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dominated by France. Verdi was born in Parma, where Verdi was born. Therefore he was technically born a Frenchman (Martin 9), which went against everything that he would eventually fight for, namely, Italy. It is striking and important that a man who would later help to form the definition of Italy was born into another nationality.

Verdi used the deeply rooted tradition of opera as a method of sparking political conversation and explaining his own personal view. Namely, Verdi opposed foreign rule. He was an advocate of individual freedom and demanded that government provide for freedom. He expressed the conflicts between individual freedom and political rule in many guises throughout his career as a composer. Italy's political history was vital to Verdi's career.

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Before Verdi's birth, the region was a conglomeration of small states that were constantly reorganizing. Governments were unstable, and the ideal form of government was subject of debate. In fact, throughout much of Italian history, government was a controversial subject. A political philosophy was not new for the region in the nineteenth century. For example, Machiavelli was a fifteenth century Italian political philosopher who dealt with the structure of power in Italian principalities. Arguments about government were common throughout the history of the Italian region.

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Before Verdi's birth, the region now called Italy was a conglomeration of small states that were constantly reorganizing. Governments were unstable, and the ideal form of government was a source of debate. In fact, throughout much of Italian history, government was a controversial issue. And political philosophy was not new for the region in the nineteenth century. For example, Machiavelli was a fifteenth century Italian political philosopher who dealt with the problem of power in Italian princedoms. Arguments about government were common throughout the history of the Italian regions.

In addition, in the nineteenth century, the states had a new, external problem with power: Napoleon I,

who planned to conquer all of Europe and unify it under French control. With only England left, Napoleon was defeated at the Battle of Waterloo, which resulted in a reorganization of Europe to promote a balance of power that would guard against another complete European domination and secure peace.

The Congress of Vienna, including Britain, Austria, and Russia, redrew the European map in 1815, two years after Verdi's birth. The international conference was called for the purpose of remaking Europe after the fall of Napoleon I. The new lines changed the balance of power in Europe once again. The French no longer controlled Verdi's home, but the Austrians did. Even at age two, Verdi had already been under the sovereignty of two different countries without moving from his home in Parma.

After the Congress of Vienna, Italians were tired of being dominated by foreign powers. Revolutionary talk circulated in Italian towns, especially in the intellectual and middle-classes. Numerous patriotic associations influenced Italian society. Although Italians were unhappy with their current situation, solutions to the problem were controversial.

One of the biggest problems with gaining autonomy was that the states did not recognize each other as more than neighbors. A united Italy did not exist because of the disjointed princedoms of Italy's history. Any individual region or state could not successfully start a revolution, because it would be too small. A successful revolution required cooperation between the states. It became the goal of Verdi and many other politically minded people of the time to unite the smaller states in order to dispel Austrian control.

After centuries of fighting with neighbor states, uniting the regions was not an easy task. In addition, it was be difficult to decide which form of government would be the most effective

for the emerging state. Many regions had preestablished systems of government. The papal state was a theocracy; Piedmont and Sicily were kingdoms; Genoa, Venice and Lucca were Republics, and Tuscany, Modena, Milan and Parma were Duchies.

"At the revolutions start, Italy in a phrase of the day, was only 'a geographical expression.' The Po valley, peninsula, and islands were divided into more than ten political units, none of them powerful, most of them dominated by foreign powers.(Martin 2)"

The Risorgimento, which literally means "resurgence" or "rising force", was a period in Italy's history in which Italian provinces gained a sense of relationship to each other and revolted against foreign control. It was a movement that affected art and literature as well as politics.

Verdi was vital to defining Italy as a country. He held strong political convictions, took constant interest in political events, and even participated active in politics by becoming a member of the first Italian parliament.

Verdi's consistent nationalism filled his entire life, including his music. Verdi operas are so saturated with his political views that the line where his love for his country stops and his genius as a composer begins is non-existent.

"Verdi himself was all of a piece, a direct, integrated, if complex personality, not divided or compartmentalized in the way that some creative personalities seem to be. With Verdi, as with Beethoven, we sense the pressure of a powerful personality behind the music: there is not that feeling of distance between creator and creation that we may find with Mozart, Rossini, or Stravinsky (Arblaster 92)."

Since Verdi's music is integrated with his interest in politics, understanding Italian politics during his lifetime is an essential part of understanding his operas.

Some would even conclude that the genius of Verdi lies in the political movement itself. Luigi Dallapiccola, a twentieth century Italian music historian and composer, argues that the Verdi phenomenon is inconceivable without the Risorgimento. Verdi absorbed its atmosphere and tone, and it is certainly true that it is in the operas themselves are the most eloquent expressions of his political involvement and commitment (Arblaster 96).

As a young man, conversations about revolution surrounded Verdi, even though he was removed from the revolutionary epicenter. His small hometown, Busseto, was flat, farm country midway between Parma and Piacenza. The small market town of about two thousand persons formed a neat rectangle of buildings still tightly girded by medieval walls. It was shrouded in tradition and agriculture and relatively unconcerned with the problems of government.

