

How Italy Became A Nation: The Genius Of Verdi, The Statesmanship Of Cavour

by Claudio Celani

Unlike nations such as Germany or England, Italy has not had a great modern dramatist in the strict meaning of the word. Its highest cultural expression, the Renaissance, gave birth to great comedians, like Ariosto; during the Risorgimento, the effort to liberate and unify the Italian nation, some wrote tragedies, but they never rose above the level of mediocrity.¹ It was perhaps destiny that in Italy, the motherland of music, the place of a Schiller or a Shakespeare has been taken by a musician, Giuseppe Verdi.

Verdi, more than a composer, was a dramatist, an artist who used music as an instrument to convey the art of Classical drama. Not accidentally his operas are called "*Drammi in musica*" (musical dramas), and the dramatist soul dominates even his few religious compositions, like the Requiem for Alessandro Manzoni, or his only instrumental work, the String Quartet composed in 1873. Verdi occupies a prominent place next to Dante, Raphael, Leonardo, and a few others, in the gallery of the great figures whom Italians recall to their mind when they think of the idea of Fatherland.

But it would be a superficial to say that Verdi gained his fame as a Patriot because he filled his operas with patriotic songs and choruses. A great patriot, the nation builder, is the one who builds a people out of a multitude, and elevates it to the highest level of Reason. Who can do this better than the dramatist? As Friedrich Schiller wrote: "So great and manifold is the merit of the better sort of theater for developing moral character; and it deserves no less merit with regard to the full enlightenment of the intellect. For it is precisely here, in this higher sphere, that the great thinker, the fiery patriot,

first knows how to utilize it to the maximum."²

One cannot separate, therefore, Verdi the Musician and Verdi the Patriot, from Verdi the Dramatist. That Verdi intended drama as a moral institution, the way Schiller described it in his treatise, is clear beyond doubt. Verdi left us no treatise on how Classical musical dramas should be composed, but in his letters, he often criticized his contemporaries and made a few remarks on the nature of drama. Thus, if Schiller wrote that on stage, "the great ones of the world hear, what they seldom or never hear— Truth," for Verdi, on stage "everything should be as it should be: True and Beautiful."³

But if the representation of Truth must be the ultimate aim of art, this must be the inner Truth, otherwise art becomes a "photograph" of nature: "To copy the truth can be a good thing, but to invent the truth is better, much better. There seems to be a contradiction in these three words: 'invent the truth,' but ask Papa⁴ about it. It might be that he, Papa, has met some Falstaff; but he would hardly have met so wretched a wretch as Iago, and never, never angels such as Cordelia, Imogene, Desdemona, etc.; yet, they are so true! To copy the truth is a fine thing, but it is only photography, not painting."⁵

Why is something invented, more true than something existing? Because Truth exists primarily in the realm of ideas, and secondarily in the realm of sensual objects. By inventing the Truth, thus, the artist sets to himself the task of educating his audience to go beyond the mere appearances of things and confront itself with ideas. In this form, beauty is no longer exterior beauty, but becomes moral beauty. In this way, the composer "casts a glance through the human race, compares people with people, century with century, and finds that however slavishly the great mass of the people lie imprisoned by the chains of prejudice and public opinion, which continually work to subvert their attainment of Happiness—that the purer

1. The great Italian patriot Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803) understood that the Italian liberation movement should be educated through Classical tragedy, and undertook a self-taught effort of producing tragedies in Greek style. But his effort was emasculated by the Aristotelian rules he himself chose to follow, and by a pedestrian imitation of the scheme of Greek tragedy. Furthermore, Alfieri's Italian verses could at best be understood by a narrow elite of literates, and never reach the broad population. The same could be said of Ugo Foscolo (1778-1827), whose dramatic production, although of a freer and higher poetical quality, suffered from the same formalistic schemes. A later, mediocre attempt was done by Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) with his two dramas *Il Conte di Carmagnola* and *Adelchi*, before writing his famous novel *I Promessi Sposi*. None of these authors could be compared to a Schiller or a Shakespeare.

2. Friedrich Schiller, "The Theater Considered As A Moral Institution," (Mannheim: 1784.)

3. Letter to Domenico Morelli, Genoa, May 14, 1873 (from Verdi's collected letters).

4. Verdi referred to Shakespeare as "*Il Papà*" (Father).

5. Letter to Clarina Maffei, S. Agata, Sept. 20, 1876 (from Luzio, *Carteggio di G. Verdi con la contessa Maffei*).

rays of truth enlighten only a few minds here and there, which have perhaps gained that small prize through a lifetime of labor. What means does the wise legislator possess, to impart this to the entire nation?"⁶

These thoughts were shared by Camillo Cavour, the great political leader of the Risorgimento which made Italy a nation, who wanted Verdi elected in the first national Parliament. In 1860, Italy was liberated from foreign occupation, but the majority of its people was still oppressed by ignorance and superstition. "Now that Italy is made, we must make the Italians," said Cavour, and wanted Verdi elected in the Parliament as a visible symbol of the content of the new national political leadership.

How Verdi Became A Dramatist

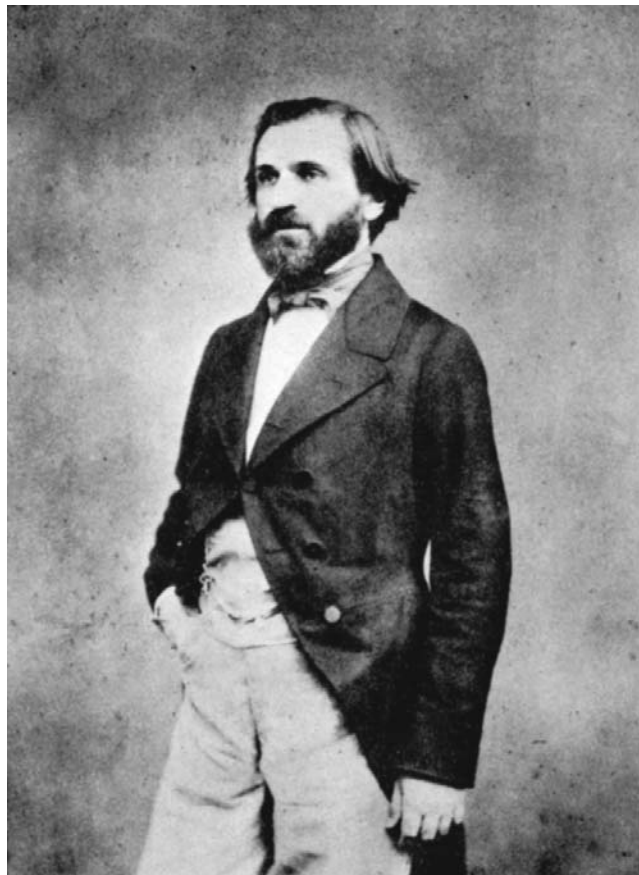
Like many other great Italians, Verdi became a dramatist by self-education. His musical education with Vincenzo Lavigna, a pupil of the famous Giovanni Paisiello and an admirer of Mozart, consisted in rigorous counterpoint, but nothing more than that. In one of his letters, which he wrote angrily against a French critic who had slandered his *Macbeth* and challenged Verdi's knowledge of Shakespeare, Verdi recalls how his acquaintance with Shakespeare occurred very early in his youth, and we can imagine how this marked a fundamental stage in his development. "He is one of my preferred poets, whom I had in my hands since my early youth, and whom I read again and again."

Shakespeare directly supplied three subjects for Verdi's dramas; and a fourth, *King Lear*, on which Verdi worked in different periods for several years, but which never came to life. This prolonged effort had a spillover in Verdi's famous "trilogy" of dramas: *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore*, and *La Traviata*, which he composed after intensively working on the *Lear* project in 1849.⁷ From Verdi's correspondence we have an abundance of references which show us how he admired Shakespeare above everybody else, and called him, as we have seen above, "il papà."

