentality: Commemoration and Wonderment in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (New York and Oxford, 2009), 3.

[64] Rehding draws, for instance, on Nora's concept of 'memory site' (12–13), nineteenth-century historicism and philological interests (chapter 5) and Wagner's personal views on monuments and monumentality (chapter 3, esp. 82–4).

[65] Rehding, *Music and Monumentality*, 27.

[66] In his review of Rehding's book, James Garratt makes a similar point, warning against 'the quest to retain a unified conception of monumentality': Garratt, review in *Music & Letters*, 92/3 (2011), 489–92, here 491.

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The lack of concern shown by nineteenth-century Italians for the sound of the proposed Mass for Rossini, and the distinctly 'anti-monumental' character of Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto*, confront us with less steady views.[67] They encourage us to look beyond any fixed stylistic and aesthetic qualities when attempting to explain a work's monumentality. Ultimately, if there *is* a way in which stylistic features play a part in fostering monumental claims, this will only emerge from examination of a work's relationship to the historical-musical context in which such statements arise. Monuments may aspire to endless life, but they by no means exist in a timeless present.

. . . ed arbitro s'assise in mezzo a lor[68]

[W]e believe that in such intelligent eclecticism resides the principal character of Verdi's music – and of course in an epoch of transition such as ours, the quality of this music consists in this character, which is also the chief reason for the success of *Don Carlos*.[69]

As early as March 1867, when *Don Carlos* was first performed at the Paris Opéra, in its French five-act version, Italian journalists reported the responses Verdi's work aroused in France, as well as, in subsequent months, in Italy and elsewhere. By the time it reached Milan, in March 1868 and in an Italian translation by Achille de Lauzières, the opera was hardly a novelty. It did, however, raise considerable expectations, as well as renewing longstanding disputes between supporters and detractors of Verdi's music. As mentioned earlier, the dominance of the orchestra, the unusual harmonic progressions and the *declamato* vocal writing pointed, for many, to a break with the Italian musical tradition. Some of these arguments would later reappear in connection with the premiere of the revised, four-act opera at La Scala in 1884; but by that time Italian audiences had become acquainted with much of Verdi's 1867 music, including its most innovative aspects, and debate mostly centred around the newly composed pieces.[70]

Of course, disquisitions about the extent to which Verdi had rejected the Italian operatic past had been part of critical writings for several years. Narratives of

[67] I am aware that one implication of my use of the adjective 'anti-monumental' is that all monuments are 'big'. However, I am using this adjective here only to suggest that the opposite is the case.

[68] 'Ei si nomò: due secoli, / l'un contro l'altro armato, / sommessi a lui si volsero, / come aspettando il fato; / ei fe' silenzio, ed arbitro / s'assise in mezzo a lor' ('He proclaimed himself: two centuries, / set armed against each other, / turned to him, subdued and / as if waiting for their fate. / He hushed them up, and arbiter / he sat between them'). It is hard not to think of Verdi when one reads these and other lines from Alessandro Manzoni's *Il cinque maggio* (1821). Manzoni wrote his ode immediately after Napoleon's death in Saint Helena, an event that deeply struck him and encouraged him to reflect on the passing of time and human glory. In his youth, Verdi composed a setting of this ode; see Phillips-Matz, *Verdi*, 30.

[69] 'noi crediamo che in questo eclettismo intelligente stia il principale carattere della musica Verdiana – e naturalmente in un'epoca di transizione come la nostra, in questo carattere sta il suo pregio, e la causa prima del grande successo anche del *Don Carlos*': Fortis, *Il pungolo*, 27 March 1868, 1–2, here 1.

[70] The premiere took place on 10 January 1884. The opera had last been performed at La Scala in the 1878–9 carnival season.

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progress proliferated, and reflected both the nineteenth-century belief in a steady advance in both the arts and science, and the persistence of a Rossinian legacy as the yardstick against which all new Italian operas were to be judged. *Don Carlo*, however, arrived at a special moment. For one thing, the 1860s had been marked by a worrying shortage of new composing talent (none of the new works by Italian composers staged at La Scala between 1861 and 1868 was successful).[71] For another, Verdi's pace of composition after the 1850s had slowed consistently, and his only two new operas in the 1860s had been written for foreign theatres.[72] To make matters worse, as early as a few years after the achievement of a single geopolitical identity, Italy (as well as its theatrical system) experienced serious financial difficulties; images of crisis and decadence were indeed omnipresent in writings of the period.[73] In the circumstances, and owing to Verdi's half-new, half-old musical language, *Don Carlo* awakened feelings of ambivalence: that it lay at the boundary between the 'old' and the 'new'; that it marked both the end and the beginning of a musical era.[74] What is more, the opera's oscillation between two temporal dimensions matched contemporary perceptions of Verdi in general as a composer whose exact position in the history of nineteenth-century Italian music was increasingly problematic: while most of his pre- *Rigoletto* operas were becoming old-fashioned and would soon fall out of the repertory, his latest compositions increasingly showed foreign (read 'futuristic') influences. As one critic put it, Verdi was 'that colossus who represents the link between a great past and a greater future'; in the words of another, he was the 'arbiter between two centuries, between two schools, between two peoples'.[75]