When Verdi got older, he moved to the larger city of Milan to study music. Milan had more interesting discussions of political action. What were murmurs of revolution in Busseto became louder, more coherent discussions in Milan.

At the time, Austria controlled Italian districts. The Viennese Hapsburgs believed in absolute monarchy and certainly would not allow Italians to govern themselves. Austrian rulers were imported to control the government. The empress of Austria, Marie Louise (Luigia), who was Napoleon's wife until his exile, controlled the Duchy of Parma, where Verdi lived.

It is not exactly clear when the feeling of Italy as a nation began to grow, but the first revolution came in 1820. The "Carbonari" created one of the first organized groups to try to gain some independence from Austria. The group, whose name literally means charcoal-burners, adopted the name, Carbonari, because their meetings were shrouded in mystery and secret. They often met in dark places only lit by charcoal attempting to keep the meetings secret and hidden.

The first Carbonari revolutions attempted to peacefully appeal to the Austrian state. They wrote a constitution for the Italian states that kept power in the hands of the Austrian king. The constitution was quickly overthrown, and Italians learned that Austria was the enemy and trusting kings was a bad idea.

The revolutionary ideals of the Carbonari did not die with the first failed attempt at independence. It tried again in 1831. The Duke of Modena was chosen to take the throne after the successful revolution. Unfortunately, he betrayed the Italians on the eve of the revolution. Thus, the second and final attempt of the Carbonari failed.

Verdi, although never involved with the Carbonari, was a revolutionary in his own way. Through his operas, he gave a national identity to a group of divided people. "In a country divided by local dialects, customs, and governments his music provided a bond for all sorts of men and women. (Martin 2)" He did more than absorb and record the events of the Risorgimento, and his art was more than the portrait of an historical period. If he and his art were partly shaped by the Risorgimento, they also, in part, shaped it.

As the revolutionary spirit in Italy matured, Verdi became more active in actual events. The leader of this set of revolutions, Giuseppe Mazzini, was an Italian patriot older than Verdi, born in 1805.

Mazzini was "a tall, thin, passionate young man from Genoa who could write with the forces of an Old Testament prophet (Martin 9)". He was a successful lawyer and several of his essays and reviews have been reproduced. But his natural bent was for literature, and it was in the literary field that he gained recognition.

Mazzini was an ardent supporter of romanticism in contrast with what he called the literary servitude under the name of classicism. But in the midst of his literary interest, his republican instincts began to grow into the feeling that Italians *could* and therefore *ought* to struggle for independence.

He put aside his dearest ambition, to produce a complete history of religion, to unite spiritual and practical life, and became devoted to political life.

His literary articles, such as *Indicatore Genevese* and the *Indicatore Livornese*, became increasingly suggestive of advanced liberalism in politics. His political interests led him to the Carbonari, in which he quickly rose to a high leadership position.

But he was not satisfied with the group and hoped to develop a new revolutionary group that was strictly devoted to the ideals of liberty without being shrouded in foolish mysterious and theatrical customs. Mazzini's goal was to unite all Italian states into one republic without foreign help. He thought the Carbonari revolutions failed because they depended on outside aid, and he was determined not to repeat the same mistake. Shortly after a revolution in 1830, Mazzini's hopes for a new group faded when he was betrayed and imprisoned.

It was within his cell at Savona that he began to form the meditations that took the shape of his most famous novel *La Giovine Italia* or *Young Italy*. Its aims were to be the liberation of Italy both from foreign and domestic tyranny and to unify the country under a republican form of government by means of education and, where advisable, guerilla bands. He founded a group, with the same name as the book, "*La Giovine Italia*" to move toward his goal. His ideas were spread from exile and were distributed despite their ban.

After his first imprisonment, Mazzini's life became more complicated. He was exiled

from several different countries and had a certain affinity for angering government leaders.

Later in his life, Mazzini had the brief opportunity to be the leader of Italy himself.

Around 1848, he was appointed one member of the Roman triumvirate, with supreme executive power until the fall of that experimental government at the hands of the French only four months later.

Mazzini's work to liberate Italy took the form of organizing and participating in revolutionary attempts. He believed in the value of revolutionary attempts, regardless of how hopeless they may seem.

Like Verdi, he was elected to be a delegate to parliament by the Messina. But unsatisfied with the unification of Italy under a monarch, Mazzini never showed up to take his seat.

Mazzini was the prophet of the revolution. Aspiring to the ideals of freedom, liberty and equality, he was a model of disinterestedness and self-denial, and one who dedicated his whole life to the cause of his country's freedom. He was honored by the Italian parliament upon his death.

Another person vital to Italian nationalism was Alessandro Francesco Tommaso Antonio Manzoni, who wrote novels to advance the Italian cause.

His work took a slightly a political stance when he wrote *Il Cinque Maggio* in 1821 on the subject of Napoleon's death. But it turned more distinctly toward politics as the events of that year unfolded and many of his friends were imprisoned. Consequently, Manzoni formed his most famous work, *I promessi sposi*, which at once raised its author to literary fame.

