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Bridging Divides: Verdi's *Requiem* in Post-Unification Italy

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> La musica, come la donna, è così santa d'avvenire e di purificazione, che gli uomini, anche solcandola di prostituzione, non possono cancellar tutta intera l'iride di promessa che la incorona.[1]
>
> (Giuseppe Mazzini, 1836)

> Vi sono delle nature virtuosissime, che hanno bisogno di credere in Dio; altre, ugualmente perfette, che sono felici non credendo a niente ed osservando solo rigorosamente, ogni precetto di severa moralità: Manzoni, e Verdi! … Questi due uomini mi fanno pensare, sono per me un vero soggetto di meditazione. Ma le mie imperfezioni e la mia ignoranza, mi rendono incapace di sciogliere l'oscuro problema.[2]
>
> (Giuseppina Strepponi, 1872)

On 22 May 1874, the first anniversary of the novelist Alessandro Manzoni's death, a small army of local citizens along with countless Italian and foreign visitors gathered – tickets in hand – in the nave of the church of San Marco in Milan to attend a distinctly unorthodox ceremony: the celebration of a *messa secca* (a Mass without the consecration of bread and wine) for the soul of Italy's most

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[1] 'Music, like a woman, is so holy with anticipation and purification, that even when men sully it with prostitution, they cannot totally obliterate the aura of promise that crowns it.' Giuseppe Mazzini, *Filosofia della musica* (1836), repr. in *Filosofia della musica, e estetica musicale del primo Ottocento*, ed. Marcello de Angelis (Florence, 1977), 33–77 (p. 48); trans. quoted from *Source Readings in Music History*, ed. Oliver Strunk, rev. Leo Treitler (New York and London, 1998), 1085–94 (p. 1085).

[2] 'There are men with a very virtuous nature who need to believe in God; others whose nature is equally perfect who are happy without believing in anything and just following rigorously every precept of severe morality: Manzoni, and Verdi! … These two men make me think; they constitute for me a real subject of meditation. But my imperfections and my ignorance do not allow me to resolve this obscure question.' Giuseppina Strepponi, letter to Clara Maffei, 7 September 1872 (*Quartetto milanese ottocentesco*, ed. Arturo di Ascoli (Rome, 1974), 282). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

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famous man of letters. The event featured the world première of Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* and was widely reported in both the Italian and the international press (see Figure 1).[3] It was almost entirely the artistic solemnity, as opposed to the liturgical goings-on, that attracted journalistic attention. Verdi's work, which marked his first public attempt at sacred composition and followed the success of *Aida* in 1871, was hailed in his homeland as 'a new triumph for Italian art', 'the most important artistic event of the year'.[4] Numerous observers took pains to explain its relationship with the centuries-old Italian tradition of sacred music. The renowned critic Filippo Filippi even ventured that the piece would influence the development of all religious art.[5] The nationalist overtones, which re-emerged at further performances of the *Requiem* at La Scala a few days later, loom large in contemporary reviews. As so often during the period, Italian anxieties about crisis and degeneration – whether political, social, moral or artistic – were negotiated on musical grounds by extolling the nation's latest compositional achievement.[6] In the

[3] See David Rosen, *Verdi: 'Requiem'* (Cambridge, 1995), 11. Following the San Marco première, the *Messa da Requiem per l'anniversario della morte di Alessandro Manzoni 22 maggio 1874* received three performances at La Scala (on 25, 27 and 29 May), the first conducted by Verdi, the others by Franco Faccio. The soloists were Teresa Stolz, Maria Waldmann, Giuseppe Capponi and Ormondo Maini; the chorus and orchestra were formed of approximately 120 and 100 participants respectively. Further performances with Verdi took place in Paris (1874, 1875 and 1876), London (1875), Vienna (1875), Cologne (1877) and Milan (1879), the last of these for the benefit of the victims of a flood that had hit northern Italy.

[4] 'Una novella vittoria dell'arte italiana' (Amintore Galli, in *Il secolo*, 23 May 1874, 2); 'nel regno dell'arte, il più grande avvenimento dell'anno' ('Z', in *Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d'Italia*, 29 May 1874, 1). Dottor Verità (alias Leone Fortis) was even more explicit in his patriotic zeal: 'Udendo la messa di Verdi, noi abbiamo sentito l'orgoglio di appartenere ad una nazione che può in arte tenere sempre il primato del mondo […] e ad una città che onora la memoria di un grande Scrittore con l'opera di un grande Maestro' ('Listening to Verdi's Mass, we felt proud to belong to a nation that is still pre-eminent in art […] and to a city that pays homage to the memory of a great Writer with the work of a great Maestro'; in *Il pungolo*, 23 May 1874 (morning issue), 2).

[5] 'La *Messa da Requiem* del Verdi è destinata, pei suoi nuovi e singolari caratteri, a segnare una linea impensata di demarcazione nello sviluppo dell'arte religiosa, aprendole forse un più vasto orizzonte' ('Owing to its novel and characteristic qualities, Verdi's Mass is destined to mark an unexpected watershed in the development of religious art, possibly opening up for it a larger horizon'; Filippo Filippi, in *La perseveranza*, 23 May 1874, 1). Filippi's statement was echoed by a critic in Venice: 'Il *Requiem* di Verdi […] segnerà indubbiamente un'era nuova per le composizioni di carattere sacro' ('No doubt Verdi's *Requiem* will mark a new era for sacred composition'; *Gazzetta di Venezia*, quoted from *Il* Requiem *del maestro Giuseppe Verdi a Venezia al Teatro Malibran nel luglio 1875*, ed. Pietro Faustini (Venice, 1875), 8). The Venice correspondent for the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* (henceforth *GMM*) argued that 'Il *Requiem* di Verdi porrà nella Storia della musica sacra le due famose colonne d'Ercole' ('Verdi's *Requiem* will constitute the Pillars of Hercules in the history of sacred music'; 'P. F.', in *GMM*, 18 July 1875, 236).

[6] An unpublished letter to Verdi from Tito Ricordi (12 June 1873) points to the national significance of the *Requiem* project: 'Permetti che io venga a porgerti le mie più entusiastiche congratulazioni pel tuo sublime pensiero di scrivere una Messa per l'anniversario della morte di

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Figure 1. 'La prima esecuzione della Messa di Verdi nella Chiesa di S. Marco', drawing by Pessina, *L'illustrazione universale*, 14 June 1874, 20.

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circumstances, the service celebrated by Monsignor Giuseppe Calvi, provost of the *cappella metropolitana*, went almost unnoticed in press reports – as did, more curiously, any substantial connection with Manzoni.

The mixture of religious and secular matters is nevertheless inscribed, and poignantly so, in Verdi's autograph score. Bound between each movement of the *Requiem* are 'rubric pages' (a total of six) with indications of what was to happen at those points. Such notes, David Rosen has suggested, must have been written to help Verdi (the conductor) 'fit the movements of the *Requiem* into the plainchant Ambrosian Mass' celebrated by Monsignor Calvi. They range from records of Latin prayers to visual cues for the movements of the liturgical participants; from indications of when to attack the next piece to excerpts of plainchant.[7] What is more, if early critical sidelining of the liturgical service may be surprising, especially in the context of the tensions that existed at the time between Italian political and religious authorities,[8] the San Marco event's religious component is in a broader sense all too perceptible in contemporary reports.

Ever since the work's first nineteenth-century performances and Hans von Bülow's criticism of it as an 'Oper im Kirchengewande' ('opera in ecclesiastical robes'), the '*Requiem* Problem' has been posed chiefly in terms of musical genre: the extent to which Verdi's composition bears traces of either an operatic or a sacred idiom.[9] With these considerations have come attempts to define Verdi's

Manzoni. Sì, lo ripeto, sublime pensiero possibile ad attuarsi solamente in questa nostra patria terra altre volte chiamata dei morti!! Infatti quale altra nazione potrebbe in quest'epoca vantare due uomini di genio, così grandi che l'uno fosse veramente ed in tutto degno di onorare la memoria dell'altro? Che il cielo mi conservi in salute per godere all'epoca prefissa delle sublimi, religiose melodie che avrai composte per questo Santo e grande Scopo' ('Let me express to you my most enthusiastic congratulations on your sublime idea of composing a Mass for the anniversary of Manzoni's death. I repeat, a sublime idea, which could have materialized only in our homeland, sometimes called the land of the dead!! Indeed what other nation could pride itself on two such men of genius, so great that the one is truly worthy of paying homage to the memory of the other? May God keep me in good health so that on the agreed date I shall enjoy the sublime, religious melodies you will have composed for this Holy and great Purpose'; from the digital archive of the Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani (original at Villa Verdi, Sant'Agata)).

[7] David Rosen, critical commentary to Giuseppe Verdi, *Messa da Requiem per l'anniversario della morte di Manzoni 22 maggio 1874*, ed. Rosen (Chicago, IL, and Milan, 1990), 5. A facsimile edition of the autograph was published by Ricordi in 1941 with a preface by Ildebrando Pizzetti.

[8] These tensions had come to the surface early on, when the Milan city council had first convened to discuss plans for the Manzoni commemoration. Arguments arose about whether it would be appropriate for the municipality to associate itself with a religious ceremony. The council eventually approved the project; but given the conflicts between the newly born Italian nation state and the church (conflicts made harsher by the conquest of Rome in 1870), the potential implications of mingling secular and religious interests were to remain a focus of debate during subsequent months. They were, however, reformulated in musical polemics about the genre of Verdi's work.

[9] Hans von Bülow made his criticism in the two-part article 'Musikalisches aus Italien' published in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Munich) on 28 May and 1 June 1874 (pp. 2293–4 and 2351–2).

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work from a political perspective. The politics of Verdi's *Requiem* have been located not only in the composer's decision to pay public homage to Manzoni – the most prominent literary icon of Italy's so-called Risorgimento – but also in his turn to sacred composition during a time of nationalistic revival of 'old' Italian church music.[10] Pressing further on these and other oppositions – old/new, sacred/operatic, vocal/instrumental and progress/crisis – may seem to reiterate overstated aspects of the work's early reception. However, examining critics' pluralistic concerns, as well as certain aspects of the *Requiem* itself, can also offer new perspectives on its nineteenth-century political reverberations.