We do not know when Verdi read Schiller for the first time. Although Schiller reached universal notoriety during his lifetime, his fame across the Alps was not an automatic matter. Schiller had to be translated into Italian, and in comparison to Shakespeare, whose translations had existed and spread for centuries already, the great German poet had died only seven years before Verdi's birth. At that time, there was no Internet; a few read German and even fewer could translate from German into Italian. "Other than those few, who are familiar with German, and the limited group of Germanophile Lombards, F. Schiller remains more than anything else, a name which serves as a standard and a reference, after Shake-

6. Schiller, op. cit.

7. Verdi would again work on *Lear* in 1853-55, but despite his efforts and suggestions, librettist Antonio Somma never succeeded in producing a suitable text, and the project was definitely called off.



The 100th anniversary of the death of Giuseppe Verdi is being celebrated musically all over the world in 2001 as "the Verdi Year." The composer of many of the most widely beloved operas was a senator and patriot of Italy's national unification movement, the Risorgimento, a campaigner for the scientific tuning of middle C=256; and a dramatist allied spiritually with Schiller and Shakespeare.

spare, in the polemics on dramatic theory; he is, in short, an author who is much discussed, but little read."⁸

Romantics Split Schiller From Shakespeare

Even considering this statement exaggerated, the fact is that, before Andrea Maffei started his organic translation in 1827, Schiller was practically unknown in Italy. Even worse, the Romantic faction, led by Madame de Staël and by Giuseppe Mazzini, had attempted to block the penetration of Schiller by building for him a Romantic image. Mazzini even wrote, in his essays "On Historical Drama" and "On Fate Considered As An Element Of Drama," that Schiller and Shakespeare had to be seen as belonging to two opposite schools. "Shakespeare's realism is as distant from Schiller's idealism as the Sun from the Earth," Mazzini wrote, and: "Schiller was never a measured investigator of the intimate

8. Lavinia Mazzucchetti, *Schiller in Italia* (Milan: 1913).



A sketch of the final scene of Verdi's *I Masnadieri* ("The Bandits"), a dramatic musical presentation of the poisonous mental disease of "terrorism" in a revolutionary time. Verdi used the drama *Die Räuber* ("The Robbers"), Friedrich Schiller's famous dramatic warning of this disease at the time of the French Revolution.

aspects which passion assumes in single individuals, nor has he ever possessed Shakespeare's objectivism and fantastic vigor."

Luckily, Verdi was not a person who would look at the "label" of an author; additionally, he possibly met Schiller's work for the first time through Maffei, who was a Classicist.

In 1842 in Milan, after Verdi's meteoric success with his opera, *Nabucco*, he started to attend Countess Clarina Maffei's famous salon. This was the circle that gathered the best intellectual elite of Milan and which became, especially in the decade 1850-59, the general staff of the Italian national movement in Austrian-occupied Lombardy. In the Maffei salon, "One spoke about literature, art, industries, political economy, even about philosophy; but everything was bound to the dominant thought, the resurrection of Italy. Any pedantry was outlawed."⁹ Among the members of the salon were Carlo Tenca, who led the mass recruiting of Lombard volunteers to the Piedmontese Army for the 1859 war; Massimo D'Azeglio, who became first governor of Milan after that war; Emilio Visconti-Venosta, who became Foreign Minister in reunified Italy; Emilio Broglio, who became Education Minister; the famous mathematician Francesco Brioschi,¹⁰

9. Raffaello Barbiera, *Il salotto della contessa Maffei*, (Milan: 1925).

10. Francesco Brioschi is a key figure in the struggle for the rebirth of science and the industrialization of Italy. In 1858 Brioschi, together with physicists Enrico Betti from Pisa and Felice Casorati from Pavia, travelled to Göttingen, Germany, to meet the famous mathematician Bernhard Riemann, who had freed science from the formal limitations of Euclidean geometry. When they came back, they started publishing Riemann's works in Italian and holding

who founded the Milan Polytechnical College; Francesco Arese, who was the contact man between French Emperor Napoleon III and Camillo Cavour; and countless other artists, scientists, and politicians.

Clarina's husband, Count Andrea Maffei, was the above-mentioned translator of Schiller. Clarina and Andrea Maffei eventually separated, but Verdi, who assiduously attended the Maffei salon for four years, remained in intimate friendship with both of them until their deaths. There is no doubt that the friendship between Verdi and Maffei developed on the basis of a deeper, shared view of common artistic values.

university lectures on the subject. Riemann's ideas relived a tradition which in Italy dated back to Leonardo da Vinci. Faithful to this tradition, Brioschi and the other Italian scientists founded the modern hydrodynamic school which brought Italy to the forefront of aeronautics in the 1930s.

In 1859, Brioschi was part of the national committee for the reform of public schools, called by Cavour. Verdi was also a member of that committee. The school reform which then was implemented in unified Italy was similar to the Humboldt reforms in Germany. In 1863, Brioschi founded the Politecnico, the technical university in Milan, which gave impulse to the development of electricity. Already, Cavour, in a speech in the Piedmontese Parliament in 1854, had anticipated the large potential for hydroelectric power in Northern Italy. In 1883, thanks to the impulse given by Politecnico director Giuseppe Colombo, Italy was the first European nation with an hydroelectrical power station.

Two years later, Galileo Ferraris, a student of Betti, invented the electric engine based on a rotating field. Brioschi also supported Alessandro Rossi, an industrialist from Vicenza and member of the Senate, who had studied the economic thought of Alexander Hamilton, Mathew Carey, and his son Henry C. Carey, and led the campaign for a protectionist policy for the development of manufactures, which led to the tariff bill of 1878 and the protectionist bill of 1887.



Verdi's patriotic and cultural collaborators and guides, Andrea and Clarina Maffei, presided over a salon which contributed important ideas to the Italian Risorgimento. Andrea Maffei wrote the libretto for Verdi's *I Masnadieri*, closely following Schiller's drama.

Maffei was born in Riva del Garda, a territory which belonged to Austria until the end of World War I, and was educated in the Classicist school of poetry, which in Italy was led by Vincenzo Monti. In 1842, when he first met Verdi, he had already translated *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (*The Maid of Orléans*, 1830), about Joan of Arc, and was finishing *Don Carlos*. The other Schiller dramas which concern Verdi's work were translated in the following succession: *Wallenstein* (1844), *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*, 1846), and *Kabale und Liebe* (*Intrigues and Love*, 1852).

Notice (we will return to this), that the translation of *Die Räuber* is almost contemporary to Verdi's *I Masnadieri* (performed 1847 in London), and that *Kabale und Liebe* was even translated after Verdi's *Luisa Miller* (1849), meaning that the composer had direct access to Maffei's "work in progress." Maffei himself wrote the libretto to *I Masnadieri*, and de facto, together with Verdi, the libretto to *Macbeth* (which he had previously translated)—although the latter carries the name of Francesco Maria Piave.

If Maffei's translations introduced Verdi to Schiller and a few others, to the broader Italian public Schiller remained unknown, for the simple reason that in the pre-united, still feudal Italy of the Nineteenth Century, literacy was exclusive. Over 80% of the almost 30 million population were illiterate. In larger areas, like Southern Italy, they even spoke dialects which had a bare similarity with the Italian language. Thus, publishers printed from 500 to a maximum of 1,500 copies of Maffei's Schiller translations.