I promessi sposi acted as a sort of language primer for the Italian regions. The Italian language had a rough unity, but thick dialects made communication difficult. His novels were

written so that all parts of Italy could understand his message, thus giving a sense of national language to the motley dialects. *I Promessi Sposi* and the many lesser works it inspired created a serviceable, modern language for an emerging nation. (Martin 10)

If Manzoni created a sense of nationalism through literature and language, Verdi created a sense of nationalism through music. Unlike Rossini, Verdi's sense of national feeling was not incidental to one opera or even two. It was an integral part of his life and music.

Verdi was of one mind throughout his career, to encourage a sense of Italian nationalism. It would be unhelpful to divide Verdi into periods, because "it is a procedure useful enough with some composers, but absurd when applied to Verdi whose temperament and characteristics are seen almost as clearly in the first as in the last operas. (Bonavia 71)"

But Austrian censors were not at all sympathetic to Nationalist propaganda. So Verdi faced a challenge in attempting to write nationalistic plots. The Austrians had strict censors that would not allow the promotion of Italian nationalism. Verdi had to work around many restrictions.

Nabucco was the first opera on nationalistic themes to make Verdi famous. The text was difficult to censor because it was a biblical story. An imprisoned group of Christians sing about the memory of their homeland in the chorus *Va Pensiero*.

Va Pensiero, Sull'ale Dorate

O mia Patria si bella e perduta!

O membranza si cara e fatal!

(Go thought , on golden wings

Oh my country, so beautiful and lost

Oh memory so dear and fatal)

Surely Verdi intended for Italians to relate to the imprisoned slaves and wanted them to echo the loving sentiments of the chorus about their own homeland. "All over Italy, as the opera passed from town to town, Italian patriots heard in that chorus their own emotions after failing so often to end their Austrian captivity. (Martin 10)." Often the cries for an encore were answered, and the chorus is customarily repeated in Italy even today. Demonstrations were also common at many of his operas. At a time of heavy Austrian censorship, Verdi creatively sparked political fervor.

One example occurred during *I lombardi alla prima crociata* (The Lombards on the first Crusade), composed in 1834. The story centered around a crusade to the Holy Land. The audience related to the Lombards and equated the Austrians to the Saracens defiling the territory. When the tenor cries "La Santa Terra oggi Nostra sara" (the holy land today will be ours!), the chorus replies "Si! Guerra ! Guerra!" (Yes! War! War!). During this part of the opera the audience became so excited that pandemonium followed, and the police were unable to prevent a repeat.

Such scenes were not accidental. Verdi wanted to foster political energy. *Macbeth*, composed in 1847, started another demonstration. "At the performances in Venice the audiences took to throwing onto the stage bouquets of red and green, the Italian colors, which provoked demonstrations. When the police forbid red and green, the audience threw bouquets of yellow and black, the Austrian colors, for the pleasure of watching the singers refuse to pick them up (Martin)."

Many of Verdi's operas were laced with political themes. Government is prominent in *Nabucco*, *Ernani*, *Macbeth*, *Simon Boccanegra*, and *Don Carlo* and not far from the center of *Die Due Foscari*, *Giovanni d'Arco*, *un Ballo in Maschera* and *Otello*.

Opera was a good medium for political discussion. At the time, it was a principal form of entertainment. People moved around, whispered and waved. They conducted business in the halls, foyers, and even in the theater itself during an opera. The evening was as much a social as a musical event. It was quite effective to introduce nationalistic themes into that relaxed setting.

Verdi's operas acted as a remarkable form of political communication. Themes that often addressed the important political issues of the day intermingled with intricate plots. And the different stages of the Risorgimento unfolded parallel to his operas. It is interesting and useful to look at his operas in the context of when they were written and what political issues were afoot at that time.

The year 1848 was called the "the mad and holy year" because revolutions exploded throughout Europe. Italy attempted to create a republic with a free press and constitution. Venice was declared a republic. And Milan hoped to persuade the King of Sardinia to support the city with his army. In Rome, Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi had taken power.

Mazzini's compatriot and military counterpart was Garibaldi, who had first become interested in the political situation of his region in Giovine Italia. But his revolutionary desires were fully revealed when he helped Mazzini in an attempt to occupy an arsenal at Genoa. The attempt failed and Garibaldi fled to South America.

But Garibaldi had a taste for military life, and he craved the battlefield. Even in that new country, Garibaldi remained a military leader. He was active in revolutions in Brazil and

Uruguay. Garibaldi returned to Italy and fought many battles for its unification. He led troops in the name of liberty to invade Rome, Sicily, Naples, Venice, and Alpine territories. His passion for liberty was acute.

Garibaldi continued fighting until the fall of Rome in 1849, at which time, he immediately turned his attention to Venice. He headed across Italy with four thousand volunteers and the armies of France, Austria, Spain, and Naples at his heels.

In the same year, Verdi composed a patriotic hymn, "Suona la tromba" (Sound the trumpet), to accompany the revolutions in Italy. He also composed a patriotic opera for Rome when the papal state was dispelled. *La battaglia di Legnano* told the story of Italian cities in 1176 that unified to defeat a German invader in the Po Valley. The story was chosen because of its political plot of unifying people to defeat a foreign power.