Verdi's use of a novel musical language, one that led some critics to describe *Don Carlo* in terms of 'eclecticism', was thus a feature of the opera that could easily encourage comparisons with the contemporary historical and music-historical moment.[76] Although such a miscellany of forms and styles did not always appeal to the critics, it was praised on occasion, and this because it appeared to match well the current self-image of Italy and Italian music – both of which were suspended between an increasingly awe-inspiring past and an enticing if still uncertain future. In an article (quoted earlier) published in *Il pungolo* a few days after the

[71] See Carlos Del Cueto, 'The Death of Italian Opera', *Opera*, 62/5 (2011), 510–18, esp. 510 and 512.

[72] *Don Carlos* for the Paris Opéra and *La forza del destino* (1862) for the Imperial Theatre of St Petersburg.

[73] One of the consequences of these difficulties was the shift from the central to the municipal management of the theatres. On the Milan case, see Irene Piazzoni, 'La cessione dei teatri demaniali ai comuni: il caso di Milano (1860–1872)', *Storia in Lombardia*, 13/1 (1994), 5–72. While a sense of musical, cultural and political crisis was no doubt widespread in post-Unification Italy, it has, perhaps, been overemphasised in literature on the period. For a revisionist stance, see Körner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy*.

[74] Del Cueto makes a similar point; see his *Opera in 1860s Milan*, 185.

[75] 'quel colosso che è anello fra un grande passato ed un più grande avvenire': Sangiorgi, *Monitore di Bologna*, 28 October 1867, 1–2, quoted from *Le opere di Giuseppe Verdi a Bologna*, 157; 'arbitro fra due secoli, fra due scuole, fra due genti': Corinno Mariotti, *GMM*, 29 December 1867, 410.

[76] For other reviews underlining the variety of styles characterising Verdi's opera, see Filippi, article for *La perseveranza*, reprinted in *GMM*, 10 November 1867, 353–6, esp. 354; and Filippi, 'Studio analitico sul *Don Carlo* di Giuseppe Verdi (I),' *GMM*, 31 January 1869, 33–5, esp. 34–5.

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Milan premiere, Leone Fortis went so far as to argue that Verdi's eclecticism was, in an 'epoch of transition', the main reason for the success of *Don Carlo*. More interesting still, it was not only the combination of conventional numbers and innovative pieces that stimulated attempts to read Verdi's opera in connection with contemporaneous circumstances; it was also the most modern aspects of the score, taken by themselves, that occasionally received interpretative attention linking them to that wider scene.

One of the most unconventional pieces of the 1867, five-act *Don Carlo* was the Grand Inquisitor scene in Act IV. Verdi's attachment to this number, which is characterised by unpredictable musical flow, extensive use of declamation and rich orchestral colours, is well known. The confrontation between Philip II of Spain, and the blind ninety-year-old priest, symbol of the repressive power of the Inquisition, was one of two scenes from Friedrich Schiller's play that Verdi had specifically asked to be included, and this at a very early stage of correspondence with his librettists.[77] It is thought provoking, to say the least, that the two scenes, the second being the duet for Philip and Posa in Act II, would have very different compositional histories: one (the Inquisitor scene) remained unchanged throughout all versions of the opera; the other (the Philip–Posa duet) underwent the most repeated and thorough-going revision of any part of the score. On various occasions after the opera's premiere, Verdi's special concern for the Philip–Inquisitor duet emerged, a sign that he was aware of the piece's groundbreaking qualities and of its mixed reception by the audiences. In 1869, in a letter to Giulio Ricordi, he lamented:

> In D. Carlos I always hear talk of some duets or the aria in Act V, but never of the third act, which is the climax and, I would say, the heart of the drama; nor ever of the Inquisitor's scene, which is elevated somewhat above the other pieces.[78]

A good thirty years later, in June 1900, he continued to regard the duet as especially significant, preparing a vocal-score reduction of its opening fourteen bars for display at Paris's Exposition Universelle.[79]

[77] See Verdi's letter to Emile Perrin, 21 July 1865, in Günther, 'La Genèse de *Don Carlos*' (1972), 30.