Therefore, we can say that the real popularizer of Schiller in Italy (and many other parts of the world) was Verdi's drama. In contrast to the high illiteracy, the Italian population had the broadest access to music theaters. Suffice it to realize

that in 1865, there were in Italy, excluding the regions of Trento and Trieste, no fewer than 348 active theaters, almost all of which dedicated to opera. Opera was the product of mass consumption, which even poor, illiterate people could attend and understand and, in the case of a good opera, leave afterwards uplifted in their soul. Verdi's immense popularity thus meant immense popularity for *Don Carlos*, *Die Jungfrau*, *Die Räuber*, *Luisa Miller*, and all other Schiller creations.

Of course, when we deal with musical dramas, based on librettos which are supposed to be a distillation of the original work, one can legitimately raise the question whether the distillation was faithful, and if the music did justice to the text. In other words, if it was the real Schiller.

To answer, we must first introduce a concept which Lyndon LaRouche calls the "principle of metaphor." A metaphor, in LaRouche's concept, occurs when a paradox arises due to the counterposition of two mutually incompatible statements. The paradox is solved only through an act of cognition, i.e., through the introduction of a higher paradigm which gives coherence to the formally incompatible statements. On stage, the paradox is usually presented in the form of an "Hamlet-like" choice posed before the character. Tragedy unfolds when a flawed culture, reflected in the way the character thinks and acts, prevents the character from adopting a new system of thought which would save him and society.

Thus, Classical drama becomes a powerful tool to educate the audience to avoid repeating the errors which lead to tragedy. In the case of the historical dramas, especially Shakespeare's and Schiller's, the aim is to show how specific cultures, in specific historical moments, were determinant in dooming societies.

A musical rendition of such dramas must, therefore, not so much reproduce the original drama in every detail (something impossible to do in a much shorter libretto), but must aim at faithfully reproducing the features of the culture which is exposed as flawed, and the specific way in which the characters of the play are influenced by that culture. In this sense, Verdi's renditions of Schiller's dramas (with the possible exception of *Luisa Miller*) can be considered successful works.

Of course, Verdi introduces another dimension, music, which also works on the principle of metaphor, with its own laws. In music, the paradox is created by the use of dissonances, which create a transition demanding a solution in the musical realm.¹¹

Metaphor in Music

When this author, an amateur singer, was confronted with Karl's role in Verdi's *I Masnadieri* (written from Schiller's *The Robbers*), he realized that this opera, together with *Don Carlos*, is the drama whose libretto is most "faithful" to the original. He was also particularly attracted by the subject for its historical actuality. We will explore this aspect later; we examine now, by looking at a few bars, how Verdi uses musical paradoxes to render the metaphorical idea of the drama as a whole.

FIGURE 1

The musical score in Figure 1 is for Act II, Scene 6 of Verdi's *I Masnadieri*. It is written in G major and 4/4 time. The score is divided into four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Co-me splen-di-do e gran-de il sol tra-mon-ta, de-gno è ben che s'a-do-ri! In que-sta for-ma ca-de un e-ro-re! Na-tu-ra, oh sei pur bel-la, sei pur bel-la e stu-pen-da;". The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings like *pp* and *ppp*, and a section marked *Adagio*. The score shows a complex interplay of melody and harmony, with some dissonances that create a sense of tension and conflict.

In **Figure 1**, we are in Act II, Scene 6, at a point in the drama when Carlo (Schiller's character Karl Moor) is in a crisis. As in the case of Hamlet's famous soliloquy, we have a conflict: two states of mind at war within the same person. On one side, Carlo realizes that his choice of becoming a bandit is against natural law, which is good and beautiful. On the other side, he feels himself chained to his condition by forces which are more powerful than himself. In this first musical example, Verdi, for reasons of space, condenses in Moor's words a whole dialogue between Karl and another robber: "*Come splendido e grande il sol tramonta, degno è ben che s'adori! In questa forma cade un eroe! Natura, oh sei pur bella, sei pur bella e stupenda*" ("How beautiful and great the setting sun, it is worthy to be praised! This is how a hero falls! Nature, yet are you beautiful, beautiful and aston-

11. "The generation of a musical dissonance, in that fashion, produces an effect which is identical in form and implication to the cases of the paradoxes posed by Kepler and Fermat, respectively, in the physical-science examples. In musical terms, inversions crafted to produce that effect, are recognized as dissonances, because, on the condition that the dissonances are resolved within the completed composition, they create transcendental qualities of musical keys, beyond the 24-key major-minor domain, just as discovered universal physical principles lie beyond and above the bounds of the axiomatic system into which such paradoxes are introduced. In that sense, such paradoxical juxtapositions, such as those generated by musical, contrapuntal inversion, negate the system into which they are introduced, just as Kepler's and Fermat's discoveries negate the system of assumptions into which they are introduced. . . . Negation signifies a paradox which obliges us to find reality in principles which exist outside a referenced system of axiomatic-like assumptions. Such paradoxes thus negate the referenced system of axiomatic-like assumptions." Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "Prometheus and Europe," *Fidelio*, Spring 2000.

ishing”).¹² Contrasting to the beauty of nature, is the ugliness of the bandit’s soul **Figure 2**: “*ed io deforme, orribile cosi!*” (“And I am deformed, so horrible!”).

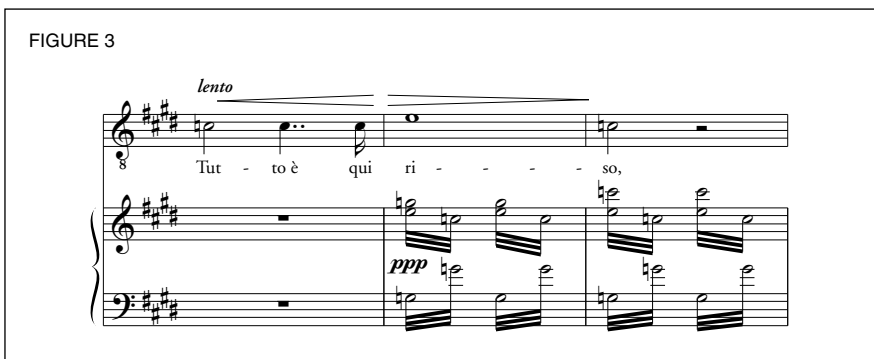
This is quite a contrast, which Verdi decides to express by using the so-called diminished seventh chord, a chord composed of four notes, which divides the octave into four intervals, each a minor third. In their cross relationships, the four intervals also form a double “Lydian” dissonance, i.e., two intervals, each of a diminished fifth. This chord is extremely dissonant, but has the peculiarity, given its multiple symmetry, to admit a multiplicity of solutions, i.e., a high degree of freedom. The irony is that Verdi, as he wrote in a letter to Francesco Florimo in 1871,¹³ warns most emphatically against the use of such a chord, complaining that music is so degenerated, that anybody can call himself a composer just

by showing that he can write a couple of diminished seventh chords. In reality Verdi is not against its use, but against its abuse, which during his time was the product of the false harmonic school of Philippe Rameau, which had pervaded musical teaching. Rameau’s school reduces music to a progression of vertical chords, thus eliminating the very possibility of creating musical ideas, which is given uniquely by the interplay of independent horizontal voices.

Romanticism had built upon Rameau’s doctrine the invention that music is composed by the two independent elements of “harmony” and of “melody,” elaborating that some peoples, like the Germans, were naturally inclined to develop harmony, whereas the Italians were notoriously inclined toward melody. Verdi intervened again and again against such

12. “Black. How gloriously the sun sinks there! Moor (melting into the sight): So dies a hero. . . . Yes, friend, this world is so beautiful. . . . This earth so magnificent.” Friedrich Schiller, *The Robbers*, Act III, Scene 2.