Some thought that a unified Italy was an achievable goal, but that fairy tale soon came to an end. France and Austria, both strong military forces, supported the Pope. After several weeks with Mazzini as political leader and Garibaldi as military leader, the French and Austria forces defeated them in July 1849. By August, Venice fell to the Austrians. Once again, the revolutionary attempts had failed.

Revolutionaries learned that without an ally, a rebel government could not survive. They decided to compromise by proposing a constitutional monarchy instead of a republic. The country decided the constitutional monarchy would be acceptable provided the new kingdom of Italy was truly independent and united all the Italian states, including the papal state encompassing Rome.

In the Kingdom of Sardinia, Victor Emmanuele II allowed a constitution, and Camillo Cavour was elected prime minister.

Camillo Cavour was a political leader during the Risorgimento. During Italy's brief months of freedom, Cavour was part of the triumvirate that ruled the states. Cavour was from the region Piedmont where he was Prime Minister. While holding that office, he had to grapple with the conflict of church and state in 1852.

Cavour's political success was ironic because he was not a good orator. He gave his first speech in the Parliament of Piedmont and was booed for speaking badly.

He was a strongly-opinionated politician who had an impact on many revolutionaries at the time. Even Verdi was influenced by Cavour, who convinced the composer to run for the Italian Parliament.

This was the height of the Risorgimento. Verdi captured the mood of the movement in his next three operas. After several failed revolutions, the vision of a unified Italy began to fade for many Italians. They held high ideals, but they could not see those ideals becoming a reality. In his operas, *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore*, and *La Traviata*, he attempted to capture the quintessence of the Risorgimento. The operas and the mood of Italians were tragic. They were hopeless in reality but magnificent in theory.

Rigoletto is indeed tragic. It tells the story of the Duke of Modena and his Court Jester, Rigoletto. The handsome Duke is a despicable womanizer. The ugly Rigoletto is in his service to laugh and joke with the Duke and the other courtiers. While at work he pretends to get along with the Duke, but he secretly detests him. Rigoletto's home life is very different from his life at work. He has a beautiful and moral daughter named Gilda, whom he loves with his whole

heart. Like something out of *Rigoletto's* nightmares, the Duke turns his womanizing tendencies toward Gilda and rapes her. Rigoletto hires an assassin to kill the Duke. But Gilda is in love with the Duke, and when she discovers the plot, she takes the Duke's place in the vicious scheme and is killed. Rigoletto loses the only person he loves. The Duke, the true villain, remains unharmed and unchanged. And the most innocent character, Gilda dies.

In *Rigoletto*, Verdi presents a realistic picture of the world that does not necessarily punish the unjust. Gilda is good and yet, she dies. Verdi is trying to make the realistic point that not all stories truly have a happy ending. The story is meant to parallel the political situation at the time, which did not promote optimism.

The political movement, like the story of *Rigoletto*, appears hopeless in practice, but magnificent in theory. The combination created a noble pessimism. Verdi believed in individual action, but he was also enough of a realist, or perhaps pessimist, to know that action is often ineffective and almost always costly. His operas, including *Rigoletto*, are filled with individuals taking action against their immediate self-interest to respond to some nobler principle. (Martin)

Violetta is the main character of *La Traviata*. She has attributes that exhibit the tragic hopelessness of the Risorgimento. Violetta is a French courtesan who is dying of a fatal disease. She falls in love with Alfredo and they are very happy living together. Without Alfredo's knowledge, one day his father comes to visit. He tells Violetta that she must leave Alfredo. Alfredo's sister has the opportunity to marry a rich, high-standing gentleman that she dearly loves. However, he would not approve of Violetta's and Alfredo's relationship. Violetta decides to give up her personal happiness so that Alfredo's sister can have a chance for love. Her heart is

broken, but she leaves Alfredo. Her sickness gets worse and on her deathbed, both Alfredo and his father come to her side to offer her love and support.

Much like *Rigoletto*, the story of *Il Trovatore* is one of misguided revenge. The story tells of a gypsy woman whose mother was burned at the stake. To avenge her mother's death, she steals one of the count's babies intending to give it the same ill-fate as her mother. She returned to the stake where her mother died. There in the confusion and passion of vengeance, she killed her own child instead of the count's baby.

After these three operas, conditions improved for Italian nationalism. The 1859 premiere of *Un Ballo in Maschera* occurred at a positive time in Italy's history. Cavour had reached an understanding with Napoleon III, and the French had decided to ally the Italians. With such an ally, war against Austria was imminent.

Verdi was in Rome for his opera's premiere when vivacious, revolutionary Italians suddenly realized that his name was an acronym for "Vittorio Emanuele Re D' Italia." Crowds called for him, scratched his name in walls, shouted in the streets, and gathered around him, and broke into cheers.

Shortly after, war broke out, and the French Army, Sardinian army, and lots of volunteers fought the Austrians into an armistice. After a year of negotiation, Austria retained only Venice and its mainland province of Venetia. France got Nice and Savoy as reward for their help. Garibaldi began military advances on Sicily. And Naples forced France to give up some of the Papal state besieged by the Neapolitan Army near Gaeta.