[78] 'Così nel D. Carlos sento sempre parlare di qualche Duetto, dell'aria del V atto, ma giammai del Terz'atto che è veramente il punto culminante, e, dirò così il cuore del Dramma; né mai della scena dell'Inquisizione che si eleva di qualche poco sugli altri pezzi': Verdi's letter to Giulio Ricordi, 7 August 1869, quoted in Aldo Oberdorfer, ed., *Giuseppe Verdi: autobiografia dalle lettere* (Milan, 2006), 469, f. 19; English translation of this quotation in Martin Chusid, 'The Inquisitor's Scene in Verdi's *Don Carlos*: Thoughts on the Drama, Libretto, and Music', in *Studies in Musical Sources and Style: Essays in Honor of Jan LaRue*, ed. Eugene K. Wolf and Edward H. Roesner (Madison, 1990), 505–34, here 505. Verdi's concern for the duet was also described by some nineteenth-century observers: 'Sappiamo però che Verdi ci tiene moltissimo – ed a ragione – e che non si stancò mai di raccomandare la esecuzione di questo duetto' ('We know, however, that Verdi cares a lot about it – and he is right – and that he has never grown tired of urging the performance of this duet'): Fortis, *Il pungolo*, 28 March 1868, 1–3, 1.

[79] See Martin Chusid, 'The Inquisitor's Scene', 528–30. For other occasions on which Verdi recalled this scene, see his letter to Cesare De Sanctis, 22 March 1871, in *Giuseppe Verdi: autobiografia dalle lettere*, 466–7; and his letter to Giulio Ricordi, 18 May 1883, in Franca Cella, Madina Ricordi and Marisa Di Gregorio Casati, eds., *Carteggio Verdi–Ricordi: 1882–1885* (Parma, 1994), 109–10. For more details on the 1900 excerpt, and for a study of the reception of the Inquisitor scene and *Don Carlos* in connection with listening practices in Paris in the 1860s, see Flora Willson's forthcoming article on the topic. My thanks to Flora for sharing an early version of this article with me.

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Verdi cannot, however, have been entirely sincere when, in 1869, he complained that Act III ('the heart of the drama') and the Inquisitor scene were never discussed. In fact, the Act III finale and the Philip–Inquisitor confrontation were precisely the moments that had thus far most attracted critical attention. With regard to the duet, comments were not always positive, yet the novelty of Verdi's language was repeatedly remarked upon. After the Paris premiere, Filippi, writing for *La perseveranza*, observed:

> The indeterminacy of form is such, the drama is so rigorously expressed, the word is followed with so much philosophical acumen that Philip's *aria* and the so-called inquisition *duet* can be called *aria* and *duet* only by name…[80]

Commenting again on the duet in his 'Studio analitico sul *Don Carlos* di Giuseppe Verdi' (published in Ricordi's *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* in several instalments between January 1869 and July 1871), Filippi voiced his astonishment more clearly:[81]

> As soon as the count of Lerma has announced the arrival of the Grand Inquisitor, from the first orchestral chords we realise that we are dealing with a new type of music, full of hidden, tragic meaning. […] the sounds of the orchestra come from the depths of his [the Inquisitor's] viscera. […] this passage […] is the gloomy ritornello of the whole duet, but with very different passages and chords, over an insistent rhythmic movement. […] and so ends this wonderful duet, which the audience cannot appreciate immediately, but which becomes after repeated listening one of the most interesting, most beautiful, most philosophical moments of the opera.[82]

Other critics also wondered at the unheard-of qualities of this music, particularly the recitative-like passages for the voices, which most differentiated Verdi's piece from the Italian, 'melodic' tradition.[83] The strikingly powerful musical battle between the two symbolical figures, representing the powers of State and Church, became thus caught up in the Italian discussions about *la musica dell'avvenire*, serving

[80] 'L'indeterminatezza delle forme è tale, il dramma è così rigorosamente espresso, la parola seguita con tanto acume di filosofia, che l'*aria* di Filippo II e il *duetto* così detto dell'inquisizione, si possono chiamare *aria* e *duetto* nientre altro che per modo di dire…': Filippi, 'Lettere parigine (I): *D. Carlos* di Verdi', *La perseveranza*, 19 March 1867, 1–2, here 2.

[81] The innovative character of Filippi's study resides in its being one of the earliest Italian attempts, apart from Abramo Basevi's *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Florence, 1859), at a close reading of a music score.

[82] 'Appena il conte di Lerma ha annunziato l'arrivo del Grande Inquisitore, dai primi accordi dell'orchestra si capisce che si ha da fare con una musica nuova, piena di sensi reconditi e fatali. […] i suoni dell'orchestra escono dalla sue [dell'Inquisitore] viscere, le più profonde. […] questo passo […] è il lugubre ritornello di tutto il duetto, ma con passaggi ed accordi variatissimi, sopra un movimento ritmico insistente. […] e così finisce lo stupendo duetto che il pubblico non può gustare subito, ma che diviene con parecchie udizioni una delle cose più interessanti, più belle, più filosofiche dello spartito': Filippi, 'Studio analitico sul *Don Carlos* di Giuseppe Verdi (VII)', *GMM*, 19 September 1869, 327–30, here 328–30.