To address such concerns requires placing early debates about the *Requiem* within a larger musical and cultural context, notably in connection with contemporary perceptions of opera and of a broader Italian cultural identity. Concepts of crisis and degeneration, as well as claims of progress and innovation, pervaded nineteenth-century European discourse; more importantly, they were among the most pressing preoccupations of Italian music critics. Opera had been at the core of such debates at least since the 1860s, and figured prominently in discussions of the musical genre of Verdi's *Requiem*. To be sure, no 'German versus Italian' dispute of the kind that often permeated operatic debates of the time was fought over Verdi's sacred work. Often-rehearsed criticisms of Wagnerian influences on the composer, which could easily have been applied to certain passages in the *Requiem*, left hardly any trace in the press (in Italy at least); nor was the future of Italian opera – apparently so uncertain and so tightly bound up with each and every new composition by Verdi – often addressed.[11] Of course, these represented two distinct groups of concerns: those about the 'crisis' of Italian opera

[10] For some recent accounts of the work's early reception in Italy and abroad, see Rosen, *Verdi: 'Requiem'*; Laura Basini, 'Verdi and Sacred Revivalism in Post Unification Italy', *19th-Century Music*, 28 (2004–5), 133–59; and Gundula Kreuzer, '"Oper im Kirchengewande"? Verdi's *Requiem* and the Anxieties of the Young German Empire', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 58 (2005), 399–449 (a revised version is included in her *Verdi and the Germans: From Unification to the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 2010), 39–84). For a reading of the *Requiem* as a message of national unity, see Pierluigi Petrobelli, 'Un messaggio di unità nazionale', *Messa da Requiem*, programme note for the Verdi Festival 2001 at the Teatro Regio in Parma, 11–15. For an interpretation of the work as a farewell to an entire period of Italian history, see Rubens Tedeschi, 'Requiem per il Risorgimento', programme notes for a performance of the work at La Scala in September 1985, 15–18, and James Hepokoski, 'Verdi's *Requiem*: A Memorial for an Epoch', booklet note for *Verdi: 'Requiem'*, Deutsche Grammophon 423674-2 (1989), 13–17.

[11] References to German influences did, however, surface in articles from abroad. Benoît Jean Baptiste Jouvin argued that 'nell'ultime tre grandi opere che ho citato [*Don Carlos*, *Aida* e *Messa da Requiem*], Verdi si è spinto verso le nubi alemanne, ma conservando nei suoi occhi, per illuminargli la via, gli splendori del cielo italiano' ('in the last three operas I have mentioned, Verdi pushed himself towards the German clouds, but without losing sight, to illuminate his path, of the brightness of the Italian sky'; quoted from *GMM*, 23 May 1875, 168). A critic for the *Daily Telegraph* spotted 'una tendenza manifesta verso le idee germaniche' ('a clear attraction to German ideas') in Verdi's work (quoted from 'Supplemento al n. 21' of *GMM*, 23 May 1875, 6).

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and those about the hoped-for resurgence of 'old' sacred music. But Verdi's *Requiem* nevertheless came to be examined in ways that were, so to speak, operatically resonant: similar tensions and contradictions, perhaps even shared attempts to redefine 'truly Italian music', ran through discussions of both operatic and sacred music. On a wider level, nineteenth-century accounts of Verdi's sacred composition articulate larger trends in Italian culture, ones in which uneasy opposites coexisted. They thus lay bare the politics of Verdi's *Requiem* in multiform, subtle ways, ones whose conciliatory gestures may still be of interest today.

In what follows, I will use Verdi's work – both excerpts from the music and instances of its controversial Italian reception – to suggest a revised understanding of the late nineteenth-century self-image of Italy and Italian music. As we shall see, Italian reports were driven at least as much by an interest in the progressive quality of Verdi's music as by an attempt to emphasize the *Requiem*'s connections with a burgeoning repertory of 'old' sacred Italian compositions. Verdi himself, through his musical language, offered suggestive ways out of those nationalistically inflected dichotomies mentioned earlier. The *Requiem*'s style and its early Italian reception thus confront us with a multiple image of 1870s Verdi: one that upholds Italy's greatest artist as a force capable not only of conjuring the past, but also of musically regenerating the nation.

National religious sounds

As is well known, the origins of Verdi's project go back to 1869, when the composer suggested a composite Mass, to be composed by 13 Italian composers in memory of Rossini, who had died in Paris the previous November. According to Verdi's plan, the piece was to be performed in Bologna (Rossini's adopted home town) on the first anniversary of the great man's death; then the score would be sealed away in an archive. Although eventually completed, the Mass was not performed (at least, not until more than a century later). Verdi's contribution was a Libera me, the final movement. A few years later, this piece provided the initial material for Verdi's individual homage to Manzoni.[12]

The Rossini and Manzoni compositions were in many ways different in scope and conception. The former aimed at representing, in Verdi's words, a *Monumento all'Arte*, a *Festa patria*: an event whose political and historical significance would stem from its exclusively Italian authorship and from a single performance at a precise place and date. Failing to accomplish these conditions would, he said, result

[12] On the Rossini Mass, see *Messa per Rossini: La storia, il testo, la musica*, ed. Michele Girardi and Pierluigi Petrobelli (Parma and Milan, 1988). For an account of the *Requiem*'s compositional history, see Verdi, *Messa da Requiem*, ed. Rosen, xli–lvi.

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in a 'mere work of art'.[13] The *Messa da Requiem* for Manzoni, on the other hand, was conceived not just as a tribute to a highly esteemed Italian, but also as a musical work for immediate circulation. Verdi did insist on the *Requiem* being played on the exact date of the anniversary of Manzoni's death;[14] yet, soon after the Milan performances, he took it on a tour of major Italian and foreign theatres (Milan, Paris, London and Vienna), the income this generated causing journalistic criticism of the commercial nature of his initial proposal.[15]

Few comparisons were drawn between the two commemorative projects at the time. Moreover, knowledge of Verdi's 'recycling' of the 1869 Libera me for the Manzoni Mass did not emerge immediately – at least, to my knowledge, not until 1876.[16] A different set of connections between Verdi and Rossini was nevertheless more easily made: that concerning their sacred compositions.[17] As Gundula Kreuzer has observed, Verdi's idea for the *Requiem*'s European tour was to some extent inspired by the commercial success of Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle* (1863/7).[18] After Rossini's death, the unperformed orchestral version of the *Petite messe* had begun a voyage through several countries – one that took it to, among other places, Italy. Responses were mixed and, besides repeating the older tale of

[13] 'Semplicemente un'opera d'arte' (Verdi, letters to Angelo Mariani, 19 August 1869; Camillo Casarini, 10 November 1869; and Giulio Ricordi, 18 November 1869; *I copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi*, ed. Gaetano Cesari and Alessandro Luzio (Milan, 1913), 211, 217 and 218).

[14] See Verdi, letters to Giulio Ricordi, 14 February 1874 (Franco Abbiati, *Giuseppe Verdi*, 4 vols. (Milan, 1959), iii, 665) and Giulio Belinzaghi, 14 March 1874 (*I copialettere*, ed. Cesari and Luzio, 286, note 3 (with a mistaken date)).

[15] 'Quanto era più dignitoso e da vero Italiano il provvedere in modo che quella messa […] potesse a tutti gli anniversari della morte del gran Manzoni, venir eseguita in una chiesa di Milano! Certo che si guadagnava meno danaro, ma si perdeva anche meno decoro' ('How much more respectable and worthy of a true Italian it would have been if that Mass […] had been performed in a church of Milan on every anniversary of Manzoni's death! No doubt it would have been less lucrative, but it would have been more decorous'; Vincenzo Sassaroli, *Considerazioni sullo stato attuale dell'arte musicale in Italia e sull'importanza artistica dell'opera* Aida *e della* Messa *di Verdi* (Genoa, 1876), 33). Giulio Roberti referred in 1879 to Verdi's 'speculazioni bottegali' ('business speculations'), and wrote that 'il Manzoni fu preso come pretesto per comporre e far eseguire una messa, e soprattutto per far quattrini' ('Manzoni became a pretext to compose and perform a Mass, and above all to make money'; in *La stampa*, 5 August 1879, 2). Verdi had been anxious to stress the disinterested nature of his proposal: 'Fatemi il piacere di telegrafare subito a Milano a chi credete perché venga smentita subito stasera la notizia che si eseguirà la *Messa* a pagamento' ('Please telegraph immediately whomever you think appropriate in Milan and make sure by tonight the news is disavowed that the Mass will be performed for money'; letter to Giulio Ricordi, 20–23 April 1874 (digital archive of the Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani (original at Archivio Ricordi, Milan)).

[16] See 'X. Y.', in *Il commercio di Genova*, 19 August 1876, repr. in *Giuseppe Verdi, genovese*, ed. Roberto Iovino and Stefano Verdino (Lucca, 2000), 139.

[17] See, for instance, Girolamo Alessandro Biaggi, 'Rassegna musicale', *Nuova antologia di scienze, lettere ed arti*, 26 (1874), 772–82 (p. 781).

[18] See Kreuzer, '"Oper im Kirchengewande"?', 412–13, repr. in *Verdi and the Germans*, 51–2.