13. To a request by the city and the academicians of Naples, to become director of the Naples Conservatory, Verdi answered negatively in 1871. But he gave indications in a letter to Francesco Florimo, Music Historian and Chief Archivist of that Conservatory, of how a curriculum of study should look. Among other things, he wrote: “I would tell the young students: ‘train constantly in the Fugue, persist, until you are sated, and until your hand has become free and strong to bend the note to your will. Thus, you will learn how to compose with security, to place the parts well, and to modulate without affects. . . . Watch a few performances of modern operas, without letting yourself be fascinated either by the many harmonic and instrumental beauties, nor by the chord of diminished seventh, rock and harbor for all of us who cannot compose four measures without a half a dozen of these sevenths.’” Genoa, Jan. 5, 1871, from *The Collected Letters*.



idiocies: “In music there is something more than melody; something more than harmony: There is music! This will seem a puzzle to you! I will explain, Beethoven was no melodist, Palestrina was no melodist. I mean, melodist in the sense we mean it today.”¹⁴

Coming back to our musical example, we will see how, in Verdi’s composition, harmonies are generated by the contrapuntal interplay of musical voices moving “horizontally.” For instance, in our diminished seventh chord, the first of the two minor intervals is introduced by the singer’s voice, which moves up from A to C[♯] (**Figure 2**) on the words “*ed io deforme*” (“and I am deformed”). The orchestra (shown here as a piano reduction) stresses this interval by repeating it in a chord, and at the same time introduces in its upper voice, a descending figure (F[♯]-E-D[♯]). This is a major sixth inversion, in downward steps, of the singer’s rising statement A-B-C (the intervals of a sixth and a minor third are complementary, dividing an octave between them; one is implicitly defined by the other).

This inversion of the singer’s voice, is played against its own mirror-inversion (D[♯]-E-F[♯]) in the lower voices of the orchestra. Here we have the generation of all of our four intervals, each a minor third, which produce in their cross relationships the two “Lydian” intervals, C-F[♯] and A-D[♯]. In this form, the so-called diminished seventh chord is generated not as a simultaneous or “vertical” chord, but as a polyphony

14. Letter to Count Arrivabene, S. Agata, Sept. 2, 1871.

FIGURE 4

moves into a C-minor mode, which occurs when the voice jumps to G and the orchestra solves the “diminished seventh” on the word “*inferno*.” But Verdi moves the voice on a long descending scale which begins with and twice repeats an A^b, making sure that a bit of “hell” remains until the end, even on the word “*paradiso*.”

Addressing two conflicting states of mind, this recitative presents the audience with the dilemma. As Lyndon LaRouche has written in the case of Hamlet, the dilemma is “Whether to cling to his present habits of behavior, which he knows will doom him and his nation; or, to leave the folly of his accustomed ways, for what is for him the unfamiliar alternative, the choice which might save him. . . . Those are among the ironies of the drama; that is the metaphor. . . .”¹⁵

of four moving voices. The terrible tension created by the interval falls on the word “*deforme*” and, again, after “*horrible*.”

The tension must now be resolved, but the text demands a “solution” which is a counterposition: The character Carlo (Schiller’s Karl Moor), counterposes a smiling image of nature, “*tutto è qui riso*” (“Everything smiles here”), to his horrible condition (Figure 3). Verdi has the singer’s voice introduce the solution, moving from C to E, thus changing one of the previous intervals from a minor third, into a major third. The orchestra supports this by moving the D[#] to E and the F[#] to G, which is the major fifth of C. Everything seems to have moved to a smiling, luminous tonality, of the key of C major.

But it is only an illusion. In this paradise of nature, Carlo feels himself in an interior hell: “*Io sol trovo l’inferno in paradiso*” (“I alone find hell in paradise”). The thoughts in Carlo’s mind occur in a quick succession, and therefore Verdi must express Moor’s despair with a sudden shift. He does it again with a diabolical jump to a diminished seventh chord again (Figure 4)!

This time, the orchestra moves ahead, moving down from G to F[#] again in the bass, and from G to A again in the bottom note of the treble. The C is kept (it has been there all along), and additionally, an E^b is introduced, which apparently has no justification. Does Verdi act arbitrarily just because he wants another of those diminished seventh chords, just for the pleasure of doing it? No, this note condenses the singer’s line immediately after, “*io sol trovo*” (“I alone find”), moving stepwise from C up to E^b and back. The singer’s movement stresses the shift which the orchestra has made, from the major third of the previous phrase to the minor third. The resolution

The recitative is followed by an aria which uses a typical scheme of the early Verdi, a scheme which he would later abandon. Very simply, the aria is divided in two parts, reflecting the two dramatic parts of the text. The first, “*Di ladroni attorniato*. . .,” is based on Moor’s original words in the same scene: “Surrounded by murderers—hissed at by vipers—chained to sin with bands of iron—staggering into the grave of ruin on the weak reed of vice—amid the flowers of the fortunate world, a howling foundling.”

This part is an andante in F-minor, with a syncopated singing line accompanied by an agitated rhythm in the orchestra. Moor is telling us finally how, surrounded by bandits and chained to his destiny, he feels himself “*maledetto dal ciel*” (cursed by Heaven). At this point, Verdi and Maffei introduce something which is not found in Schiller’s original, at least not in this place and not in the same form. Moor, in this quite desperate state, thinks of Amalia, the beloved maiden he abandoned when he decided to become a bandit. This second part of the aria, by introducing the figure of Amalia, replaces and condenses a whole section in *Die Räuber* (Act 4, beginning of Scene 2 and Scene 4). The theme of Amalia, who represents a world of love and reason, thus replaces the nostalgia of “*Oh du Schloss meines Vaters*” (“O, you castle of my father”), which in Schiller’s original should come at this point. Verdi and Maffei do not use it, because they have extracted it to build the first tenor aria, at the beginning of the opera!

Like in an apposition, the thought of Amalia comes di-

15. LaRouche, “Prometheus and Europe,” op. cit.



Pope Pius IX, who upon being named Pope, greatly encouraged the Risorgimento with his public utterance, “Great Lord, bless Italy” (an Italy which, politically, did not then yet exist). But Mazzini’s terrorism, on behalf of Britain’s Foreign Minister Palmerston, forced the “poor Pope,” as Verdi called him, to begin a long retreat.

rectly, and is developed in a melody in A^b major: We are now in a different paradigm. Here there is no agitation, either in the melody or in the orchestral accompaniment, which unfolds in a typical Verdi arpeggio. The melody, calm, is composed on an ascending singing line. A syncopated figure appears at the closing of the aria, on “*la mia pena è più crudel*” (which means both “my sorrow is greater” and “my punishment is harder”), which assumes the character of a broken cry.

‘I Masnadieri’ in the Political Struggle

I Masnadieri was performed in Summer 1847, in London. Verdi had worked almost one year, while at the same time producing *Macbeth*. Unlike the whole series of operas from *Nabucco*, through *I Lombardi* and even to *Macbeth*, this opera has no explicit “patriotic” character. There is no patriotic chorus, no freedom fight—on the contrary, the robbers sing “freedom,” meaning license to steal and kill, a state of violence of man against man. Yet, *I Masnadieri* is one of the operas—another one is *Don Carlos*—with which Verdi inter-

venes at a high political level in a conscious effort to change the destinies of Europe.

By the time Maffei had translated *Die Räuber* and was working on the libretto for Verdi, some promising changes had started to occur in Italy.

The peninsula was still under the divisions established at the Congress of Vienna: Lombardy and Veneto in Northern Italy under Austrian domination; the central Italian regions of Lazio, Umbria, Marche and part of Romagna under the Papal States; Tuscany under the Grand Duke Leopold—a Hapsburg—and the “King of Two Sicilies” (Southern Italy) under the French Bourbon monarchs. Modena and Parma (Verdi’s birthplace) were two small duchies under Austrian protection. The only state not under foreign domination was Piedmont.