[83] Among the most interesting reviews, besides Filippi's, see those in the *Gazzetta di Milano* (26 and 31 March 1868), *Il pungolo* (27 and 28 March 1868) and the *Gazzetta di Venezia* (reprinted in 'Supplemento alla *GMM*', 21 March 1869). For some French reviews, see *Paris-Magazine* (17 March 1867), *Le Moniteur universel* (18 March 1867) and *La Gazette de France* (19 March 1867), all in *Giuseppe Verdi, Don Carlos: Dossier de presse parisienne*.

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as the stage for further confrontations. Indeed, finding an exact position within the current musical scene for this peculiar piece – termed a 'scène' by Verdi in his autograph score and often called a 'dramatic dialogue' by nineteenth-century critics – turned out to be a matter of real importance.[84]

A few days after the La Scala premiere, the music critic for the *Gazzetta di Milano*, 'F. F.', entered into a debate with the reviewer for *Il pungolo*, Fortis.[85] The latter had expressed his views on *Don Carlo* in three articles, which, despite overall praise for Verdi's work, criticised the excessively conventional character of some pieces.[86] 'F. F.', clearly overstating his colleague's assertions, summarised by saying that Fortis was encouraging Verdi 'to write an opera entirely on the model of that duet between Philip II and the Grand Inquisitor, which is, we repeat, the most complete indictment of the *wagnerian-mefistofelian* system'.[87] We understand from the rest of the article that 'F. F.' was neither completely in favour of nor totally against Verdi's opera, in this sense following most of his colleagues. In general, he thought Verdi had been influenced too much by Meyerbeer, and that his individual character – his Italian melodies – was clearest in some of his earlier works. What is most striking, however, is that 'F. F.' went on to define the Inquisitor's scene in the following terms: 'That duet is a miracle of art, but it is the *ne plus ultra* of indeterminate recitative, of *melopoeia* without rhythm'.[88] *Nec plus ultra*: 'not further beyond' was the supposed inscription on the Pillars of Hercules, marking the end of the known world. It was a warning for sailors, a limit for navigation. In its more common meaning, however, the expression indicates perfection, the outer limit of what can be achieved. It even has an exemplary value, in some ways similar to that of the 'classic'. It is perhaps significant that the same critic, in an article published only a few days before, describes the Philip–Inquisitor duet in precisely such terms:

[84] Printed sources, on the other hand, usually defined it a 'scène et duo' or 'duetto'; see Gilles de Van, *Verdi's Theatre: Creating Drama through Music* (Chicago and London, 1998), 275.

[85] 'F. F.' was also the signature to an article about the *musica dell'avvenire* in the *Gazzetta di Milano*, 19 March 1868, 1–2. Rosita Tordi suggests that Giuseppe Rovani, co-owner of the *Gazzetta* and opponent of Wagner and his school, was the commissioner of both articles (which were certainly not by Filippi); see Rosita Tordi, *Il manto di Lindoro: Rovani e il teatro d'opera* (Rome, 1995), 65–70.

[86] Fortis, *Il pungolo*, 26–27–28 March 1868.

[87] 'a scrivere oramai tutta un'opera sul modello di quel duetto fra Filippo II e il Grande Inquisitore, che è, lo ripetiamo, la più completa condanna del sistema *wagneriano-mefistofelico*': 'F. F.', in *Gazzetta di Milano*, 31 March 1868, 1–2, here 2.

[88] 'Quel duetto è un miracolo di arte, ma è il *nec plus ultra* a cui può giungere il recitativo indeterminato, la *melopea* senza misura ritmica': 'F. F.', in *Gazzetta di Milano*, 31 March 1868, 2. During the 1860s, the term *melopea* was of common use in Italy and stood for a melody lacking well-defined rhythmic qualities (which were thought to characterise Italian melodies). *Melopea* generally identified with the melodies of Wagner and the school of the future; see Virgilio Bernardoni, 'La teoria delle melodia vocale nella trattatistica italiana: 1790–1870', *Acta Musicologica*, 62/1 (1990), 29–61, esp. 57–61.

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that piece of music with no rhythmic melody, where the melodic line follows closely the words with classic brevity [...] is both a glorious victory achieved by Verdi, who has been obliged to renounce the spontaneity of his genius in order to write melopoeia, and the defeat of the musicians of the future; nobody among those who form part of the antimelodic and antirhythmic school will ever be able to write music more unquestionably classic than this...[89]

Tellingly, 'F. F.' placed Verdi's distinctly unconventional music for the Inquisitor scene in between the 'old' Verdi (the Italian tradition) and *la musica dell'avvenire*. In this sense, the critic's attempt to 'classicise' what often seemed unpromising melodies, ones that lacked any truly 'melodic' quality, may well speak of a desire to exorcise the Otherness of Verdi's new, speech-like vocal writing – by camouflaging it in a more acceptable, reassuringly classic disguise. At the least, his stance betrays the extent to which Verdi's scene was politicised in the Italian musical debates: it was seen as a vehicle for solving pressing problems, for reconciling opposite poles. What is more, the duet's unquestionable modernity, albeit disquieting, was beguiling enough for some to propose the piece as no less than a model for future Italian music.[90]