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the contentious reception of the *Stabat mater* (1832/41), raised issues that re-emerged in the Verdi debates.[19]

The première of the *Petite messe* (in Rossini's revised, 1867 version) at Paris's Théâtre Italien in February 1869 was preceded by much expectation, as were the first Italian performances during subsequent months.[20] Following initial enthusiasm, the work became the centre of polemics in various parts of Italy (Bologna, Turin and Milan). Debates focused on the appropriateness of the theatre for a religious piece. After its Parisian debut, the critic of Ricordi's *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* lamented:

> [La *Petite messe*] ben altro effetto farebbe egualmente in una cattedrale, perché lo strumentale ne è ricco e possente; ma al teatro, splendidamente illuminato, senza quel mistero, quella solennità che deve accompagnar la musica religiosa; al teatro, con gli artisti seduti lì, in faccia agli spettatori, in abito nero, con le spettatrici che agitano i ventagli, giuocano cogli occhialetti o salutano le persone di loro conoscenza, l'esecuzione perde molto del suo bel *carattere religioso*.[21]
>
> ([The *Petite messe*] would make a very different effect in a cathedral, because the orchestration is rich and powerful; but in the theatre, richly illuminated, it lacks that mystery, that solemn character which should accompany sacred music; in the theatre, with the performers seated in front of the audience and dressed in black, with the women in the audience fanning themselves, playing with their opera glasses and greeting their acquaintances, the performance loses much of its beautiful *religious character*.)

Similarly, following the first La Scala performance, the composer and music teacher Alberto Mazzucato criticized the 'sconvenienza del luogo', claiming that the correct environment for the *Petite messe* was 'il tempio cristiano'.[22] The same sentiments were voiced by another critic, who complained about operatic habits (the breaking up of the composition into two parts, 'come un libretto d'opera', and the addition of a ballet) that had affected the concert.[23] The very forms, that is, in which the piece was realized were felt to impact negatively on its religious atmosphere. So, too, were aspects of its interpretation by the singers. As one critic reminded his readers,

[19] For a collection of reviews of Rossini's *Stabat mater*, see *Lo* Stabat mater *di Rossini giudicato dalla stampa periodica francese ed italiana, ossia raccolta dei migliori articoli artistici pubblicati dal giornalismo delle due nazioni sovra tale argomento* (Milan, 1843).

[20] See Gino Stefani, 'La *Messe solennelle* di Rossini nella critica dell'epoca', *Bollettino del Centro Rossiniano di Studi*, 8 (1968), 137–48, and Roberta Montemorra Marvin, 'La *Petite messe solennelle* di Rossini: La sua prima esecuzione in Italia', *ibid.*, 41 (2001), 37–82.

[21] 'A. A.', in *GMM*, 14 March 1869, 88.

[22] Alberto Mazzucato, in *Il mondo artistico*, 2 May 1869, 1.

[23] 'Il corriere', in *Il mondo artistico*, 2 May 1869, 2.

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> Non bisogna eseguire un pezzo di musica da chiesa come si eseguirebbe un solfeggio qualunque. Bisogna che la voce si animi, diventi espressiva secondo la parola, secondo l'arcano senso del verso. Soprattutto vuolsi quell'accento convinto che è la caratteristica della fede, poi gli slanci ardenti dell'anima innamorata del bello, del vero.[24]
>
> (One should not perform a piece of church music as one would sol-fa any old piece. The voice should become animated, express the meaning of the words, following the hidden sense of the poetic line. Above all, what one needs is the sincere tone typical of faith, and the burning impetus of the soul which loves beauty and truth.)

There were nevertheless elements of Rossini's style that made negotiation of the *Petite messe*'s sacred character even more difficult. The work was agreed to be less problematic than the *Stabat mater*, but remained an oddity in its blending of modern (operatic) and ancient (sacred) musical idioms.[25] What the latter pole of this dichotomy meant is not easy to pin down, but spotting some of the musical gestures with which it reverberated will help clarify the backdrop to the Verdian polemics.

What was generally understood in Italy to be 'good' sacred music was solemn, austere vocal compositions, relying on diatonic contrapuntal procedures and free from instrumental or rhythmic effects that could impede understanding of the liturgical text. These conditions were thought to have been accomplished most notably by Palestrina, hence the label *alla Palestrina* for music in this style.[26] The reasons for Palestrina's nineteenth-century popularity with Italians were not solely musical. By the latter part of the century, and through the heroic image fostered by his first Italian biographer, Giuseppe Baini, the composer had become a symbol of Italian-ness, a model in 'moral terms'.[27] Revival of his music, both through preparation of editions and (increasingly) through performances, expanded in the last few decades of the century, characterized as they were by the rise of the Cecilian movement. Whatever the actual knowledge of his compositions during the period, Palestrina became a staple in the sacred musical canon that took shape after Italian unification – a canon that served church as well as nationalist agendas.[28]

[24] 'M.', in *Il monitore di Bologna*, 24 March 1869, quoted from Marvin, 'La *Petite messe solennelle* di Rossini', 53.

[25] See, for instance, Filippi's article in *La perseveranza*, repr. in *GMM*, 4 April 1869, 115–17.

[26] See Stefani, 'La *Messe solennelle* di Rossini', 142, and Marvin, 'La *Petite messe solennelle* di Rossini', 51.

[27] Giuseppe Baini, *Memorie storico-critiche della vita e delle opere di Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1828); Marco Di Pasquale, 'Inventing Palestrina: Ideological and Historiographical Approaches in Nineteenth-Century Italy', *Schweizer Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft/Annales suisses de musicologie/Annuario svizzero di musicologia*, 30 (2010), 223–66 (p. 239).

[28] For a chronological account of the late nineteenth-century sacred-music 'renaissance' in Italy, see Felice Rainoldi, *Sentieri della musica sacra: Dall'Ottocento al Concilio Vaticano II: Documentazione su ideologie e prassi* (Rome, 1996). See also Basini, 'Verdi and Sacred Revivalism', and Roberto Calabretto, 'Tomadini, Amelli e la nascita di *Musica sacra*', *Candotti, Tomadini, De Santi e la riforma della musica sacra*, ed. Franco Colussi and Lucia Boscolo Folegana (Udine, 2011), 471–8. For music and the Cecilian movement in Italy, see *Aspetti del cecilianesimo nella cultura musicale*

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Perceptions of Palestrina's music were, however, complex. As James Garratt has stressed in the German context, there is no easy way of reducing the nineteenth-century expression *alla Palestrina* to a single notion.[29] One recurrent theme in Italian perceptions is the importance of imitative counterpoint: 'canons, imitation and fugues technically constitute Palestrina's music', proclaimed one of Italy's leading music critics of the time, Amintore Galli, in a collection of biographies of past and present composers.[30] In similar vein, Vincenzo Bigliani maintained that ever since Palestrina the two elements most typical of sacred music had been 'fugue and dissonance', and that the fugal style was 'most appropriate for sacred texts and the liturgy'.[31] Even the authoritative pro-church journal *Musica sacra*, in its inaugural issue of 1877, declared that 'the fugal, imitative style [is] the most appropriate for the purposes of sacred music' (here 'sacred music' must, of course, be taken to refer to music *alla Palestrina*, rather than to plainchant).[32] More acute observers, such as Girolamo Alessandro Biaggi, keen on emphasizing musical progress, noted a transformation in Palestrina's style after the *Missa Papae Marcelli*, which marked the beginning of a second manner characterized by greater reliance on Italian melody (as opposed to the contrapuntal artifice of the Flemish

italiana dell'Ottocento, ed. Mauro Casadei Turroni Monti and Cesarino Ruini (Vatican City, 2004).

[29] See James Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination: Interpreting Historicism in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge, 2002), 3. The nineteenth-century reception of Palestrina in Italy has received little attention from scholars; see, however, Leopold M. Kantner and Angela Pachovsky, *La cappella musicale pontificia nell'Ottocento* (Rome, 1998), esp. pp. 65–78; and Angela Pachovsky, 'La prassi esecutiva dei mottetti del Palestrina nel periodo ottocentesco della cappella pontificia: Testimonianze dei diari sistini', *Palestrina e l'Europa: Atti del III Convegno Internazionale di Studi, 6–9 ottobre 1994*, ed. Giancarlo Rostirolla, Stefania Soldati and Elena Zomparelli (Palestrina, 2006), 1089–112.

[30] 'I canoni, le imitazioni e le fughe costituiscono tecnicamente la musica palestriniana.' Amintore Galli, *La musica ed i musicisti dal secolo X sino ai nostri giorni, ovvero biografie cronologiche d'illustri maestri* (Milan, 1871), 18. Galli was a composer, teacher and music critic based in Milan for a few years during the 1860s and then again from the 1870s; he cultivated both historicist trends and interests in French and German opera.

[31] 'La fuga, e le dissonanze'; 'acconcio assai alle sacre parole, alla liturgia'. Vincenzo Bigliani, *La messa in musica, ossia considerazioni sulla musica sacra e sua importanza* (Florence, 1872), 22–3.

[32] 'Lo stile fugato e imitativo [è] il più conveniente allo scopo della musica sacra.' *Musica sacra*, 15 May 1877, quoted from Calabretto, 'Tomadini, Amelli e la nascita di *Musica sacra*', 478, note 23. A similar claim was made by Mattia Cipollone in *Musica sacra*, March–April 1878, 11. Francesco Izzo has also called attention to the learned style as an element closely associated with nineteenth-century Italian church music; see his 'A Tale for Survival: Choral Music in Italy', *Nineteenth-Century Choral Music*, ed. Donna M. Di Grazia (Abingdon, 2012), 305–31 (pp. 309, 314–16; my thanks to Dr Izzo for providing me with a copy of this article). In France, by contrast, Palestrina's music was understood as mostly homophonic and harmonic rather than contrapuntal; see Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York, 2005), 179–207, esp. pp. 182 and 190–1. For the Catholic Church's conception of sacred music, see *Deliberazioni dei Congressi Cattolici Italiani di Venezia e di Firenze* (Bologna, 1876), 32.