It was an exciting time for Italian nationalists, and people were celebrating. Verdi gave credit to the military leaders and provided them with the ultimate compliment for uniting most of

Italy. "Of Garibaldi and the Sardinian general,' Verdi exclaimed, 'Those are composers! And what operas! What finales! To the sound of guns!'"(Arblaster)

Verdi applauded to the military generals and downplayed his own political importance. But he was also important politically as one of four delegated to the joint assembly of Parma and Modena.

By November 1860, all of Italy except for Venice and Rome were ready to be joined into the independent kingdom of Italy. Cavour convinced a reluctant Verdi to stand for election to the newly-created parliament. Cavour was eager to have such a well-known Risorgimento figure in the government. Verdi agreed mostly out of respect for him, but was not excited about the position. Verdi was easily elected. After Cavour's death, however, Verdi did not run for re-election.

In 1870, Italy acquired Venice as reward for helping Prussia in the Austro-Hungary war soon afterward, so that all of Italy was unified except for the region around Rome. Only the Roman question remained. What to do with Rome was particularly difficult to decide because the Pope had political power. Catholic Italians were forced to denounce the Pope as a their political leader, but maintain him as a spiritual leader. Catholic literally means universal- so separating the two entities was not an easy task. Splitting religion and politics was a difficult concept.

Don Carlos premiered in 1867 in Covent Garden, and considering the political concerns of the time, it is no surprise that the opera received heated reviews. The scandalous opera dared to make the priesthood look bad and thus offended many devoted Catholics.

"The opera was certainly perceived as being anti-Catholic. The Empress Eugenie, who attended the 1867 premiere, turned her back on the stage during the scene between the king and

the Grand Inquisitor, reportedly at the moment when the king tells the cleric to be quiet: 'tais-toi, pretre.' Even as late as 1950 the opera was picketed in New York by protestors who objected to its anti-Catholicism. (Arblaster 138)"

Don Carlo focuses specifically on the conflict of church and state. Set during the Spanish inquisition, the opera clearly expresses Verdi's anti-clerical views. "Verdi was 53 when he composed *Don Carlo* and, partly because of events and his increasing age, it is the last of his operas on current political issues (Martin 24)." As Italy became more stable, Verdi's political motivations dissipated.

Two events finally led up to the complete unification of Italy by including the Papal state. First, on July 18 while the church was meeting in Vatican Council I, the Pope proclaimed the dogma of papal infallibility. And second, Napoleon III, egged on by Bismark, declared war on Prussia the next day. Napoleon III, angry about new dogma, withdrew from Rome. On September 20, after a short bombardment in the name of Victor Emmanuele, the Papal State, the oldest sovereignty in Europe, ceased to exist. The Pope withdrew to the Vatican.

This must have pleased Verdi very much. His anti-clerical views, which are obvious in many of his operas, developed at a young age. By the 1830's, when he applied for the Maestro di Musica position in Bussetto, he was already identified as a liberal. Ferrari, his competitor, had the church's support. And Verdi did not get the job.

Italy was completely unified in 1870, when Rome was included. But Verdi was not content even then because the Pope was included as a political leader in Italy.

If there were only one adjective to describe Verdi, it would be 'non-conformist.' And nothing infuriated him more than being controlled by an unworthy authority. Although war

horrified him, he was not a pacifist. And he encouraged anything that would free Italy from the control of another nation.

Personally, "He despised mere conventionality and claimed the right to live his personal life as he pleased, free from the pressure or censure of conventional opinion. (Martin 92)"

This is evident from his relationship with Guiseppina Strepponi. He lived with her in scandal for 14 years before they finally married. He described his opinions on that subject bluntly, "All I have meant to say is that I claim my right to freedom of action, because all men have a right to do it, and because my nature rebels against mere conformity." (Arblaster 130).

Strepponi described him as a liberal to the utmost degree, without being a Red. He respects the liberty of others and he demands respect for his own liberty.

In Verdi's later years, the Risorgimento was basically complete. Italy was unified under Victor Emmanuele II, and foreign powers were no longer in charge. It seemed as if Verdi had stopped composing when the movement ended. After *Aida* premiered in 1871, it was 16 years until the next opera was completed. *Simon Boccanegra* was revived at La Scala in 1881, but it was another 6 years before the production of *Otello*. For a man that had composed an opera almost every single year since 1839, a 16 year vacation threatened to be retirement. But Verdi did continue to compose and compose well. *Otello*, which opened in 1887, and *Falstaff*, in 1893, completed his career and are two of his best-loved operas.

And those operas do contain political themes, although those themes are less pronounced than in some of his other operas.

In *Otello*, like *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Verdi is interested in the nature of rulers. He once again draws a parallel between personal strife and political negligence. But in *Otello*, unlike some

of Verdi's other operas, personal turmoil is emphasized. The general's mental dilemma becomes the most central theme. So, in a way, *Otello* reiterates Verdi's respect of Shakespeare and expresses a new interest in character development which may in part come from his German contemporary, Wagner.