Restoration works

When it came to revising *Don Carlo* in the early 1880s, Verdi himself must have thought that the time was ripe for taking the Philip–Grand Inquisitor scene as a model for that other political 'dramatic dialogue' in the score: the Philip–Posa duet of Act I (Act II in the original, five-act edition). This piece had already given Verdi remarkable difficulty over the past fifteen years. As is well known, it was one of only two numbers he felt compelled to readjust, with the help of *Aida* librettist Antonio Ghislanzoni, when he produced a revised edition of the score for performances in Naples in 1872. The crucial changes to the scene, however, were those made in 1882–1883, and would result in substantially refashioned music. After the discarding of the original lyrical movements, the piece now recalled the free declamation that characterised the (never modified) scene for Philip and the Inquisitor.[91]

[89] 'quel pezzo di musica senza melodia ritmica, dove la linea melodica segue inflessibilmente la parola con una brevità classica [...] è insieme una gloriosa vittoria conseguita da Verdi costrettosi a rinnegare la spontaneità del suo ingegno per far della melopea, e la disfatta dei musicisti dell'avvenire; nessuno della scuola antimelodica e antiritmica arriverà certo a far cosa più classicamente indiscutibile...': 'F. F.', *Gazzetta di Milano*, 26 March 1868, 1–2, here 2.

[90] While modernity rebels against tradition, it in fact also establishes its own tradition: what is 'new' (that is, not merely stylish) today will one day become antiquity, a classic; see Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1863), in Jonathan Mayne, ed. and trans., *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (New York, 1964), 1–40, here 13–4; and Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity versus Postmodernity', *New German Critique*, 22 (1981), 3–14, here 4.

[91] On the various revisions of the duet, see in particular David Rosen, 'Le quattro stesure del duetto Filippo-Posa', in *Atti del II° congresso internazionale di studi verdiani* (Parma, 1971), 368–88; Budden, *From* Don Carlos *to* Falstaff, 80–98; and Roger Parker, 'Philippe and Posa Act II: The Shock of the New', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 14/1–2 (2002), 133–47. Most of Verdi's correspondence concerning the duet at the time of its last revision in the early 1880s is reproduced in Ursula Günther and Gabriella Carrara Verdi, 'Der Briefwechsel Verdi–Nuitter–Du Locle zur Revision des *Don Carlos*', *Analecta musicologica*, 15 (1975), 334–401.

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Don Carlo was of course not the first opera Verdi felt the need to revise at a later point. Its 'restoration' followed at least four similar undertakings: those to *Macbeth* (1847; revised version premiered in 1865), *Stiffelio* (1850; as *Aroldo*, 1857), *La forza del destino* (1862 and 1869) and *Simon Boccanegra* (1857 and 1881). Such revisions, which usually resulted in the heightening of stylistic disparity already at the heart of the original works, were conceived by Verdi at least partly as a response to changing musical tastes: they constitute evidence of how the original operas were received and point to Verdi's unceasing (if often unacknowledged) attention to both critics' and audiences' reactions. By 'updating' some of the music, particularly the most old-fashioned elements, Verdi hoped to provide a new version of a given opera more suited to modern tastes.[92] What is most remarkable, however, is that such remakings, starting at least with the late 1860s revision of *La forza del destino*, took place at a time when, in what we might call his burgeoning literary persona, Verdi was increasingly adopting conservative positions about how Italian music should develop. He himself, that is, entered the contemporary debates in which some recent and less recent operas were, for different reasons and to different ends, being described as 'monuments'. Verdi's positions have far too often been smoothly summarised under his motto 'torniamo all'antico, e sarà un progresso' ('let's return to the past, it will be a step forward').[93] In fact, the composer's late operas and revisions, as well as his correspondence, suggest that his attitudes to the *musica dell'avvenire* and to the particular path young Italian composers should follow were more complex.

Throughout the 1860s, both the daily and the musical press in Milan were animated by diatribes about musical and aesthetic problems by a group of artists, some of them with impressive musical credentials, known as the Scapigliati ('the dishevelled ones').[94] The intensity of debate about new operas by young Italian composers (Boito's *Mefistofele*), the latest works of Italy's most famous composer (Verdi's *Don Carlo* and his revised *La forza del destino*) and recent compositions by foreign musicians (Meyerbeer's *L'africana* and Gounod's *Romeo e Giulietta*) was to some extent the result of the Scapigliati's 'intellectualism'.[95] On several occasions Verdi disapproved of their abstruse theorising, lamenting their waffling about such concepts as 'Art', 'Aesthetics', 'Past' and 'Future'.[96] Still, starting in the late

[92] Roger Parker has explored some of the implications of Verdi's late revisions in his 'Philippe and Posa Act II' and in chapter four of his *Leonora's Last Act: Essays in Verdian Discourse* (Princeton, 1997). On a completely different type of revision, which applied to most of Verdi's early operas, see David Lawton and David Rosen, 'Verdi's Non-definitive Revisions: The Early Operas', in *Atti del III° congresso internazionale di studi verdiani*, 189–237.