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school).[33] Overall, *alla Palestrina* compositions and church music more generally implied prominent voices undisturbed by musical instruments (except the organ).[34] Both Galli and Bigliani commented on this: the first praised the 'gentle religious effusion [which] is instilled in [Palestrina's] extraordinary vocal symphonies'; the second pointed out, in accordance with church edicts, 'severity of instrumentation, and sometimes total absence of it' as a distinctive feature of church music.[35]

Some of these ideas were rehearsed in responses to Rossini's *Petite messe*. In an article for *La perseveranza*, Filippi designated among the *Messe*'s most successful 'non-theatrical' pieces the 'Christe eleison' from the Kyrie (a double canon for four-part chorus in *a cappella* style), the 'Cum sancto spiritu' from the Gloria (a fugue) and the Sanctus (for soloists and chorus with no orchestral accompaniment).[36] More precisely, the critic welcomed the 'four-part *canon* in the *stile osservato*, *alla Palestrina*, on the words "Christe eleison", written with sublime expertise and with all the severity and unction required by the religious style'. He went on to proclaim that the Gloria's 'Laudamus' was *religiosissimo*, because of its insistent chords and the (non-imitative) contrapuntal entries of the voices; then he applauded the fugue of the 'Cum sancto', in which Rossini had struck a magnificent balance between contrapuntal severity and free melodic inspiration. What is more, in recalling Rossini's *Stabat mater*, Filippi argued that the only piece one could call 'authentically evangelical', expressing 'the religious, Christian feeling consecrated by tradition', was 'Quando corpus morietur' – a homophonic unaccompanied quartet.[37]

[33] See Marco Di Pasquale, 'Immagini del Rinascimento nella storiografia musicale italiana del secondo Ottocento: Due paradigmi', *Musica e storia*, 13 (2005), 279–322 (pp. 299–300).

[34] According to Richard L. Crocker, Palestrina's music 'was understood by the [nineteenth-century] reformers to be purely vocal (*a cappella*)'. Crocker, *An Introduction to Gregorian Chant* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2000), 84. On the 'constructed' nature of the vocal and instrumental idioms, and their understanding in relation to an earlier, medieval repertory during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music: Scholarship, Ideology, Performance* (Cambridge, 2002).

[35] 'In codeste mirabili sinfonie vocali è trasfuso un soave effluvio religioso' (Galli, *La musica ed i musicisti*, 18); 'la severità della strumentazione, e talvolta la mancanza totale di questa' (Bigliani, *La messa in musica*, 24). The *a cappella* scoring seems to have been a defining characteristic of *alla Palestrina* compositions also for Verdi; see his letter to Ferdinand Hiller, 7 January 1880 (*Carteggi verdiani*, ed. Alessandro Luzio, 4 vols. (Rome, 1935–47), ii (1935), 333), in which he describes his *Pater noster* (1880) as 'scritto a cinque parti senza accompagnamento nello stile Palestrina' ('written in five parts without accompaniment in the style of Palestrina') .

[36] The Offertorio, an organ prelude, was also regarded by Filippi as sacred in style because of the instrument's church connotations.

[37] '*Canone* a quattro parti nello stile osservato, alla Palestrina, sulle parole *Christe eleison*, scritto con magistero sublime e con tutta la severità e l'unzione voluta dallo stile religioso'; 'veramente evangelico'; 'il sentimento religioso, cristiano, come l'ha consacrato la tradizione' (Filippi, in *La perseveranza*, quoted from *GMM*, 4 April 1869, 115–17).

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The boundaries within which sacred Italian music lay, then, were tied to distinct types of musical gesture. These – comprising notions of vocality and counterpoint – provided chances to utter musical-aesthetic statements that could be reabsorbed into definitions of Italian music more generally: vocality reverberated not only with ideas of 'truly religious' church music, but also with conceptions of the most authentic aspects of Italian opera. Furthermore, examination of such musical gestures carried implications for shaping larger perceptions of time and change. The 1860s and 1870s were the first two decades of Italy's nation-building, and as such were characterized by attempts to celebrate Italian achievements in all fields of culture and history. Monuments were raised to the Great Men of politics and the arts; public anniversaries and commemorations were planned to foster the sense of an 'imagined' national community; and the country's recent, and in many ways far from glorious, historico-political trajectory – the Risorgimento – was refashioned in mythical guise.[38] Musical criticism was also imbued with nationalist discourse. At a period when Italian opera seemed to have exhausted its capacity to regenerate itself except by capitulating to French and German elements, critical pronouncements stressed the importance of unmistakably Italian aspects of music: 'melody' was defended against the intrusion of complex harmonic devices; *vocalità* (particularly pre-Verdian bel canto) against the tyranny of ever weightier orchestration. What is more, supporters of the Italian tradition appealed to an increasingly old, long-forgotten repertory of both operatic and non-operatic works.

To tell such a tale, however, is to look at just one side of the musical and cultural preoccupations of the period. For one thing, there were competing, more forward-looking claims (to be examined later in this article). For another, traditional ideas of Italian vocality and counterpoint, and their interconnection in sacred music, did not go unchallenged. Both such categories were at the centre of early discussions of Verdi's *Requiem*. Their politics were nevertheless made more complex by certain elements of Verdi's musical language, elements that encourage a more nuanced approach to spelling out nineteenth-century dichotomies.

Blurring idioms

Verdi's personal role in Italy's search for cultural roots after unification was by no means passive. Increasingly from the late 1860s and the 1870s, he railed against the 'Germanization' of Italian composers, and soon became a self-appointed spokesman of those wishing to defend Italy's musical traditions. His motto 'torniamo all'antico, e sarà un progresso' ('let's return to the past, it will be a step forward'),

[38] Some of these topics are addressed in Bruno Tobia, *Una patria per gli italiani: Spazi, itinerari, monumenti nell'Italia unita, 1870–1900* (Rome and Bari, 1991); *I luoghi della memoria*, ed. Mario Isnenghi, 3 vols. (Rome and 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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from an 1871 letter to his friend Francesco Florimo, was one of several Verdian statements used to support the rediscovery of old repertories of Italian music. The expression came to circulate widely later in the century, usually in books, journals and musical editions that supported the 'vocal status' of Italian music. True, the motto acquired a variety of meanings; Verdi's original intention in his letter to Florimo, in which he declined to be appointed director of the Naples Conservatoire, had been to recommend thorough studies of fugue and counterpoint for students.[39] But in line with contemporary trends, he also understood counterpoint as a legacy of Italy's musical past: as a feature of ancient Italian music that, via Palestrina and other sixteenth-century composers, was usually associated with the human voice. In his letter about 'l'antico', Verdi provided advice and models for vocal composition; and when elsewhere he mentioned a piece, later discarded, for the opening of Act 3 of *Aida*, which in his opinion could have won him 'a position as a contrapuntist in any old conservatoire', he referred to it as a 'four-part chorus worked out in the style of Palestrina'.[40] That being said, Verdi's relationship with learned, 'Italianate' compositional devices was ambivalent, owing to his increasing experimentation with that idiom in both vocal and foreign-influenced instrumental music.

The vocal quality of Italian music figured in a large number of public and private pronouncements by Verdi on the burning topic of Italian music of the future. '*Our* art is not instrumental', was his reaction in a letter to his friend Clara Maffei following the inaugural concert of the Società Orchestrale della Scala in 1879.[41] A few weeks earlier he had articulated the same idea to Opprandino Arrivabene, as well as in an official letter to the Società Orchestrale. In all cases, he hoped that the recent Italian developments in instrumental music (by way of the inauguration of orchestral and quartet societies) would be complemented by cultivation of 'that art that was *ours*' – namely, the vocal works of Palestrina and others of the time.[42] Starting in the 1870s and continuing until the late 1890s, Verdi himself set out to contribute to the resurgence of this vocal tradition by

[39] Verdi, letter to Francesco Florimo, 5 January 1871 (*I copialettere*, ed. Cesari and Luzio, 233). For a discussion of this motto and larger Italian perceptions of time, see my 'Verdi's *Don Carlo* as Monument', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 25 (2013), 75–103 (pp. 99–102).

[40] 'Coro a quattro voci, lavorato ad imitazione uso Palestrina, che avrebbe potuto […] farmi aspirare […] ad un posto di contrappuntista in un Liceo qualunque'. Verdi, letter to Giulio Ricordi, 12 August 1871 (*I copialettere*, ed. Cesari and Luzio, 676; for the date, see *Verdi's* Aida*: The History of an Opera in Letters and Documents*, ed. Hans Busch (Minneapolis, MN, 1978), 202, note 1).

[41] 'L'arte *nostra* non è l'istromentale.' Verdi, letter to Clara Maffei, 2 May 1879 (*I copialettere*, ed. Cesari and Luzio, 525).

[42] See Verdi, letter to Opprandino Arrivabene, 30 March 1879 (*Verdi intimo: Carteggio di Giuseppe Verdi con il conte Opprandino Arrivabene (1861–1886)*, ed. Annibale Alberti (Milan, 1931), 231–3). 'Quell'arte che era *nostra*': Verdi, letter to the Società Orchestrale della Scala, 4 April 1879 (*I copialettere*, ed. Cesari and Luzio, 306). See also his letter to Giulio Ricordi, April 1878 (*ibid.*, 626).

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composing pieces – the *Requiem*, the *Pater noster* of 1880 and the *Quattro pezzi sacri* of 1889–96 – that involved contrapuntal and/or unaccompanied vocal writing.

At the same time, though, he applied contrapuntal procedures to instrumental pieces – such as the String Quartet (1873) and the disowned *Aida* overture (1871) – overtly rooted in foreign musical traditions. The language of the former piece, in particular, is so idiomatically instrumental that one cannot avoid relating its contrapuntal style to Germanic rather than Palestrinian models.[43] Such ambivalent attitudes to learned compositional devices are emblematic of a composer absorbed, in his later years, in a twofold project: one conservative, not to say reactionary, in its verbal formulations, but at the same time pioneering in its musical results. As early as 1874, the *Requiem* enters this increasingly murky picture as a paradigmatic case, questioning through music several of those unyielding definitions and abstractions we sometimes like to cast in words.