However, at the beginning of 1846, a new Pope, Pius IX, was elected, who awakened expectations of Italian patriots already when, in his inaugural speech, he invoked the prayer, “*Benedite, Gran Dio, l’Italia*” (“Great God, bless Italy”). To his words, Pius IX let deeds follow: He introduced liberal reforms, and in 1847 started a customs union with Tuscany and Piedmont, which had the potential to include all other Italian states, and prepare political union through economic integration and development.

The ground for this development had been prepared by a growing influence of the moderate patriotic current in the Risorgimento. Starting with the publication of a book by Cesare Balbo in 1844, these national patriots had challenged Giuseppe Mazzini’s influence on the national movement. Mazzini, the radical agent of British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, had gained large influence over young patriots through his theories that Italy could be liberated only by a national revolution that establishes a republican form of government. Soon, however, Italians became aware that Mazzini’s theories were only the cover for launching hopeless insurrections and provoking bloody repression. Furthermore, the tragic outcome of the expedition of the Bandiera brothers, in 1844, raised well-grounded suspicions that Mazzini himself organized such insurgencies only to deliver sincere patriots to the police, and to the guillotine.¹⁶

When the 1847 Custom Union was formed, Mazzini

16. The two Bandiera brothers, belonging to a high-placed Venetian family, were militants of Mazzini’s “Young Italy” movement. In 1844 they organized an armed expedition to Calabria, where they thought they could organize peasants to join them and revolt against the Bourbons. But the Bourbon government was informed in advance by the Austrian government of Lombardo-Veneto, which had been informed by the British government, and was able to arrest and execute the two Bandiera brothers, together with their 12 comrades, as soon as they landed. The Bandieras had corresponded with Mazzini, who was directing his network in London, under protection of Palmerston’s government. Mazzini was accused of being responsible for the tragic failure, and possibly even of betrayal, an allegation which could have destroyed him had his British friends in Parliament, led by Thomas Duncombe, not saved him by accusing the police of reading Mazzini’s mail.

launched a counterattack. With money and protection from Lord Palmerston, from his headquarters in London Mazzini founded that same year the international project of his organization, called “International League of Peoples,” and started organizing an anarchist insurgency throughout Europe.

In this context, in 1846 Verdi had been invited to perform a new opera in London, and his choice of *I Masnadieri* fit in a possible design to counter and neutralize Mazzini’s plots. Schiller’s *Die Räuber* is the story of a student, Karl Moor, who is animated by great revolutionary ideas, but ends up by becoming an assassin, justifying his crimes as acts against an “unjust” society. The secret of the story is that Moor never grew up, and mixed up his infantile feeling of rage against a supposed injustice from his father, with the apparent greatness of his “revolutionary” ideals. In reality, Moor is manipulated, first by his evil brother Franz—who embodies the impulse of oligarchical power and its philosophical justification (materialism)—then by his fellow criminals, and ultimately by himself. Moor is controlled by his ideology.

As we saw in the scene analyzed above, Moor sees the pit into which he has plunged, and also knows what the way out is, but he is blocked by the fear of moving into a totally new world. Like Hamlet, Moor expresses this dilemma in a soliloquy, where Schiller goes further than Shakespeare in showing the inner thoughts of the character in all their transparency. Moor’s pride dominates him and leads him to the peak of “logical” irrationality, when at the end, he kills what is dearest to him, Amalia.

Schiller wrote *Die Räuber* in 1781, addressing the ideology that later would produce the devastations of the French Revolution. It was the same ideology which Mazzini, from his golden hideout in London, was spreading throughout Europe in 1847.¹⁷

Verdi, like many in the Maffei salon, had been a Mazzinian himself. He had believed in the possibility of an Italian revolution which could establish a national republic and chase foreign armies from the nation. But where was the Italian army that could fight against the Austrian, the French, and the Bourbon armies all together? All insurrections, as became tragically clear one year later, in 1848, was shown to have no chance against well-armed and well-trained regular armies which routinely crushed them. Many Italian patriots had started to understand that, and began supporting constitutional and economic reforms, abandoning dreams of overthrowing monarchies. They started to look at Piedmont, where the star of Camillo Cavour was rising, as the state which could take the leadership of the reform movement and of a real Italian revolution.

Presumably Verdi, by the time he went to London, had

17. In modern times, Karl Moor would embody the final evolutionary stage of a violent member of the '68 generation. How many small Karl Moors were bred in the July 2001 street riots of Genoa?



Giuseppe Mazzini was Lord Palmerston’s Europe-wide agent and organizer of uprisings and terrorism against the European states. Mazzini’s “Young Europe” movement became discredited, and Italy’s patriots could overcome it. Of Verdi’s one meeting with Mazzini, the composer made no note or comment.

already matured his thinking in this direction. We know that he met Mazzini, but we do not know how the meeting went. It is possible that Verdi realized that the man in front of him was an impotent fanatic, an extremely weak personality, bordering on effeminacy. In contrast to his meeting with other great personalities, such as Cavour or the poet Alessandro Manzoni, Verdi does not mention his meeting with Mazzini in any of his letters. And the fact is, that Verdi came to London with an opera which was a complete rebuttal of Mazzinianism. This would have left a mark, Verdi thought, on many Mazzini supporters, including a large Italian colony in London, and maybe—why not?—on Mazzini himself. How would many patriots react, seeing on stage the tragic outcome of Moor’s “revolutionary” enterprises?

The premiere was a success. Significantly, Queen Victoria did not like the opera, as she wrote in her daybook.¹⁸

18. From the diary of Queen Victoria, London, July 22, 1847: “We have been at the Opera, where we saw the performance of Verdi’s *I Masnadieri*, in four acts. The subject is the same as Mercadante’s *I Briganti*. In this new Verdi



Camillo Cavour, the Piedmontese statesman who became the great political leader of the Risorgimento, defeating Mazzini's terrorist strategy with that of the national development of Italy on the "American" model.

Italy's Unification: Cavour Steps In

Exactly 20 years later, another Queen felt extremely annoyed by a Verdi opera. This time it was Queen Eugenia, the Spanish wife of Napoleon III, and the opera was *Don Carlo*, composed for Paris in 1867. In the meantime, the map of Italy had changed in a way that the most optimistic patriot could never have hoped. Italy was now unified under one government, from the Alps to Sicily. Austria had been chased out of Lombardy and Veneto. Almost the whole territory of Italy, except Trento and Trieste, and the Lazio region around Rome, was liberated.

But let us make a step back.

We had left Verdi in London 1847. On his way back to

Opera, inspired by Schiller's *Die Räuber*, the music is very shoddy and banal. Lablache played the part of Maximilian Moor, in which he performed well, although he is too fat for the role of the bloodless old man. Gardoni was a wonderfully dressed Carl Moor. Miss Lind sang and interpreted marvelously Amalia's role, appearing very elegant and attractive in her various costumes. She was immensely applauded. (From William Weaver, *Verdi* [Florence: 1980], retranslated from Italian.)

Italy, things precipitated. Mazzini's and Palmerston's conspiracies had set fire throughout Europe. In 1848, insurrections broke out everywhere on the continent, including all major Italian cities.

The Austrian army had been forced to abandon Milan and Venice, and the Piedmontese government thought the moment had come for a war against Austria to liberate Northern Italy. But the Piedmontese army, after a first victory in Goito, paid for its lack of organization and competent leaders, and was bitterly defeated at Custoza. Piedmont had to withdraw from all liberated territories, but used the truce to reorganize its army and put it under the leadership of a Polish general, hoping for a better performance. But a second and final defeat in Novara put an end to the war. The Piedmontese King Carlo Alberto abdicated in favor of his son, Victor Emmanuel II.