[93] Letter to Francesco Florimo, 5 January 1871, in *I copialettere*, 232–3, here 233.

[94] For an introduction to the *scapigliatura*, see Giuseppe Farinelli, *Scapigliatura: profilo storico, protagonisti, documenti* (Rome, 2003) and the much longer, classic account of Gaetano Mariani, *Storia della Scapigliatura* (Caltanisetta and Rome, 1967). On music and the *scapigliatura*, see Guido Salvetti, 'La Scapigliatura milanese e il teatro d'opera', in *Il melodramma italiano dell'Ottocento: studi e ricerche per Massimo Mila*, ed. Giorgio Pestelli (Turin, 1977), 567–604, and David Kimbell, *Italian Opera* (Cambridge, 1995), esp. 569–95.

[95] The revised *La forza del destino* was first performed at La Scala in February 1869; *L'africana* and *Romeo e Giulietta* premiered there in March 1866 and December 1867.

[96] See Verdi's letter to Clara Maffei, 13 December 1863, in *Giuseppe Verdi: autobiografia dalle lettere*, 420–22.

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1860s and continuing for the next two decades, he occasionally put aside his distaste for such questions and commented, often in contradictory terms, on the future of Italian music. In December 1867 he depicted the role of the artist in a quasi-prophetic manner:

> the artist must peer into the future, see new worlds in the chaos; and if on the new path, at its very end, he sees a *feeble light*, he should not be intimidated by the dark that enshrouds it: he should walk on, and if sometimes he stumbles and falls, he should get up and move ever onward.[97]

Similarly, in a letter to his friend and senator-to-be Giuseppe Piroli, in May of the following year, he went so far as to list the steps modern composers had made in detaching themselves from the early nineteenth-century tradition.[98] And yet, only three years later, writing to Francesco Florimo, he would voice his famous call for a return to 'the past': to *l'antico*.

But what did Verdi mean by *l'antico*? And how might this relate to the debates about musical taste and monuments that emerged at the time? Much has been made of Verdi's motto since its appearance. Verdi, in the process of declining an invitation to be director of the Naples conservatory, originally used the phrase as part of his advice on how to improve music education in Italy. He recommended rigorous study of the old Italian masters (particularly Palestrina and his contemporaries), and little exposure to modern music. The danger of seeing modern operas, he argued, was that one could be charmed 'by their many harmonic and orchestral beauties' – 'beauties' that, interestingly enough, had been one of the hot topics of the debates around Verdi's latest works (*Don Carlo* in particular). Instead, students should focus on fugue and counterpoint, only afterwards composing their own music. This would save them from the risk of joining the 'the crowd of imitators' – another accusation that had recently been made against Verdi himself.[99] The letter – as Verdi must have expected – was soon published in newspapers and musical magazines, giving the motto its substantial notoriety in subsequent years.[100] Most interestingly, Verdi's austere advice was retrospectively loaded with alternative meanings, ones that do not always seem to reflect the original (admittedly ambiguous) sense. 'Torniamo all'antico' came to represent as much an exhortation for students to practise Palestrinian counterpoint as a rallying cry for those wishing to return to 'truly Italian' music (i.e. Rossini)[101] – as much a call for the rediscovery of the

[97] 'l'artista deve scrutar nel futuro, veder nel caos nuovi mondi; e se nella nuova strada vede in fondo in fondo il *lumicino*, non lo spaventi il buio che l'attornia: cammini, e se qualche volta inciampa e cade, s'alzi e tiri diritto sempre': Verdi's letter to Vincenzo Torelli, 23 December 1867, in *I copialettere*, 618–19, here 619.

[98] See Verdi's letter to Giuseppe Piroli, 30 May 1868, in Gustavo Marchesi, 'Gli anni della forza del destino', *Verdi: bollettino dell'ISV*, 2/6 (1966), 1505–42, here 1523.

[99] 'dalle molte bellezze armoniche ed istromentali', 'turba degli imitatori': letter to Florimo, 5 January 1871, 233. The accusation was often heard, both in France and in Italy, at the time of the first performances of *Don Carlo*.

[100] The letter, published in *Il pungolo* (Naples) on 17 January 1871, was reprinted in the *GMM*, 22 January 1871, 35.

[101] See 'Rassegna musicale', *Nuova antologia*, 30/12 (1875), 876–86, here 877, and 34/8 (1877), 970–9, here 979. Interestingly enough, both articles are signed by G[irolamo] A[lessandro] Biaggi.

