

Giuseppi VERDI – Opera’s GOAT!

A Syllabus for Autumn 2024: The Point at CC Young, Tuesday, September 3rd, 10:00-11:30 AM; and Robson Ranch Clubhouse, Thursday, October 31st, 10:00-11:30 AM

Verdi (1813-1901) is arguably the “Greatest Of All Time” in opera. Together we will study WHY, by examining “five things to remember” about Verdi – that address both context and content of his output. YouTube extracts - selections from his operas - will illustrate these “five things.” In conclusion, we will consider an extended selection from Verdi’s masterpiece, AIDA, intended to affirm our perception that Verdi is, indeed, opera’s most loved and most listened-to GOAT.

[I (Steve Dubrow – smdubrow@gmail.com) have been a devotee of opera since my childhood, attending, over the years, many hundreds of opera and vocal recital performances in the U.S. and Europe and maintaining an extensive CD collection focused on the classical vocal repertory. Having graduated summa cum laude from Columbia, I did graduate work in Romance Languages and Literatures at Princeton and taught French at Brown University. A specialist in press and cultural affairs, I served for 25 years as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer, working in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Slovenia, the DR of Congo (when it was called “Zaire”), Poland, Belgium, France, Austria, and (of course) in Washington, DC. I retired in 1998 as a member of the Senior Foreign Service of the U.S. and, under contract for another two years, continued working for the U.S. Department of State as spokesman for the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. From 2000 to 2019, I taught world languages (French, Latin, Spanish, and Italian) in a high school in Montgomery County, MD, where I became a National Board Certified Teacher. My wife, Jeannette, and I retired and moved to Denton in June of 2019, joining our poet and essayist daughter, Jehanne, UNT Professor of English and Creative Writing, but, alas, leaving our son, Eric, behind in Maryland.]

1. Verdi's extraordinary record of lifelong creativity at the highest level
(8) ERNANI, Act 1 aria for soprano ("Elvira" sung by Angela Meade)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhe9CQUShn8&t=146s> (TIMING – 18:48-26:46)

(6) OTELLO, Act 4 death scene for tenor ("Otello" sung by Jonas Kaufmann)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcuaN3jN29Q> (TIMING – 2:20:00-2:26:00)

2. Verdi's important role in the creation of the modern nation-state of "Italy"
(5) NABUCCO, part 3, scene 2, the chorus of the Hebrew slaves ("Va, pensiero" – performers not identified)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUUVnJkjcAM>

3. Verdi, at mid-career achieves public and critical adulation, never again challenged during the remaining almost 50 years of his life and lasting until today

(5) IL TROVATORE, Act 4, scene 1 ("Miserere" – from a 1958 French TV production with Maria Callas and, off stage, tenor Albert Lance)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TegWugrrCgU>

4. With his REQUIEM, Verdi gives the world the most often performed choral work written after Mozart.

(9) Excerpt from the "Dies irae" (Alisa Kolosova and Morris Robinson with the Proms Youth Choir and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, conducted by Marin Alsop)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TegWugrrCgU> (TIMING – 08:20-17:30)

5. Verdi – opera's GOAT to the end!!!

(3) Finale to FALSTAFF, the fugue "Tutto il mondo è burla" (performed by the Berlin Opera in 1979 under the direction of Georg Solti)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=We0heyFkqXU&t=4435s> (TIMING – 2:02:35-2:05:35)

AIDA (1871)

Verdi's most popular opera – hands down!!!

(13) Conclusion of the “Nile Scene” (Act 3) performed by Pavarotti, Chiara, and Pons at La Scala under the direction of Loren Maazel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II_QmjDyuf8&list=PLFXm33g1Zx9za2P6vf3CSPB7NW_wB2G4h&index=22 (TIMING – 1:48:50-2:01:50)