Vocality is a good case in point. The *Requiem*'s seven movements draw on a large variety of vocal gestures with different music-historical connotations: chant-like, monotone declamation punctuating orchestral discourse (the opening of the Requiem e Kyrie); mostly homophonic moments for unaccompanied voices (the beginning of the 'Pie Jesu' in the Dies irae); passages with or without orchestral accompaniment that rely on contrapuntal procedures (the fugues of the Sanctus, the Libera me and the first version of the 'Liber scriptus' in the Dies irae,[44] as well as *a cappella* passages such as the 'Te decet hymnus' in the Requiem e Kyrie); and powerful outbursts of emotion conveyed through opera-like declamatory statements (the solo soprano at the opening of the Libera me and at the transition to the fugue in the same movement). Responses to this pot-pourri were various. Contemporary critics were particularly captivated by passages without orchestral accompaniment, which seemed to recall religious music more directly. The 'Te decet hymnus' was described by Filippi as a 'chorale for voices only with imitations, written in the great style of classic art: a real piece for the church'. One of the most

[43] On the String Quartet, see Manfred Hermann Schmid, '"Il orrendo *sol bemolle*": Zum Streichquartett von Giuseppe Verdi', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 59 (2002), 222–43; Ennio Speranza, 'Caratteri e forme di una "pianta fuori di clima": Sul quartetto per archi di Verdi', *Studi verdiani*, 17 (2003), 110–65; and Gundula Kreuzer, *Giuseppe Verdi: Chamber Music*, ed. Kreuzer (Chicago, IL, and Milan, 2010), xi–xxii. For a contextualized view of the *Aida* overture seen in relation to wider, symphonic developments in Italian music under the influence of foreign compositions, see Antonio Rostagno, 'Ouverture e dramma negli anni settanta: Il caso della sinfonia di *Aida*', *Studi verdiani*, 14 (1999), 11–50. Another instrumental piece that was deemed to resonate (through counterpoint) with 'old' music is the Act 2 Prelude of the 1884 *Don Carlo*; see Filippi, in *La perseveranza*, 14 January 1884, repr. in *Carteggio Verdi–Ricordi: 1882–1885*, ed. Franca Cella, Madina Ricordi and Marisa di Gregorio Casati (Parma, 1994), 405–9 (p. 408).

[44] As is well known, Verdi replaced the fugue of the 'Liber scriptus' in 1875 with a mezzo-soprano solo composed for Waldmann; see David Rosen, 'Verdi's "Liber scriptus" Rewritten', *Musical Quarterly*, 55 (1969), 151–69.

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acclaimed and encored movements, the Agnus Dei, struck Verdi's audiences because its first 13 bars are scored for soprano and mezzo-soprano soloists singing an octave apart. 'A nice melopoeia, a sort of *cantabile recitative* at the unison, but at the distance of an octave', reported Filippi.[45] Others insisted on the striking fusion of sounds (quite possibly associated with plainchant) achieved by the soloists Teresa Stolz and Maria Waldmann.[46] Some of Verdi's most remarkable massed displays of contrapuntal mastery (particularly the Sanctus fugue) were also welcomed; they showed off Verdi's compositional skills and encouraged chauvinist listeners to hear connections with the 'great musicians of the past'.[47] Yet, despite praise for these contrapuntal tours de force, vocality remained – in its barest, most stripped-down, most naively 'melodic' expressions – the main source of beguilement.[48]

[45] 'Corale a voci sole ad imitazione, scritto nel grande stile dell'arte classica: un pezzo veramente da Chiesa'; 'una bella melopia [*sic*], una specie di recitativo cantabile all'unissono [*sic*], ma alla distanza di un'intera ottava'. Filippi, in *La perseveranza*, 23 May 1874, 1–2. The prominent Cecilian figure and founder of *Musica sacra* Guerrino Amelli, who criticized Verdi's *Requiem* severely, nonetheless praised the 'soave e maestosa melodia dell'*Agnus Dei*, la quale quasi sdegnando affatto l'accompagnamento istrumentale, colla sua ingenua bellezza ci parve richiamare la sublime semplicità delle melodie gregoriane' (the 'delicate, dignified melody of the Agnus Dei, which, almost disregarding instrumental accompaniment, recalls through its innocent beauty the sublime simplicity of Gregorian melodies'; Amelli, speech repr. in *Sulla restaurazione della musica sacra in Italia: Estratto degli atti del primo Congresso Cattolico Italiano tenutosi in Venezia dal 12 al 16 giugno 1874* (Bologna, 1874), 5–22 (p. 15)). Similarly, Galli commented: 'una melodia lenta, tranquilla, facile […] pella sua popolare semplicità ricorda l'indole dei canti liturgici' ('a slow, calm, simple melody […] through its popular simplicity it recalls liturgical chant'; in *Il secolo*, 23 May 1874, 3).

[46] On the fusion of the singers' voices, see E. Spagnolo, in *Gazzetta di Milano*, 26 May 1874, 2; the anonymous review in *Corriere della sera*, 1–2 July 1879, 3; and Blanche Roosevelt, *Verdi, Milan and* Othello: *Being a Short Life of Verdi, with Letters Written about Milan and the New Opera of* Othello*: Represented for the First Time on the Stage of La Scala Theatre, February 5, 1887* (London, 1887), 73.

[47] 'Il *Sanctus*, fuga a due cori, scritto al modo antico e che rammenta la maniera del Lotti, del Pergolese [*sic*] e degli altri grandi musicisti del passato' ('The Sanctus, a fugue for two choruses, written in the old style and recalling Lotti, Pergolesi and the other great musicians of the past'; Spagnolo, in *Gazzetta di Milano*, 26 May 1874, 2). 'La *Messa da Requiem* di Verdi è l'ultima perfezione dello stile di Pergolese [*sic*] e Marcello; basta una sola delle tre fughe […] che vi si riscontrano per confermare nel modo più assoluto la nostra asserzione […] Il *Sanctus* […] racchiude tutto lo scibile della scienza dell'armonia e del contrappunto; anzi dell'arte musicale stessa. Oggi Verdi […] è pari ai più grandi classici d'ogni tempo e d'ogni scuola' ('Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* is the uttermost perfection of the style of Pergolesi and Marcello; one of its three fugues […] is enough to prove unquestionably this assertion […]. The Sanctus […] is a compendium of all knowledge in the field of harmony and counterpoint, nay of music as a whole. Today Verdi […] equals the greatest classics of any time and any school'; Galli, in *Il secolo*, 23 May 1874, 2–3).

[48] Galli described the *Requiem* as 'un'opera colossale, e da cima a fondo *tutta melodia* di sapore esclusivamente italiano' ('a colossal work, *all melody* of Italian flavour from beginning to end'; in *Il secolo*, 23 May 1874, 3).

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What makes this trend in early reception intriguing is the shadow of instrumental gestures in Verdi's vocal writing. Interpretation of the liturgical text led the composer to shape on occasion, in the words of Carolyn Abbate, a 'marvellous confusion of human sound with the sound of the mouths of the instruments', such as in the 'Tuba mirum' and 'Mors stupebit' sections of the Dies irae (where the bass soloist imitates the dotted rhythm of the brass heard before by repeating an accented *e♭*).[49] Indeed, Verdi's treatment of the voice in the *Requiem* invites consideration of the ways in which so-called Italian vocality might have become reimagined through interaction with the 'foreign', instrumental element.[50]

This tension between idioms emerges strongly in pieces where the singers' melodies seem to be conceived less vocally than instrumentally. Rosen has drawn attention to the theme of the Agnus Dei, which relies on extensive word repetition and whose connection with the underlay (as the piece's compositional history shows) is far from straightforward.[51] What is more, despite the overall flexibility of the 13-bar phrase, and the psalmodic connotations stemming from its mostly stepwise motion, the melody sounds oddly squared off (see Example 1): constrained, at least for the first ten bars, by the rhythmic and melodic repetitions occurring at the beginning of each of its three subphrases (bars 1, 5 and 8); perhaps even awkward as the result of uncomfortable vocal gestures (the acciaccaturas of bars 3 and 10, the first placed on the second syllable of 'A-gnus').

The rest of the movement only adds to the complexity of the vocal–instrumental relationship. The first variation of the theme – the Agnus Dei can be described as a cantus firmus variation, in which the melody is repeated almost verbatim but with changing orchestral accompaniment – consists of a new statement of the melody by the chorus, clarinets, bassoons and strings in octave unison. The blend of sound is striking, owing especially to the registral restriction of the whole ensemble. Subsequent statements with the chorus harmonize the melody and gradually expand both the vocal–orchestral range and the number of instruments, thus bringing greater diversity. Overall, though, the sonority remains compact, creating a stark contrast with the soloists' statements. The latter passages are also underpinned by a clearer distinction between melody (singers) and accompaniment (instruments, both

[49] Carolyn Abbate, 'Mourning and Apocalypse in Verdi's *Requiem*', booklet note for *Verdi: 'Requiem', 'Quattro pezzi sacri'*, Deutsche Grammophon 435884-2 (1993), 11–16 (p. 15).

[50] One foreign commentator, teacher and music critic, August Guckeisen, also made an interesting pronouncement in this regard: 'To a considerably greater extent than we Germans, the Italians use the human voice instrumentally […]. Solo voices are thus used in the same way as orchestral instruments: singers and players are treated as one large orchestra.' This is why, according to Guckeisen, Verdi the conductor adopted very fast tempos in the *Requiem* fugues, tempos that seemed less appropriate for singers than for an orchestra. Quoted from the translation of Guckeisen's article in Marcello Conati, *Interviews and Encounters with Verdi*, trans. Richard Stokes (London, 1984), 125–7 (p. 126).

[51] See Rosen, *Verdi: 'Requiem'*, 54–5.

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Example 1. Verdi, *Messa da Requiem*, Agnus Dei, bars 1–13. Giuseppe Verdi, *Messa da Requiem per l'anniversario della morte di Manzoni 22 maggio 1874*, ed. David Rosen (Chicago, IL, and Milan, 1990).



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harmonizing and weaving around the theme). The alternation of choral and soloistic passages, then, as well as Verdi's different treatment of the instrumental layer in the two situations, conjures distinct ideas of vocality. Most importantly, these vocal sonorities are given a new context by mixing a plain, delicate, almost religious 'Italian' melody with the resounding voice of a modern orchestra.