In the meantime, the most decisive political setback had occurred in Rome. In November 1848, Pius IX's Prime Minister, the reformer Pellegrino Rossi, was assassinated, and the Pope left Rome, fearing for his life. An insurrection broke out and a revolutionary government was formed under a triumvirate including Mazzini, who had come back from London and was the real head of the new government. As a result, Pius IX, the Pope who had started the patriotic reforms, including the very important Customs Union in 1847, was now forced to call in the French Army and let policy be dictated by his internal opponents, represented by reactionary Cardinal Antonelli.

In July 1849 the French Army entered Rome, restored the Pope to his throne, and occupied the city. Throughout Italy, the old regimes were back on their seats, the reforms were cancelled, hundreds of patriots were imprisoned. The demoralization was deep. Verdi wrote from Paris: "You can well imagine that the catastrophe of Rome has plunged me into heavy thoughts, and you were wrong not to write to me immediately. But, let us not speak about Rome!! What good would it do? Force still rules the world. Justice? What good is it against bayonets!! We can only cry over our disgrace, and curse the authors of so many calamities."¹⁹

But the 1848-49 events had one positive result: They gave the ultimate blow to the Mazzinian faction, which lost hegemony in the national movement. In Turin now grew the influence of Camillo Cavour, editor of the newspaper *Il Risorgimento* and a man of outstanding political qualities and economic competence. Cavour became Agriculture Minister in 1850, then Finance Minister in 1851, and finally Prime Minister in 1852. With a Machiavellian strategy, which included a Piedmontese intervention in the Crimean War, Cavour was able, in 1856, to participate in the Paris Peace Congress. It was the first time that an Italian state (and a small one!) was represented at the same table with Britain, France,

19. Letter to Vincenzo Luccardi, Paris, July 14, 1849.

Austria, and Russia.

In front of these powers, Cavour spoke in favor of the Italian cause against Austria. This intervention had no result at the international level (Cavour afterwards dropped all illusions about “liberal” Britain), but in Italy, Cavour was definitely recognized as leader of the Risorgimento.

The national movement, including former followers of Mazzini such as the famous Giuseppe Garibaldi,²⁰ united itself in the Società Nazionale one year later. In Piedmont, Cavour started a program of economic development, focussing on infrastructure, agriculture, and re-armament.²¹

20. Giuseppe Garibaldi (Nizza 1807–Caprera 1882) was a young follower of Mazzini, with an outstanding quality of military leadership. He escaped from Italy in 1834, after the failed insurrection in Genoa, and organized in South America an Italian Legion which fought with Rio Grande and Uruguay independentists. In 1848 he came back to Italy and participated in the First War of Independence. In 1849 Garibaldi defended the “Roman Republic” from the French intervention. After a short exile in America, he broke with Mazzini and joined the Società Nazionale. He recognized the leadership of Cavour, but the two never liked each other. Cavour thought that Garibaldi should be contained because of his revolutionary ideas. Appointed by Cavour as general of the Piedmontese army, Garibaldi beat the Austrians in Varese and San Fermo during the Second War of Independence (1859). After the Villafranca truce, he abandoned the Piedmontese army and organized the expedition of the “Thousand” in Sicily. After the liberation of Southern Italy he became popular throughout the world. In between two attempts to liberate Rome, he participated in the Third War of Independence and beat the Austrians in Monte Suello and Bezzecca. In 1870 defended the Third Republic in France against the Prussian Army in Digione. He was a member of Parliament and organized in favor of the First (Socialist) International.

21. Cavour was an admirer of the United States of America. An anti-Jacobin, he was also an opponent of the oligarchical system which dominated Piedmont under the monarchy of Carlo Alberto. A military engineer by profession, Cavour insisted that scientific and technological progress must be the aim of statecraft, and that politicians should be guided only by the higher principle of reason. For Italy, this meant that progress of the nation, and ultimately its unification, could occur only under the state form of a constitutional monarchy. As Prime Minister of Piedmont under King Victor Emmanuel II, Cavour had to cope with a jealous monarch and a Parliament composed half by aristocrats and half by latifundists. In order to win support for his policies, he had to play one against the other. Thanks to his leadership, Piedmont started a progressive policy based on a mix of dirigistic measures, aimed at improving infrastructure, promoting manufacturing activities, modernizing agriculture and the military. At the end of his government, in 1861, Cavour had succeeded in covering Piedmont with a 1,000-kilometer-long network of railroads, basically starting from nothing. This amounted to half of the total railroad network of the Italian peninsula. To connect Piedmont to France, a giant work was started with the Moncenisio tunnel under the Alps, 12 kilometers long, which was completed only after his death.

Cavour had an extremely modern conception of infrastructure. In an early essay, when he was not yet Prime Minister, he wrote that a national railway system would make Italy a link in the routes between Europe and Africa, and between London and the Far East. Thanks to that, Turin could become a nodal point on a great connection axis “between the German and the Latin peoples.” Moreover, on the Italian peninsula, a well-designed railway network would help cancel localisms which were an obstacle to progress, and consolidate a common sentiment among Italians which would help develop a national conscience. The government subsidized the main services such as railways, post, banks. The shipyards, considered a strategic priority, were also subsidized. Landowners were helped by the state to purchase modern machinery and to train farmers. The state also built a canal network for

Defeat Of The Austrian Occupiers

Cavour knew that to liberate Northern Italy from the Austrians, the small Piedmontese army, even if modernized, would never be strong enough, and therefore plotted a strategy to involve French Emperor Napoleon III in an alliance against Austria, with the aim of “enlarging” the Kingdom of Piedmont to Northern Italy. In exchange, France, which had interest in reducing Austria’s power on the continent, was promised the Savoy region and the city of Nice. At the same time, Cavour counted on Prussia assuming a role in Germany similar to Piedmont, against Austria, knowing that Bismarck was in favor of an Italian state.

Finally, Napoleon and Cavour signed a secret agreement in Plombiers, France, on a joint war against Austria, but only in the case that Austria attacked Piedmont. Cavour started a policy of provocations, including public recruitment of patriots from Lombardy in the Piedmontese army. In Milan, the Maffei salon, in direct correspondence with Cavour, became the organizing center for volunteers. Austria fell into the trap and issued in April 1859 an ultimatum against Piedmont. It is reported that when Cavour was informed of the declaration of war, he started to sing “*Di quella pira*” from Verdi’s *Il Trovatore*.

The war was bloody but victorious for the Piedmontese-French army. The Austrians tried to beat the Piedmontese before the arrival of Napoleon’s troops, but they were stopped by Cavour’s brilliant decision to flood the fields at the border with Lombardy. In May, the Franco-Piedmontese army defeated the Austrians in Montebello, while Garibaldi crossed the Ticino River with a volunteer army and engaged the Austrians in the north. After a major victory in Magenta, the allied troops entered Milan. The Austrian Army withdrew to its fortresses in Veneto, and Emperor Franz Josef personally took general command, but the Franco-Piedmontese won again in San Martino and Solferino. The way was open to Venice, Trento, and Trieste.

Verdi, who had not trusted Napoleon, was full of enthusiasm: “So many wonders in a few days! It does not seem true. And who would have expected so much generosity from our allies? For my part, I confess and tell: It is my great fault, that I did not believe that the French would come to Italy; and that, in any case, they would spill their blood for us, without the idea of conquest. On the first point, I was deceived; I hope

irrigation. The textile industry, on the contrary, which had remained backward under a regime of total protection, was exposed to foreign competition through abolition of protective tariffs, and forced to modernize.