Otello is a careful balance between lyrical expression and action. Lyrical expression, traditionally found in arias, tends to retard action. As the romantic period evolved, music took the additional role of creating character development, which began to take a valuable and equal, if not dominant, position in comparison to action. *Otello* is less about the pomp and circumstance of war and more about a ruler's mental dilemma. (Bonavia 5) The increased interest in character development, which is clearly seen in Wagnerian operas, becomes a trademark of the late romantic period and leads us into modern music.

By the end of his life, Verdi was a national hero. The throng of 200,000 mourners at his funeral in Milan is a testament to his national importance. Verdi was a vital character in Italian history. He integrated politically heated subject matter with beautiful musical and gave the Italian country something they needed, in the form of something they wanted. He was faithful to the Italian cause and remained devoted to the ideals of freedom, liberty, and self-determination, even when the cause seemed hopeless.

Many of his operas are forthrightly political with the issues of the day in the foreground, but some of his operas are political in more subtle ways. Two Verdi operas, *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Aida*, have plots that intertwine romantic love with politics. They both address political issues that are in conflict with romance.

The actual production of Verdi's operas is politically significant. As censors tried to modify and tone down Verdi's message to lessen its revolutionary content, Verdi remained a steadfast liberal and a hot tempered artist. Despite his obstinance, sometimes he was forced to sacrifice elements of his art in order to pacify censors.

Although the plot of Verdi's operas could be censored, the music could not. The political fervor that he lost to the censors in terms of plot, he regained through the power of music. Musical elements carried the concept of duty and nationalism past the barrier of plot and into the realm of feeling and believing. Censors could not stop the intangible, passionate messages that Verdi communicated to throngs of sympathetic Italians.

The story of *Un Ballo in Maschera* tells the story of the Governor of Boston, Riccardo, whose life is threatened by a group of conspirators. His best friend Renato faithfully tries to persuade Riccardo to be careful. Riccardo goes to a fortuneteller who predicts that Riccardo will be murdered by the next man to shake his hand. Renato enters and immediately shakes hands with his friend. Riccardo laughs off the prophecy. But what thickens the plot is Riccardo's love for Renato's wife, Amelia, and her love for Riccardo. The two meet in secret, but unfortunately the conspirators come to murder Riccardo there. Renato runs ahead of them to warn Riccardo. Amelia hides behind her veil so Renato will not recognize her, but in the conflict between her husband and the conspirators, she drops the mask and reveals herself. Renato is horrified. He swears to get revenge. He at first plans to murder Amelia, but then decides it is Riccardo who must die. He plans with the conspirators to murder the governor at a masked ball. In the meantime, not knowing Amelia's predicament or Renato's rage, Riccardo decides to send Amelia and Renato away. He signs a note to relocate them. Amelia sends him a note warning him not to

attend the party, for she knows her husband's murderous plans. He goes anyway. He wants to say goodbye to his love, Amelia. During the party, Renato stabs the Governor, who forgives Renato and declares Amelia's faithful purity (after all, they never consummated their relationship) before dying. The opera ends with the sense that a good ruler died unjustly.

Putting aside the love and friendship aspects of the opera, in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Verdi addresses the political issues that surround the nature of a king and highlights the importance of national duty in conflict with personal desire. Riccardo is a ruler committed to his people, but he falls in love with his best friend's wife, Amelia. Although they never consummate their relationship, the love interest does affect his conscience. He realizes the illicit relationship is not honorable and finds it his duty to send Amelia and her husband away from him. Because he is torn between his personal wishes and his commitment to what is right, it is not an easy decision to make. At the moment when he tells Amelia his decision, Renato, her angry husband, stabs Riccardo and kills him. A just man dies unjustly.

Verdi's is often considered a pessimist, and some would argue that the ending of *Un Ballo in Maschera* gives validity to that claim. But the more appropriate term for Verdi is realist. He would argue that it is necessary for a good ruler, and really all good people, to act justly, even if it does not pay off. Being honorable is not always easy, nor is it always immediately beneficial. Justice may not be an attainable goal, but it is a worthy motivation. *Un Ballo in Maschera* suggests that a good ruler must be committed to what is just throughout both his personal and political life, despite short term discouragement.

Un Ballo in Maschera was not Verdi's preferred plot choice. He was actually seriously considering the Shakespeare text, *King Lear*. He wanted very much to set that story to music. But

Verdi wanted the singer of King Lear's character to be a proficient baritone. A singer of that caliber was not available in the Naples company where he had signed a contract for an opera.

So Verdi's second choice became the opera that he produced. He remained committed to the idea of painting a musical portrait of a good ruler, but had to use a different story to complete his task. The story is based on a real character in the history of Sweden, Gustaf III whose name was the original title of the opera. Gustaf was a Swedish prince, born in 1746, who was highly influenced by the Enlightenment movement of the 18th century and the writings of Voltaire.

However, he was primarily under the control of an overpowering mother, Louisa Ulrica who was the sister of Frederick of Prussia. She meddled in his romantic affairs throughout his life and even made the accusation that Gustaf's son was illegitimate. Little of Gustaf's private life finds its way into Verdi's opera, but from a political stand point, much history is there.