Verdi's engagement with instrumental idioms is even more apparent in some of the vocal writing of the Offertorio, for four soloists and orchestra. The movement consists of five sections organized according to an *ABCBA* form, and is characterized by exceptionally dense motivic repetition. This is especially evident in the *A* sections, in which most of the musical material is derived from the *cantabile dolce* theme played early on by the cellos (bars 13ff.; see Example 2). The phrase is preceded by 12 bars of ascending or descending arpeggio figuration (for the same instruments) finished off by chromatic scales, with passages for solo wind at the end of each subphrase. The theme itself consists of the repetition of a four-bar motif punctuated each time by brief cadential statements from mezzo-soprano and tenor soloists. From the very beginning, the Offertorio establishes the vocal–instrumental relationship in equivocal terms: not only does the cello phrase have a markedly 'individual' character – it could well have been scored for a solo cello, as in the introduction to Philippe's aria in Act 4 of *Don Carlos*[52] – but it is also rounded off by vocal remarks that, in the circumstances, carry instrumental connotations. When the melody is taken up by the soloists (bars 31ff.), the ambiguity of this apparent exchange of roles partly fades away; yet it soon reappears through other routes.

For one thing, Verdi's use in the *A* sections of very limited musical material, elements of which generate moments of loosely imitative writing, means that different words will have to be set to music with the same rhythmic features: through its pervasiveness, the cellos' lyrical motif requires adaptation of the varying prosodic qualities of the text. This can only increase the sense of an uneasy integration of the musical and textual elements whenever trivial words such as the preposition 'de' are set to the whole first bar of the theme (bar 39); or the same rhythmic element, such as the six quavers of the melody's second bar, generates different types of relationship with the word underlay (from one syllable per note in bar 36 to one syllable per six notes in bar 74).[53] To put it differently, it is as if (once again) Verdi had conceived his melody less as a vocal than as an instrumental idea. All of this is made more suggestive by such eerie moments as the soprano's entry with an exceptionally long *pianissimo e″* (bars 62ff.). Above this note and further accompaniment by violins and violas, two solo violins play the first two

[52] Further echoes of this aria may be heard in the three accented notes with acciaccaturas (a recurrent element in *Don Carlos*, and Philippe's aria in particular) at bars 29–30, and in the bass entrance (recalling Philippe's voice) immediately afterwards.

[53] The awkward relationship between words and music is also evident in Verdi's different distribution of the syllables of 'fidelium defunctorium' to the same music at bars 36 and 203.

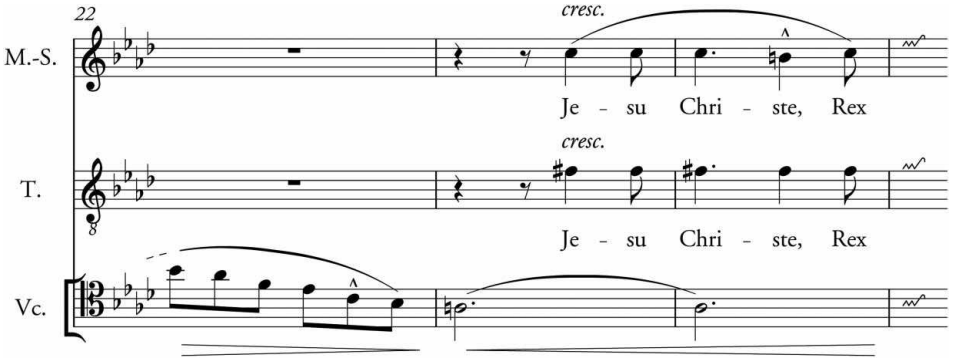
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Example 2. Verdi, *Messa da Requiem*, Offertorio, bars 9–24. Giuseppe Verdi, *Messa da Requiem per l'anniversario della morte di Manzoni 22 maggio 1874*, ed. David Rosen (Chicago, IL, and Milan, 1990).



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Example 2 (continued)



bars of the melody three times (with a shift of key on the third one) before giving way to an evocative exchange of roles: the singer takes up the theme while the violins continue her long-held note (the protagonists finally being reunited through simultaneous statements of the melody). For a few seconds, vocality bows to instrumentality: the former constrained – like the soprano – to hold back in both dynamics and melodic invention while still contributing to the weave of the overall musical texture.[54]

One further way of expanding traditional connotations of Italian vocality emerges in the 'Requiem aeternam' section of the final movement, the Libera me, a section scored for unaccompanied solo soprano and chorus (bars 132–70).[55] Through the soloist's part, the beginning of this section suggests some of the considerations made above in relation to the soprano's long-held note in the Offertorio. In the case of the Libera me, the soloist enters on and prolongs for three beats a long f'' played by a solo oboe and horn in the preceding bars – a gesture that constitutes a gliding of instrumental into vocal sound. What comes next, though, is purely vocal discourse, in fact discourse of a type that both invokes and calls into question earlier traditions of sacred, *a cappella* music (see Example 3). The texture is prevalently homophonic, both in the four-part choral writing and often (as well as increasingly as the music unfolds) in its relationship with the soloist. In this sense, the soprano part is constructed less as a ruling solo

[54] As a result of the soprano's long-held note, one also struggles to grasp the word on which it is sung ('sed', i.e. 'but'), which further undermines traditional notions of vocality.

[55] The significance of these bars also stems from the *Requiem*'s compositional history. The Libera me passage (virtually unchanged in its 1869 and 1874 versions, except for a few minor revisions and the transposition from A minor to B♭ minor) provided the opening material for the Requiem e Kyrie, albeit with different scoring: the Libera me statement is *a cappella*, whereas the antiphon of the first movement is scored for strings and choral declamation. See David Rosen, 'La "Messa" a Rossini e il "Requiem" per Manzoni', *Messa per Rossini*, ed. Girardi and Petrobelli, 119–49.

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Example 3. Verdi, *Messa da Requiem*, Libera me, bars 132–44. Giuseppe Verdi, *Messa da Requiem per l'anniversario della morte di Manzoni 22 maggio 1874*, ed. David Rosen (Chicago, IL, and Milan, 1990).



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Example 3 (continued)



than as a voice indistinguishably fused with all the others, according to the best sixteenth-century polyphonic tradition. At the same time, however, the soloist stands out as utterly independent from the choral mass. The soprano's range is such that it tends to single out her voice from the harmonies underneath. Owing also to the timbral difference from the blended sound of the choir, the soprano translates into a solo statement supported by a harmonic weave of human voices.[56] Her vocality is constructed as a more 'modern', perhaps even more 'operatic', expression of individuality: an expression that establishes distance from the homogeneous textures of ancient polyphonic music and instead consigns all remaining musical sound to a soloist-centred, or at least soloist-related, discourse.

All in all, Verdi's writing betrays a forcing of the human voice out of its customary habits into a domain of often unperformable, or at least evocatively instrumental, effects (see for instance the *pppp* he asks the soprano to produce at the very end on a high *b*♭″). Verdi's 'modern' take on the interweaving of the soprano with the other lines is, above all, accomplished by relying on the human voice in all layers of the music, the chorus gaining a role that would have more

[56] The texture of this passage is similar to that of the quartet for solo voices in Act 2 of *Luisa Miller*, though in the opera the supporting group is made up of three soloists (rather than the chorus) and the character of the music is markedly different.

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naturally belonged to instruments. This is *vocalità* – 'modern' *vocalità* – celebrated through unspoiled vocal sound; the music of the present refashioned and sacralized in echoes of ages past.

Crisis and progress

Early discourse about the *Requiem* reflected many of these seeming contradictions, drenched as it was in statements that proclaimed both the conservative and the progressive character of Verdi's music. On the one hand, and as we saw earlier, Verdi's sacred work encouraged comparisons with an increasingly revered musical past, as well as endorsement of widespread complaints about the *decadenza* of sacred Italian music. The latter, it will now be obvious, was a common theme of late nineteenth-century writings. Its origin supposedly stemmed from the deviation of church composers from the *recta via* represented by medieval chant and Palestrina. In an 1879 issue of *Musica sacra*, Carlo Viganò defined *canto fermo* as 'that collection of sacred melodies recorded by choral books with the aim of preserving them and prohibiting their alteration'. Despite his explanation of the adjective *fermo* as pointing to the chant's 'stability' (a stability dictated by the law that also applied to 'sacred ceremonies, which are immutable'), Viganò's concern to stress this point – to summon up the materiality of enduring artefacts as a warranty against forgetfulness and decay – suggests that plainchant was in fact perceived as subject to the effects of time.[57] Indeed, the increasing proximity (through revivals and varied operations of monumentalization) in the late nineteenth century of old repertories of both sacred and operatic music came both to offer modern Italian musicians models with a didactic, even moralizing function, and to set in motion perceptions of crisis and degenerative processes. What is less often emphasized, however, in literature about Italian music criticism of the period are critics' acknowledgments that modern composers should also move on.

Verdi's *Requiem* invited notable attempts to foresee future musical developments. 'Verdi is the personification of musical progress', announced Galli in *Il secolo* the day after the *Requiem* première.[58] A retrospective of the composer's career, spanning more than 30 years and culminating in religious composition, led the critic to identify in Verdi's constant transformations some sort of natural law dictating musical and historical development. Plainchant was the voice of an

[57] 'Quella raccolta di sacre melodie registrate nei libri corali con precetto di conservarle e con proibizione di alterarle'; 'Da tutti vien chiamato *fermo* questo canto per la sua lentezza e gravità. A me sembra che il medesimo attributo indichi meglio la sua stabilità' ('Everybody calls this chant *fermo* owing to its slowness and gravity. I reckon this attribute better indicates its stability'); 'è soggetto alla legge delle cerimonie sacre, le quali sono immutabili'. Carlo Viganò, 'Memoria intorno al canto fermo', *Musica sacra*, May–July 1879, 18–20, 21–4 and 30–1 (p. 18).

[58] 'Verdi è la personificazione del progresso musicale.' Galli, in *Il secolo*, 23 May 1874, 2.