In order to find capital, Cavour was forced to turn to London and Paris private banks, thus increasing state debt. His plan, however, was to create a national bank on the Hamiltonian model. He tried twice to pass legislation in the Piedmontese Parliament to create a national bank, but he was defeated both times. No doubt, had he lived longer, he would have tried a third time in the National Parliament, and maybe he would have succeeded. (Sources on Cavour: *Camillo Cavour, Diario* (1833-1843) [Milan: 1941]; Rosario Romeo, *Vita di Cavour* [Bari: 1984]; and Dennis Mack Smith, *Cavour* [Milan: 1984]).

and desire that I am deceived on the second; that Napoleon will not deny the Proclamation of Milan. Then, I will adore him, as I adored Washington, and even more. . . .”

But Napoleon III, under domestic pressures, broke the alliance with Piedmont and signed an armistice with the Austrians in Villafranca. The blow for the Italian patriots was tremendous, and the resentment against Napoleon III was not diminished by the fact that Austria gave Lombardy away to France, which in turn gave it to Piedmont.

Enraged, Cavour attempted to convince King Victor Emmanuel to continue the war alone, and then resigned from the government. Cavour was embittered and felt betrayed by Napoleon, but his policy had yielded important results. The momentum which he had built would not stop. In January 1860, Cavour was again head of the government, in time to receive delegations of patriots from Tuscany and Romagna, who delivered him the results of plebiscites in favor of unification with Piedmont. The Duchy of Parma, where Verdi lived, had already sent its delegation to Turin in Summer 1859.

Giuseppe Verdi was a member of the delegation. In his hometown, Busseto, he had financed the purchase of guns for the National Guard. He now had the possibility to meet Cavour, and asked for an appointment. This must have been a memorable meeting, of which few records are available. Both men had a high estimation of each other. Cavour told Verdi that the Fatherland needed his music. Verdi was greatly impressed by Cavour. Back in Busseto, he wrote a letter to the statesman, addressing him as “the Promethean of our nation.”²²

At the beginning of 1860, Piedmont had almost doubled its territory. It now included almost all Northern Italy and Tuscany. Cavour’s original plans had not changed. He worked on the project of a new war with Austria to conquer Veneto, and build up a new customs union with the other Italian states. In this way Piedmont’s influence on Italy would become dominant. A single political state in Italy was the longer-term perspective.

But in May, about 1,000 volunteers led by Garibaldi left Genoa for Sicily, with the aim of liberating Southern Italy from the Bourbon regime. The “Mille” (“The Thousand”) were armed with old guns, had no ammunition (they were to procure it through a stop in Tuscany), and faced, in Sicily alone, a regular army of 30,000 which could easily crush

22. “May Your Excellency excuse my boldness and the disturbance which I bring to you with these few lines. I have desired for some time, to personally meet the Prometheus of our nationality; I did not despair of finding an occasion to satisfy my strong desire for it. I would never, however, have dared to hope for the open and generous reception with which Y.E. [Your Excellency] would have deigned to honor me. I was deeply moved by this. I will never forget that I am yours, that I was given the honor to shake the hand of the great Statesman, the highest citizen, whom every Italian ought rightly to call Father of the Country.” Verdi to Cavour; Busseto, Sept. 21, 1859. Manuscript on file at the Artistic and Cultural Institute, Forli.



The celebrated Giuseppe Garibaldi was at first a Mazzini follower in the 1840s, but was won over to Cavour, and commanded various Italian patriotic forces successfully.

them. But the army command underestimated Garibaldi and divided its forces. In a demonstration of outstanding tactical qualities, Garibaldi defeated the Bourbon army at Calatafimi and marched on Palermo. Sicily was conquered, also because the population rose up in support of Garibaldi. The Garibaldi forces, with an enlarged force, then crossed the Strait of Messina and moved on to Naples, while the Bourbon army disintegrated.

Cavour was in a dilemma: He feared the European powers could militarily react to Garibaldi’s conquests, in apprehension of a revolution. If he supported Garibaldi, Cavour risked jeopardizing the whole of Piedmont’s Italian policy. On the other side, Cavour saw the tremendous opportunity of consolidating Garibaldi’s victory and liberating all Italy. One of Cavour’s collaborators from the Maffei salon, Cesare Giulini della Porta, suggested that in the name of the Lombardy patriots, Garibaldi’s effort must be supported: “A failure would have a terrible echo inside Italy.”²³

23. Barbiera, op. cit.

The Nation Is Formed

The only way to support Garibaldi's war was to offer guarantees to France that the city of Rome, still occupied by French troops, would remain in the hands of the Pope. When Garibaldi was still in Naples, Cavour organized a fake insurrection in the Papal States and ordered the Piedmontese army to invade the Papal States to "re-establish order." The Piedmontese easily won the assistance of the Pope's mercenaries, and King Victor Emmanuel II, at the head of the army, met Garibaldi north of Naples, at the historically famous village of Teano. On March 17, 1861, the Piedmontese Parliament proclaimed the united Kingdom of Italy under Victor Emmanuel II. On March 27, the Parliament proclaimed that Rome, then still under the Pope, would be Italy's capital.

Giuseppe Verdi was elected to the new national Parliament. He had accepted Cavour's personal request concerning this.²⁴ At first inexperienced in parliamentary meetings, he always voted as Cavour did. Cavour was now at the peak of his power and ready to solve the next problem: how to get the French Army out of Rome and put an end to the temporal power of the Church.

The problem was sensitive, and Cavour wanted to reach an agreement with the Pope, under the motto "Free Church in a free State," which would settle the question of the relations between the state and the Church for all Italy. Given the influence that the Catholic Church had on the majority of the population, it was imperative that it collaborate with the new state.

Cavour also faced enormous administrative and economic problems represented by the organization of the new state. In Southern Italy, feudal barons had already organized bandit gangs which challenged its power.

But, on June 6, 1861, Cavour died, at the age of 51, leaving an unfillable vacuum. The news hit Italy like a thunderbolt. "At the moment of leaving," Verdi wrote in a letter to Count Arrivabene, "I hear the terrible news that kills me! I have no courage to come to Turin; nor could I participate in the funeral of that man . . . what a misfortune! What an abyss of troubles!"

Was Cavour poisoned? This allegation could never be proven. We do not know how things would have developed without Cavour's early departure. He might have succeeded in solving the "Rome question" through a concordat, thus avoiding the deep split between the Church and the new state which lasted 70 years. We can only speculate, but history

24. Cavour to Verdi: "I will permit myself to address S.V. [you] directly . . . in order to encourage you to accept the mandate that your fellow-citizens intend to confer on you. I know that I ask for something that is grave and bothersome for you. If, despite this, I insist, it is because I judge your presence in the Chamber [of Deputies] very useful. You will contribute to the dignity of the Parliament within and beyond Italy; you will give credit to the great national party that wants to build the nation on the solid bases of liberty and order; you will there impose on your imaginative colleagues from the southern part of Italy, who are susceptible to the influence of artistic genius very much more than we inhabitants of the cold valley of the Po [River]."

would have been different, including the economic development of the nation.

Without Cavour, the "Rome question" was solved militarily. In 1864, an agreement was reached with Napoleon III for a withdrawal of the French troops from Rome, in exchange for the Italian promise not to assault the Papal States. In the meantime, a public debate on the "Rome question" had broken out in France. A large section of French public opinion was in favor of Rome becoming the capital of the Italian nation, and of reaching a settlement to end the temporal power of the Church. In 1866 Italy, allied with Prussia, declared war on Austria with the aim of liberating Veneto. But the campaign was unsuccessful, revealing the lack of leadership created with the death of Cavour. While the army was beaten at Custoza, a superior Italian fleet, with steel vessels, was defeated by Austrian wooden ships at Lissa. Nevertheless, since Italy's ally Prussia defeated Austria, at the Paris peace congress, Vienna was forced to give up Veneto.