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art of *bel canto* as a case for support, at the turn of the century, for the early music movement.[102] Verdi's motto, in other words, became weighed down with its own historical baggage.

An element common to all these appropriations of Verdi's statement resides in an attempt to foster the idea of a national(ist) revival of Italian music. What is rarely cited, though, is that Verdi makes another, equally arresting statement in that same letter to Florimo about *l'antico*: 'I would have liked, so to speak, to put one foot in the past [*passato*], and the other in the present and the future, since I am not afraid of the *music of the future*'.[103] True, the expression *musica dell'avvenire* may not on that occasion have referred exclusively to foreign music; it may not have been at odds with the revival of the Italian musical tradition, which Verdi was supposedly supporting. Yet this and other elements – Verdi's invitation to study 'modern declamation';[104] his warning to young composers of the perils he himself had experienced and had cost him hurtful denunciations; his far from simple views on Wagner; the increasingly modern aspects of his late music – could at least invite reconsideration of what *l'antico* meant to him. Perhaps they might even lead us towards a more nuanced, more open-ended understanding of the older Verdi's call for a 'return to the past', and of his attitudes to 'modern' music. I cannot, of course, expand on this here. I should like, however, to consider briefly *one* possible resonance for Verdi of *l'antico* and try to apply it, if in a loose, non-prescriptive way, to the issue of the composer's late operatic revisions. This will eventually take me full circle back to the topic of monumentality.

'So, neither the *past* [*passato*] nor the *future*!', Verdi exclaimed in 1883, writing to Giulio Ricordi. This may sound like a renewed claim to be the long-awaited link that would connect the past with the future of Italian music: a new colossus of Rhodes, perhaps, with one leg on each side of the harbour of music's present. Verdi nevertheless went on to explain:

> It is true that I said: 'Let's return to the past [*antico*]', but I mean the past [*antico*] that is groundwork, foundation, solidity; I mean that past [*antico*] which has been put on one side by modern exuberance, and to which we must inevitably return sooner or later. For now let's allow the river to overflow. We will build the banks later.[105]

[102] Laura Basini lists these among the meanings attached to the motto in various sets of late nineteenth-century writings on music; see her 'Verdi and Sacred revivalism in Post Unification Italy', *19th-Century Music*, 28/2 (2004), 133–59, esp. 145–7. For further examples of the use of the motto, see Filippi's reviews of *Simon Boccanegra* and *Don Carlo*, in *La perseveranza*, 25 March 1881 and 14 January 1884, reproduced respectively in Hans Busch, ed. and trans., *Verdi's* Otello *and* Simon Boccanegra *(Revised Version) in Letters and Documents*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1988), vol. 2, 666–72, here 669, and *Carteggio Verdi–Ricordi: 1882–1885,* 405–9, here 408. Filippi sees Verdi's instruction exemplified in the brief 'benediction' (the 'Sostenuto religioso') of the Gabriele–Fiesco duet of Act I of the new *Boccanegra*, and in the new prelude to Act II of the revised *Don Carlo*.

[103] 'Avrei voluto, per così dire, porre un piede sul passato, e l'altro sul presente, e sull'avvenire, ché a me non fa paura la *musica dell'avvenire*': Verdi's letter to Florimo, 5 January 1871, 232.

[104] Letter to Florimo, 5 January 1871, 233.

[105] 'Dunque, né *passato* né *avvenire*! È vero che io ho detto: "Torniamo all'antico", ma io intendo l'antico, che è base, fondamento, solidità; io intendo quell'antico che è stato messo da parte dalle esuberanze moderne, ed a cui si dovrà ritornare presto o tardi infallibilmente. Per ora lasciamo che il torrente straripi. Gli argini si faranno dopo': Verdi's letter to Giulio Ricordi, 26 December 1883, in *I copialettere*, 629.

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Here *l'antico*, which Verdi distinguishes from *il passato*, seems to indicate no musical past, no specific repertory or tradition. The attributes through which he describes it – 'groundwork, foundation, solidity' – could hardly be more generic. All of these words, however, confer an element of permanence and stability: far from serving as a historically descriptive concept, *l'antico* seems to suggest a suspension of all historical referents, the superseding of the contingent, the transitory, by means of the timeless. Perhaps it expressed a personal need, all too understandable in the aging Verdi, to stop what cannot be stopped, the inexorable passing of time.