In 1771, Gustaf took power of the Swedish parliament, which had been in a deadlock for many years. The Hats, mostly nobles, were pitted against the Caps, mostly farmers and bourgeois. The division of favorable and unfavorable citizens is illustrated in Verdi's Act 1 Scene 1 with the chorus. Half of the chorus cheers and praises Riccardo, Gustaf's fictional counterpart, and the other half, characterized by Samuel and Tom, who are of lower orders, detest him. Even in the first act, a sense of ambiguity about the King exists- which originates in the actual life of Gustaf.

In Gustaf's own life, the conflict between the Hats and the Caps led to a revolution in Stockholm. He governed the conflict in a very sophisticated way using rhetorical ability in giving speeches to soldiers and the people of Stockholm. Gustaf explained in a letter to his friend Eva, about his position.

"I ask you to reflect that as I ever since my childhood have grown up at the most stormy court, been introduced to the secrets of politics and the affairs of the state at an age, when hardly others have made their appearance in the world of grown-ups and furthermore experiences all ill-will and destruction of the minds of people with different opinions, so I have acquired an experience that few have at my age, that learnt how evil, unpredictable and envious the world is. You must admit that a man under such conditions ought to be unusually mad or unusually wise to remain in these quarters." The quote from Gustaf reveals elements of his psychology, which Verdi incorporated into *Un Ballo in Maschera*.

First, the idea that an enlightened ruler is a strange mixture of wisdom and insanity, which finds basis in Gustaf himself, is also present in Verdi's character, Riccardo, who never seems to fear the conspirators that plan to kill him. Is he crazy? Why isn't he afraid? Perhaps his courage is based in wisdom. He may disregard fear of death at the hands of right, justice and good. To fight back is to be as bad as the aggressor. Riccardo remains a mystery on this level. He is presented as both foolish and courageous, and it is difficult to separate the two attributes.

Also Verdi reflects elements of Gustaf's psychology in his opera. To one extent the letter evokes not only wisdom or insanity, but perhaps a coating of arrogance. The idea that he is superior to others of his same age is at least a little haughty.

However, it is probably true that the king, both in real life and in the opera, has more experience in political matters than others. Perhaps Verdi would agree that a king should possess a certain level of knowledge and wisdom, and perhaps he would accept a certain degree of pompousness in return.

An obvious similarity between the real-life Gustaf and Verdi's character is evident in the story of their deaths. After losing a war against Russia, Gustaf returned to Stockholm where he was out of favor, especially with the nobles. He was no longer a popular king, but he continued to try to gain support and be a good ruler. During this time, Gustaf often went to the Haga Castle in the evenings with just a small party. In 1792 the conspiracy against him began, and several members of the court planned his assassination. Ankarstrom, or Renato in the opera, was the leader of the malevolent group.

Finally the opportunity to complete the assassination came when the king was at a Masquerade Ball. Lilliehorn, one of the conspirators, got cold feet and sent a letter to Gustaf, warning him and revealing the plot. Gustaf said that if he had not died at war, there was no danger in peace-time. His enemies would kill him anyway if they wanted him dead. Ankarstrom shot Gustaf, but did not kill him. The king actually died of gangrene several weeks later. The conspirators were caught and punished.

Verdi based much of his plot on real events; the masked ball, the conspirators, the letter revealing the assassination plans, a fearless king, and the tragic death of a beloved ruler. But Verdi included a love plot to give the murder more motive.

After giving up on the idea of *King Lear*, in 1858 Verdi decided to work on the story of Gustaf III. *Un Ballo in Maschera* was written in only three months. One reason why the story was completed so quickly may be because several operas on the subject of Gustaf III already existed. One version was written for Auber twenty-five years earlier and produced in Paris. Also *Il Regginte* by Cammarano for Saverio Mer Cadante was produced in Turin.

In addition to influence from the life of Gustaf III, Verdi's story is also influenced by the famous play, *King Lear*. Verdi was firmly interested in Shakespeare and a copy of the great dramatist's works remained next to his bed at his home in Bussetto. One aspect of the plot, in Verdi's opera and Shakespeare's play deals with the nature of a king. Lear is not torn between courage and foolishness, but he is a complex character that is torn apart in a way that compares madness with foolishness. Like Riccardo, he is an ambiguous character that shows evidence of being a good king and a bad king. A second similarity is the use of a foolish character to act as a foil to the king. In *King Lear* that character is a court jester, but in Verdi's opera, it is a page named Oscar. In both cases, these lesser characters function partially to play off the characters of their masters. Their existence in the plots proves that the king is not as foolish as he may seem. The court jester in *King Lear*, or Oscar in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, is always more foolish. Both kings are portrayed as rulers with human faults that are vital to the study of a good king. Shakespeare would warn against being proud and vain, while Verdi would warn a king against being foolish and careless.

But *King Lear* and *Un Ballo in Maschera* have many differences as well. It would be difficult to say that they are for all practical purposes the same. The plots are very different. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's influence on Verdi is definitely visible.

In fact, the plot of *Un Ballo in Maschera* shares similarities also with Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Like *Julius Caesar*, the plot of *Un Ballo in Maschera* is vitally hinged on conspirators. The characters, Samuel and Tom, dislike Riccardo as a person and as a ruler and eventually help to kill him. On a purely superficial level, both rulers are assassinated.