Verdi's Intervention: 'Don Carlo'

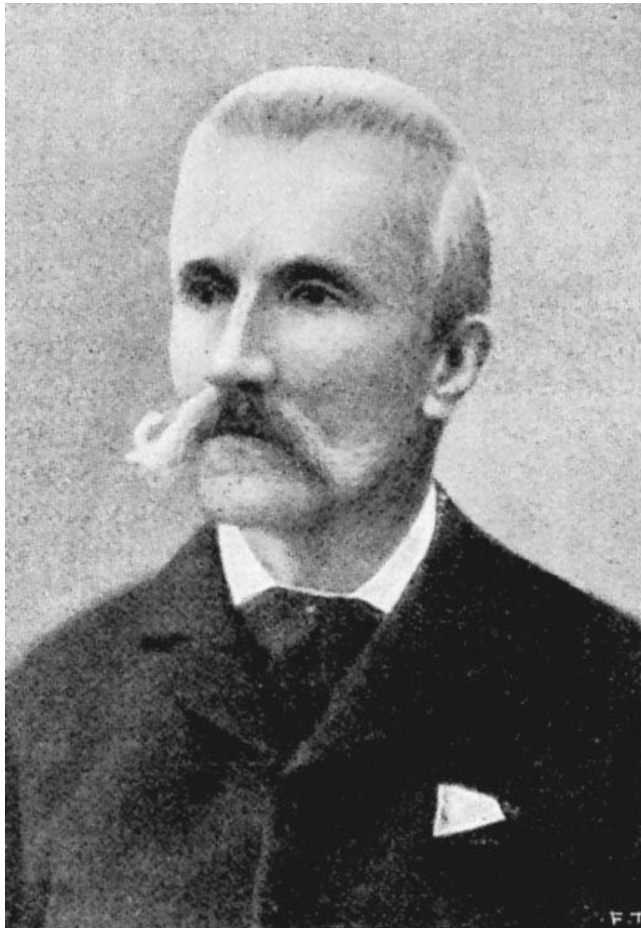
But Austria still treated Italy as a non-entity, and gave Veneto to France, which then gave it to Italy. After the war, the Rome question became urgent again, and this was the context in which Verdi was asked to compose a new opera for performance in Paris.

Verdi made a definite choice of the subject in 1865, while he was in Paris to prepare a performance of *Macbeth*: It would be Schiller's *Don Carlos*. The idea of *Don Carlos* had come to Verdi long before—already in 1850—and the fact that in 1863 he visited the Spanish palace, the Escorial, shows that he had been thinking about it again and again.²⁵ The new opera was to be performed in 1867.

Verdi did not attend public salons, but was well acquainted, through the media and his friends, with the political discussions in Parliament, and in the French court, around the Rome question: the issue of relations between state and Church, and the related issue of the role of the French Empire of Napoleon III in the future of Italy. In *Don Carlos*, the figure of Spanish King Philip II embodies the dilemma of Napoleon III. Like Philip, Napoleon was tempted to become "a king of kings," a ruler over free citizens. At the same time, he was blocked by the same forces which had put him into power: As in Schiller's drama, these were the feudal powers represented by the religious Inquisition.

In Schiller's drama, the Marquis of Posa's dream of reforming the kingdom is defeated by the *raisons d'état* imposed by the Inquisition, but Posa is the moral winner and the King the moral loser. What a provocation to put on the Paris

25. Verdi wrote in a letter to Arrivabene: "The Escorial (and please excuse my sacrilege) is not to my liking. It is a mass of marble, with some very rich things in it, including some beautiful ones, such as a marvelously beautiful fresco by Luca Giordano, but on the whole, it lacks good taste. It is severe, terrible, like the ferocious sovereign who built it."



Giuseppe Verdi's collaborator in planning and inspiring a revival of broad-scale Classical education in liberated Italy, the mathematician Francesco Brioschi.

stage a Spanish Grand Inquisitor, in front of Napoleon III's wife, the bigoted and reactionary Spanish Princess Eugenia who led the anti-Italian faction!

Verdi decided to be as faithful as possible to Schiller's text. "We will stick to Schiller," he wrote, "and we will add only what is necessary for the show."

The libretto for *Don Carlo* was produced by Josef Méry and Camille du Locle, and Verdi started to compose in Italy, while the 1866 war against Austria was still under way. The defeat and the Austrian decision to give Veneto to France instead of Italy, were seen as a humiliation by the Italians. Verdi interrupted his work on *Don Carlos* and tried, unsuccessfully, to break the contract with Paris. In July he was in the French capital for the first rehearsal and wrote, sardonically: "Imagine what pleasure for an Italian who loves his country, to find himself now in Paris."

The opera was performed on March 11, 1867. In the middle of the duet between the Grand Inquisitor and King Philip, at the point where the King tries to impose his authority and says "*Non più*," ("Be quiet, priest"), the Napoleon III's Span-

ish Empress lost her composure and demonstratively left the opera house.

The opera marks a further evolution in Verdi's style. In his hands, this musical form had now lost almost every element of "entertainment," epitomized by traditional arias with easy melodies. The orchestra works more actively in a counterpoint with the singers' voices. The combination of the new musical forms and the political content, was difficult to digest for the high society which filled the audience at the premiere. As Verdi wrote the day after, "It was not a success!! I do not know what it will be in the future, and I would not be surprised if things change."

Things changed not only for *Don Carlo*, which soon was recognized by the broader public as one of Verdi's most valuable works. Three years later, in 1870, the Italian government decided to move on Rome by taking advantage of the Franco-Prussian War. While von Moltke's armies brilliantly outflanked and defeated the French divisions, Italian troops entered a Rome no longer protected by French troops.

The end of the temporal power of the Catholic Church, a legacy of the Roman Empire, was an event of world historical importance. But it took more than a century before a Pope, Paul VI, recognized that this fact of development was a divine gift, because it forced the Church to deal only with its spiritual mission. The oligarchy which controlled the Papacy in 1870 stubbornly refused to accept the new Italian state. Pius IX, the Pope who had started his pontificate with liberal reforms, tried to prohibit Catholics from participating in the national political life of Italy. Pius IX also issued a document, the Syllabus, condemning modernism, which was seen as a condemnation of the new liberal state.

The Vatican's attitude, of course, played into the hands of anti-clerical and Freemasonic factions, which were able to gain political power in Italy, a situation which played a decisive role in Italy's entrance into World War I and in the rise of Fascism. The figure of Pius IX is still a subject of open controversy today, a controversy which was fed again by John Paul II's decision, last year, to beatify Pius IX.

Here, Giuseppe Verdi demonstrates how important is the dramatist's eye, to formulate a judgment on reality. Verdi saw that Pius IX was a tragic figure in real life, and saw the truth. When the Pope died, he wrote: "Poor Pope. Of course, I am not for the Pope of the Syllabus, but for the Pope of the Amnesty, and of the 'Great God, Bless Italy'. . . . Without this, who knows what we would be now? They have accused him of having lacked courage, and of not being able to brandish the sword of Julius II. How fortunate! Even admitting that in '48 he could have driven the Austrians out of Italy, what would we have now? A government of priests! Anarchy, probably, and dismemberment! We are better off as we are! All that he did, for good or ill, was useful to the country; and after all, he was good natured, and a good Italian; better than so many others who merely shout Fatherland, Fatherland. . . . May this poor Pope have peace at last!"