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ancient age, one that by then seemed far off; and while it still survived in the church in traditional chants with a monumental status (such as the Te Deum), it should not impede the advancement of modern composition. A similar if more extended reckoning of the history of music since the tenth century – starting with Guido d'Arezzo and closing with Verdi – had constituted the material of a book published by Galli a few years earlier. To the burning question of whether modern sacred music ought to be modelled on sixteenth-century works, Galli answered in the negative, arguing that musical progress should not be held back.[59]

Further efforts to distance Verdi's *Requiem* from the fixity of old forms and styles came from such authoritative critics as Filippi and Pietro Cominazzi. Praising Verdi's latest work, the former noted that, although

> il tipo classico della musica religiosa, come esisteva molti secoli addietro, è certo ammirabile […] non ha ragione di essere che a titolo di ammirabile, venerabile memoria. Per il canto fermo, per la musica calma, grave, impassibile, la quale non modula, e non comporta nemmeno la battuta, ci vuole una fede, oserei quasi dire un'esaltazione religiosa, che non sono più del nostro tempo.[60]
>
> (the classic type of religious music, as it existed years ago, is certainly admirable […] it has no reason to exist but as an admirable, honourable memory. For plainchant, for that music which is calm, grave, impassive, which does not modulate and implies no measures, a faith, I would almost say, a religious exaltation is needed that no longer belongs to our time.)

Rather than clinging to outdated models, modern composers should seek to be 'bold innovators', as their predecessors had been.[61] Even a Verdi opponent such as Cominazzi, typically hostile to any anti-traditional move by the composer, criticized those who held that 'church music should obey the immutable laws of Catholicism, thus remaining as fixed as them'. True, Verdi had moved ahead too fast; yet the 'sterile forms of the old masters' should be abandoned, making room for innovation.[62]

[59] See Galli, *La musica ed i musicisti*, 45–6.

[60] Filippi, in *La perseveranza*, 23 May 1874, 1.

[61] 'La forma più elementare della musica da chiesa è il canto fermo: in confronto del canto fermo Palestrina è un audace novatore: e lo è Pergolese [*sic*], col suo *Stabat Mater* drammatico, in confronto di Palestrina; e così via discendendo fino a Rossini, ed a Berlioz' ('The most elementary form of church music is plainchant: compared with it, Palestrina is a bold innovator; and so is Pergolesi, with his dramatic *Stabat mater*, compared with Palestrina; and so on and on until Rossini and Berlioz'; Filippi, in *La perseveranza*, 28 May 1874, 1).

[62] 'Parve […] che la musica da chiesa obbedire dovesse alle leggi immutabili del cattolicismo e restasse immobile al pari di quello […] lasciamo le troppo sterili forme de' vecchi maestri'. Pietro Cominazzi, in *La fama*, 26 May 1874, 82. Another commentator, writing for the *Gazzetta di Venezia*, maintained that 'Il gigantesco successo di questo lavoro [il *Requiem* di Verdi] […] non può a meno di far gettare uno sguardo retrospettivo sulla storia della musica sacra e lo si fa con

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Claims akin to these were voiced by others and were by no means restricted to the Verdi debates. In two articles on Rossini published in the *Nuova antologia di scienze, lettere ed arti* in 1869 and 1870, Biaggi complained about one common opinion that urged modern religious music to follow the models of plainchant and Palestrina. Such a trend, the critic opined, is incompatible with artistic advance. 'With regard to style, forms, voice-leading, harmony, counterpoint and all that constitutes its external manifestation and technical mastery, church music must be conceived and written according to the practice of its time.'[63] In like fashion, Giuseppe Arrigo noted in 1875 the anachronism of Gregorian chant and *alla Palestrina* compositions. 'Everything has its own time', he argued, and one needs to learn to 'abandon all that is conventional and that belongs to an age that is past, that cannot come back'.[64] Indeed, during the second half of the nineteenth century, Italian accounts of music history – and specifically the history of sacred music – were increasingly underpinned by the idea of an ascending sequence of technical developments whose ultimate goal coincided with the music of the present. Such a stance was not only in contrast to earlier trends (as exemplified, for instance, by Baini) advocating a return to a remote apex of musical composition, but also reflected shifting conceptions of history. Ever more teleologically inflected and coloured by moral tensions and expectations, these resulted in a late nineteenth-century explosion of narratives, both musical and historical, relentlessly articulating a story of progress and regeneration entwined with one of crisis and decline.[65]

Paying greater heed to forward-looking claims in contemporary musical debates does not undermine any of the considerations made earlier in this article (as well as by previous scholars) concerning late nineteenth-century Italian revivalism and the

grande compiacenza, perché il progresso fu imponente' ('The enormous success of this work […] cannot avoid making one look back at the history of sacred music and be happy at its impressive progress'; quoted from *Il* Requiem *del maestro Giuseppe Verdi a Venezia*, ed. Faustini, 23–4).

[63] 'La musica da chiesa rispetto allo stile, alle forme, alla condotta, all'armonia, al contrappunto e a tutto ciò, insomma, che costituisce la sua manifestazione esterna e il suo magistero tecnico, deve essere concepita e scritta secondo la pratica del giorno.' Girolamo Alessandro Biaggi, 'Della vita e delle opere di Gioacchino Rossini', *Nuova antologia di scienze, lettere ed arti*, 10 (1869), 637–47 (p. 642; see also pp. 640–1). See also *idem*, 'La musica religiosa e la *Petite messe* del Rossini', *Nuova antologia di scienze, lettere ed arti*, 14 (1870), 612–20, esp. pp. 613–14.

[64] 'Ogni cosa ha il suo tempo'; 'tralasciare quanto di convenzionale si incontra e di relativo ad un tempo che passò, né può più ritornare'. Giuseppe Arrigo, *L'organo nel santuario e la musica religiosa* (Alessandria, 1875), quoted from Rainoldi, *Sentieri della musica sacra*, 191.

[65] On such teleological views of music history, as exemplified by Biaggi, see Di Pasquale, 'Inventing Palestrina', and *idem*, 'Immagini del Rinascimento', esp. pp. 295–306. Galli was another critic and theorist whose writings adopt a similar evolutionary approach to music history; see Andrea Estero, 'Il dibattito critico e musicologico nella pubblicistica milanese', *Milano musicale: 1861–1897*, ed. Bianca Maria Antolini (Lucca, 1999), 333–50 (pp. 349–50).

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search for cultural roots in the national past. Rather, it offers a corrective, as historian Axel Körner has noted, to a long-lasting image of post-unification Italy as a nation 'obsessed' with its own past and cultural traditions.[66] Mid- to late nineteenth-century Italian culture was no doubt saturated with protests against various kinds of weaknesses, decay and immorality. In the words of Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, 'The formulation of an Italian national self was predicated on a language that posited marginalization and powerlessness as fundamental aspects of what it meant to be modern Italians.'[67] Yet crisis had also a larger, European discursive dimension – one that cut across such varied disciplines as medicine, biology, politics, sociology and literature – and should also be read in connection with burgeoning pleas for progress and modernization.[68] As Svetlana Boym has argued, nostalgia 'is a longing for that shrinking "space of experience" that no longer fits the new horizon of expectations. Nostalgic manifestations are side effects of the teleology of progress.'[69]

There is yet another aspect, though, of late nineteenth-century Italian writings about music that attracts attention: the ubiquity and routine application of such critical utterances – utterances imbued with concerns about both crisis and progress – to varied musical genres. Accounts of sacred music are deeply redolent of Italy's oft-asserted 'operatic crisis' around 1860, the language used to describe the shortcomings of modern compositions, whether sacred or operatic, being at times surprisingly similar. In an examination of the current health of Gregorian chant and sacred music, the priest Luigi Bianchi started out by acknowledging their worrying decadence.[70] Later on, listing the deficiencies of modern religious music, he provided an inventory of what turned out to be the perceived negative qualities of Italian opera of the time: from a style that 'often sacrifices melody for obscure harmonic artifice, so-called *alla tedesca*' to an 'entirely profane style […] that is purely instrumental'; from the lack of respect for the meaning and understanding of the text to the 'roar' caused by 'a stormy sea of deafening

[66] Axel Körner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy: From Unification to Fascism* (New York and London, 2009), 2.

[67] Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians, 1860–1920* (Chicago, IL, 2007), 2. For an insightful analysis of tropes of degeneration during the Risorgimento and their connection to later nineteenth-century nationalistic discourse, see Silvana Patriarca, 'Indolence and Regeneration: Tropes and Tensions of Risorgimento Patriotism', *American Historical Review*, 110 (2005), 380–408, and *eadem*, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (Cambridge, 2010), 20–50. On the ideology of nostalgia in late nineteenth-century Italy, see Richard Drake, *Byzantium for Rome: The Politics of Nostalgia in Umbertian Italy, 1878–1900* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1980).

[68] See Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848–c. 1918* (Cambridge, 1993).

[69] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, 2001), 10.

[70] See Luigi Bianchi, *Una gloria dell'arte italiana, ossia lo studio del canto ecclesiastico riportato a chiara intelligenza di tutti* (Pisa, 1877), 5.

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instruments'. As if the allusions to contemporary operatic discourse were not enough, Bianchi took leave of his cataloguing impulse via a reference to the '*musica enigmatica*, so-called *dell'avvenire*'. 'Posterity', he said, 'would be its judge.'[71]

Language thus provided territory in which remarks about this or that composition or musical genre could (and did) take on wider resonances. Linguistic and rhetorical similarities bridging late nineteenth-century discussions of sacred and operatic music should give us pause: they encourage a more flexible and porous relationship between the two genres, or at least between the concerns of those who used opera and sacred music as ground for musical and cultural discussion. To return once more to Verdi's *Requiem*, its musical language and the eclectic claims it raised among critics made it political in a broader sense than those (mentioned at the beginning of this article) so far addressed by scholars. Early liking for Verdi's barest yet instrumentally inflected vocal writing could be seen as a symptom of wider trends in perceptions of Italian music – as a sign that seemingly inward-looking, old-fogey discussions about church composition could also (via Verdi's mediating presence) encompass refreshing visions of Italian opera. The fact that Italy's greatest opera composer and his *Requiem* came to embody the teleological drive that pushed music and history forward ultimately also suggests more progress-orientated views of Italian culture of the time. Pursuing such views would not only allow us to reconsider some of the traditional narratives and binary oppositions underlying many scholarly accounts of nineteenth-century *Kulturkämpfe* and processes of secularization – the most trodden interpretative route flowing invariably from the sacred to the secular, from tradition to modernity, from the church to the nation state;[72] it would also offer us a chance to recall that crisis always comes with a promise of alternatives, an anticipation of change.