Verdi's letter to Ricordi, which dates from only a few days before the La Scala premiere of the revised *Don Carlo*, may invite further thinking about the increasingly solid position that Verdi, both as opera composer and a national figure, had gained with Italian audiences. In the last decades of his life, he was fully aware of his status as both a musical and national 'monument', one that would almost certainly survive for many years and thus have an effect on future generations. The active role he took in building his public image is proof of this, as is the 'operatic', elevated tone of some of his letters. There is a sense, then, in which Verdi's mature revisions could also be read in this light: as an attempt to 'monumentalise' some of his most innovative music, to bestow an abiding status on some of his operas (ones that, in the new repertory-dominated musical system, he felt were going to last).[106] Verdi's continual preoccupation with the Philip–Posa duet, for instance, and his persistent emphasis on the Inquisitor scene, point to the fact that he was aware of the novelty of these pieces. Moreover, by treating these political conversations with such care, he was also making a point about opera as a genre: about what aspects of human life could be encompassed within the operatic realm.[107]

We have, in all this, encountered one further implication of the concept of the 'monumental': the idea of durability and permanence. Modulation to this key might seem to lead away from the core idea of this essay. I have suggested that, if in late 1860s Italy Verdi's *Don Carlo* was labelled as a monument, it was mainly because it was perceived as poised between the past and the future, and during an

[106] As it happens, *Don Carlo* fell out of the repertory in Italy as elsewhere in the late nineteenth century, and was rarely staged until at least the second decade of the twentieth century; for a brief performance history, see Giorgio Gualerzi, 'Un secolo di "Don Carlo"', in *Atti del II° congresso internazionale di studi verdiani*, 494–504.

[107] The 'unoperatic' (political) quality of the material for these pieces was also remarked upon by some nineteenth-century commentators. In France, Théophile Gautier stated that 'cette conversation politique et religieuse n'était pas aisée à mettre en musique, mais Verdi s'en est tiré magistralement' ('this political and religious conversation was not easily to render in music, but Verdi came through it brilliantly'): *Le Moniteur universel*, 18 March 1867, quoted from Gartioux, *Giuseppe Verdi, Don Carlos*, 105. Fortis claimed that in Philip and the Inquisitor one could see synthesised 'due principi da secoli in lotta, l'Altare e il Trono, quell'atmosfera storica e morale, che la musica soltanto può rendere' ('two principles which have been in fight with each other for centuries, the Altar and the Throne; that historical and moral atmosphere which only music can represent'): *Il pungolo*, 28 March 1868, 1. The Philip–Posa duet was described as being 'di un genere affatto nuovo; è la politica trasportata nel campo della musica' ('of an entirely new kind; it is politics brought into music'): *Gazzetta di Venezia*, 12 March 1869, reprinted in 'Supplemento alla *GMM*', 21 March 1869, 3. See also Budden, *From* Don Carlos *to* Falstaff, 16.

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historical moment that was as intrigued about these categories as it was uncertain about where to situate itself within the space opening up between them. Put differently, the monumental status of Verdi's opera was linked to the work's very modernity: to its 'self-consuming actuality', in Jürgen Habermas's definition; to its resonances with perceptions of time that were widespread in Italy at that period.[108] The infiltration of the idea of permanence – an idea we can hardly ignore when addressing the topic of monuments – does not, after all, cast any shadow on this point. And this not only because a monument's aspiration to everlasting life cannot, for better or worse, always be fulfilled, but also because, to borrow one of Frank Kermode's thoughts on the 'classic', it is all 'a question of how the works of the past may retain identity in change': how the model, be it one we call 'classic' or 'monumental', renews itself from one generation to the next by constantly remoulding its meaning – by, time and again, being made modern.[109]

Robert Musil once suggested that 'there is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument'.[110] Relentless presence, that is, brings about concealment. But to those who allow themselves a few seconds to look up, monuments can renew their narrative function. At the least, they can remind us of 'the value of time'.[111] The aging Verdi may not always have welcomed the honours his contemporaries conferred on him through imperishable objects made of marble and stone; it was not by such means that he wished to defy the laws of nature. He did, though, take great pains in updating some of his music in order to save it from oblivion. Perhaps he was answering his operatic monuments' call not to forget. In the words of Verdi's last collaborator, Arrigo Boito, no matter how worn and dated a monument becomes,

Pur colle rotte braccia
quel torso ancor m'allaccia,
e al secolo che raglia
sembra cercar battaglia.[112]

Yet with broken arms,
That bust still enmeshes me,
And seems to seek battle
With the braying century.

[108] Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 8. Of course, this emphasis on the present, on the contingent had already been indicated as an important feature of modern art by Baudelaire in his *The Painter of Modern Life*; see Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, NC, 1987), 46–58.

[109] Frank Kermode, *The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1983), 16.

[110] Robert Musil, 'Monuments', in *Posthumous Papers of a Living Author*, trans. Peter Wortsman (Hygiene, 1987), 61–4, 61.

[111] Verdi's letter to Arrigo Boito, 29 March 1862, quoted from Marcello Conati and Mario Medici, eds., *The Verdi-Boito Correspondence*, trans. William Weaver (Chicago and London, 1994), xiii.

[112] Arrigo Boito, 'Un torso' (1862), in Boito, *Tutti gli scritti*, 15–8, here 15.

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