[71] 'Sacrifica spesso la melodia ad un male inteso artifizio armonico, o, come dicono alla tedesca'; 'stile del tutto profano […] puramente strumentale'; 'per nulla intese, o considerate le dette parole, servono invece come di zavorra' ('totally misunderstood or disregarded, words become mere ballast'); 'un indefinito e indefinibile frastuono' ('an undefined and undefinable roar'); 'un mare tempestoso di assordanti strumenti'; 'Della musica enigmatica che dicono dell'avvenire, giudicheranno i posteri.' *Ibid*., 22–4.

[72] For a general overview of scholarly examinations of secularization, see Hugh McLeod's introduction to his *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848–1914* (New York, 2000), 1–30. For insightful revisions of traditional views, see Austen Ivereigh, 'The Politics of Religion in an Age of Revival', and Margaret Lavinia Anderson, 'The Divisions of the Pope: The Catholic Revival and Europe's Transition to Democracy', *The Politics of Religion in an Age of Revival: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Europe and Latin America*, ed. Ivereigh (London, 2000), 1–21 and 22–42; and Christopher Clark, 'The New Catholicism and the European Culture Wars', *Culture Wars: Secular–Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (Cambridge, 2005), 11–46.

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Epilogue

> Si aprono nuove pagine del libro del mondo, e come l'arcipelago indiano vide uscire un giorno, dalla schiuma delle sue onde immacolate, la sua Venere spirituale – dall'ampio mare dello scetticismo dominante, sorge una nuova figura che si atteggia ostile alla rivelazione. La terra ha sete di verità morali, più che di verità teologiche; l'arte la soccorre.[73]
>
> (New pages from the book of the world are being unfolded, and as the Indian archipelago once saw its spiritual Venus arise from the foam of its immaculate sea, a new figure hostile to revelation today emerges from the vast ocean of pervading scepticism. The world is thirsty for moral truths rather than theological ones; art comes to the rescue.)

The quotation that opens this final section is taken from a review of Verdi's *Requiem* published in the *Gazzetta di Milano* a few days after the work's première. It posits in powerful terms Italian aspirations to progress and regeneration, not solely artistic but also moral and social. In the uplifting role the author ascribes to musical art, one can hear echoes of Giuseppe Mazzini's unshakable faith in music's higher 'destinies', its 'new and more solemn mission',[74] and the same moral tension that runs through Francesco De Sanctis's *Storia della letteratura italiana* (1871) and its vision of a worldly religion of morals. The edifying quality of music was, of course, a topos of nineteenth-century writings, not only Italian but also European more generally, one that originated around the middle of the previous century and is usually connected with the rise of the bourgeoisie. In Italy, debates fomented by the Cecilian movement about the style and function of religious compositions are especially packed with instructive undertones, ones that emanated from church agendas. Yet they also resonate with wider, secular feelings about the formative possibilities of musical education and choral singing in particular.

I shall not set out, at such a late stage in this article, to explore any of these topics. Late nineteenth-century Italian discussions about the educational role of choral singing and the establishment of popular schools of music and musical societies (in Milan, for instance, from the 1860s) would be a compelling subject of study – one likely to bring new insights into perceptions and larger political

[73] Spagnolo, in *Gazzetta di Milano*, 26 May 1874, 1.

[74] 'In questa [musica] dei nostri giorni che noi condanniamo, s'agita non pertanto tale un fermento di vita che prenunzia nuovi destini, nuovo sviluppo, nuova e più solenne missione' ('In this [music] of our own day which we condemn, there is yet so much vitality as to foretell new destinies, new progress, and a new and more solemn mission'; Mazzini, *Filosofia della musica*, repr. in *Filosofia della musica, e estetica musicale*, ed. de Angelis, 48). On Mazzini's views about music's social regenerative power, see Lawrence Kramer's foreword and Franco Sciannameo's introduction to *Giuseppe Mazzini's Philosophy of Music (1836): Envisioning a Social Opera*, trans. Emilie Ashurt Venturi (1867), ed. and annotated by Franco Sciannameo (Lewiston, NY, and Lampeter, 2004), i–iv and 1–26 respectively.

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implications of works such as Verdi's *Requiem* and Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle*.[75] Once again, examination of such debates would back the view that fluxes between secular and sacred domains were indeed possible, music offering itself, amid rising tides of decline and degeneration, as a medium of salvation. But my reason for ending this *Requiem* voyage along lines coloured with ideas of moral and social uplift is less ambitious, and to some extent also more personal. I want to recover in this picture the presence of Manzoni: Verdi's friend and the dedicatee of his sacred composition; a figure who remained surprisingly eclipsed, as mentioned much earlier in this essay, in nineteenth-century Italian reports.[76]

Verdi's special attachment to the *Requiem* – even its material representation, the autograph score – must surely also have had to do with the friendship that tied him to the great man of letters. Contrary to his standard practice, Verdi demanded that his publisher Giulio Ricordi return the *Requiem* autograph to him after the first performances (rather than keep it in the firm's archive, as usually occurred with operas). It was not until December 1897, following the death of his wife Giuseppina Strepponi a few weeks earlier, that Verdi finally released it, handing it over – perhaps in an act of gratitude, perhaps in a nostalgia-driven clearing of the decks – to the soprano and close friend Teresa Stolz.[77] How ironic, in the circumstances, that

[75] The moralizing effects of music-making, and choral singing in particular, were the subject of a series of articles published in *GMM* during August 1874 (in the issues of 2, 9, 23 and 30 August). The articles were signed by the composer and choral professor Giulio Roberti, and drew on writings by the Florentine musicologist Leo Puliti. Similar claims about the civilizing effects of choral music were made a few years later by Giovanni Varisco, professor of singing and author of didactic textbooks in Milan; see his *Metodo di canto corale per imitazione e corso di lezioni teorico-pratiche* (Milan, 1882). For more on these topics, see Marina Vaccarini Gallarani, 'Aspetti e problemi della didattica musicale a Milano nell'ultimo ventennio dell'Ottocento', *Milano musicale*, ed. Antolini, 351–71, esp. pp. 360–5; and Irene Piazzoni, *Spettacolo, istituzioni e società nell'Italia postunitaria (1860–1882)* (Rome, 2001), esp. pp. 317–24.

[76] Manzoni does, however, feature in an 1874 French article emphasizing the poet's and Verdi's similar devotion to Italy's cause of independence. 'Verdi fut ainsi le collaborateur de Cavour et de Victor-Emmanuel. A cette même cause de l'indépendance nationale, l'auteur des *Promessi Sposi* avait, lui aussi, dévoué son génie et les tendances de la vie la plus pure et la plus laborieuse, et c'est à la mémoire de Manzoni, à la gloire du compatriote et de l'ami, que Verdi consacre aujourd'hui cette messe de *Requiem*, oeuvre sinon religieuse, du moins inspirée par une pensée toute religieuse' ('Verdi was thus the collaborator of Cavour and Victor Emanuel. To that same cause of national independence, the author of *I promessi sposi* had himself devoted his genius and orientated his purest and most laborious life, and it is to the memory of Manzoni, to the glory of his compatriot and friend, that today Verdi dedicates his *Requiem* Mass, which, if not a religious work, is at least inspired by an all-religious thought'; F. de Lagenevais [Ange-Henri Blaze de Bury], 'Revue musicale', *Revue des deux mondes,* 15 June 1874, 941–55 (p. 942); article repr. almost unchanged in H. Blaze de Bury, 'Verdi', *Musiciens du passé, du présent et de l'avenir* (Paris, 1880), 247–79 (p. 256).

[77] See Rosen, critical commentary to Verdi, *Messa da Requiem*, 3–4.

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Verdi's wish to pursue an afterlife in history hand in hand with Manzoni would come true only through the readings of later generations of critics.

Verdi may well have failed, during the poet's lifetime and immediate afterlife, to tie his name to that of Manzoni (the two men had met on remarkably few occasions). Still, they would both become paternal figures for the young Italian nation, their artistic output and their moral and intellectual rigour retaining their hortatory force to the present day. What is more, Verdi's and Manzoni's marked differences in matters of religious belief, so touchingly summarized by Giuseppina in the second epigraph to this article, invite us to muse on one last unexpected proximity. When it comes to narrating identities, whether individual or communal, whether our past or our present ones, differences tend to inflate; but they sometimes do so deceptively. Verdi and Manzoni superseded those differences through mutual esteem and a shared faith in art's power to effect change. Above all, though, their symbolic encounter provides us with a fitting metaphor for those boundaries – between the old and the new, the sacred and the secular, progress and crisis – that through early debates about the *Requiem* have revealed all their precariousness and refreshing permeability.

ABSTRACT

This article addresses the early Italian reception of Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* (1874), premièred in Milan on the first anniversary of the death of the novelist Alessandro Manzoni. Previous literature has focused on issues of musical genre and the work's political implications (particularly its connections with Manzoni and with late nineteenth-century Italian revivals of 'old' sacred music). The article examines, instead, the curiously pluralistic concerns of contemporary critics, as well as certain aspects of Verdi's vocal writing, with the aim of destabilizing traditional dichotomies such as old/new, sacred/operatic, vocal/instrumental and progress/crisis. It argues for more broad-ranging political resonances of Verdi's work, suggesting that the negotiation of a variety of boundaries both in Verdi's music and in its contemporary discussion made the *Requiem* dovetail with wider cultural attempts to define Italian identity.

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