Riccardo and Caesar are both generally well-liked by their citizens and are often praised. However, the hatred of a few leads to both deaths. Riccardo, Lear and Caesar are all somewhat arrogant and believe themselves to be above everybody else, and perhaps also above the threat of death.

Both Riccardo and Caesar receive an omen that their lives are in danger and neither takes the premonition seriously. Riccardo is warned by Ulrica, a fortune-teller, while Caesar is warned by a dream that his wife had.

Some Verdi scholars have lamented the fact that Verdi never had the opportunity to complete an operatic version of *King Lear*. But it is safe to say that in some ways Verdi integrated aspects of three stories into one: the historical story of Gustaf III, *King Lear* and *Julius Caesar*. His opera is richer than a straight operatic version of *King Lear* could ever be, because it combines various stories and plots. In addition, *Un Ballo in Maschera* is more quintessentially Verdian than any replica of Shakespeare could possibly be. The story represents the beliefs of the great composer which stand firmly on their own and do not need the crutch of the great dramatist. To lament that Verdi never composed an operatic *King Lear* is to insult Verdi as a dramatist.

Un Ballo in Maschera was written for the San Carlo theater in Naples but it did not premiere there because the censor required important modifications, and Verdi refused to comply. He took the opera to Naples to begin rehearsal as scheduled. But on January 13, 1853, a telegraph from Paris announced an assassination attempt made by Felice Orsini against Napoleon III. On hearing the news, the foreign police immediately redoubled their strictness, and of course the censor in each country became more severe and more timorous. In Naples, the censor withdrew authorization for *Un Ballo in Maschera*. The theme of regicide was particularly unacceptable.

The Duke of Ventignano, superintendent of the royal theaters, tried to convince Verdi to adapt the music to another story. But Verdi flatly refused. The noble Duke was knocking his head against a wall. Verdi remained inexorable and, as it was the period of the great liberal aspirations in Italy, it happened that the entire town of Naples openly took his side. They approved of his resistance, and desired to have an opera with the original libretto (Pougin 181).

Verdi would not consider changing the plot and he did not want to change the time period much, but he did consider moving the place. He suggested a change to the setting of seventeenth century Pomerania instead of eighteenth century Sweden. But the censor was not satisfied, and the opera remained unacceptable. The deal claimed insurance of 40,000 ducats

Tension rose over the issue, and the people of Naples became even more excited about the problem. Verdi could no longer leave his hotel without being followed by an immense crowd. To stop the rising tension, the government released Verdi from his obligations, and let him depart with his opera.

The situation had just been unraveled in this way, when Verdi received a visit from the director of the Apollo Theater in Rome, Jacovaci, for a long time famous in Italy. He thought he could get the opera performed in an uncensored version in Rome and made a deal with Verdi for the opera. But he was mistaken, and the Pontifical censor changed the place of the action and thus the rank and condition of the principal character. Jacovaci was afraid to tell Verdi about the changes. When Verdi did finally find out that the story had not passed censorship, he was furious. The production of the opera, however, did proceed and *Un Ballo in Maschera* was first performed at Teatro Apollo in Rome February 17, 1859.

Verdi himself suggested the new setting of the opera. He chose Colonial Boston as the place. Osborne argues that the time and place and characters' names have no real impact on the success of the opera (320). Despite reworking, *Un Ballo in Maschera* is still a masterpiece. Italian audiences surely understood the parallel relationship between a governor and a king. Even with modifications the gist of Verdi's political opera remained intact. The characters are rich in humanity, and the melodies combine warmth and vigor with humor, lightness, and elegance. Verdi uses more woodwinds and more inner voices to add depth to the music. And a tautly constructed libretto helps to solidify the opera as a complete work of art. Despite changes of setting and character, *Un Ballo in Maschera* shows few scars (Osborne 323).

In addition to its popularity as a focal point of patriotic feeling, the opera was a success in its own right as a work of art. It had a highly successful premiere and has succeeded in many performances since then.

The prelude contains the main musical and literary themes of the opera; politics, love, and danger. It begins with a soft, six-measure introduction. The ability to have a quiet opening was a novelty in Verdi's time, which depended on the use of electric lighting in the opera house. Before electric lights, a loud opening signaled to a rowdy audience that the opera was starting. Dimming the lights became the new signal for audiences to settle down and remains to the present day. The prelude was one of the first preludes that did not have to fill the dual role of setting up the mood of the drama and calling an audience's attention to the stage. Piano flute and pizzicato strings introduce the prelude.

The political theme is first, both figuratively and literally. Measures 7-15 are the same musically as the ensemble for the chorus which opens the first act. That chorus, 'Posa in pace,

a'bei sogni ristori,' celebrates the king as peaceful, enlightened and noble- (although the conspirators disagree and sing different words to the opening melody.) By using the political music to start the prelude, Verdi establishes politics as an important theme.

Musical Example 1

Example One shows the soothing, hymn-like melody that is played in the strings and clarinet. It moves regally by smooth leaps in a moderate duple meter. The overall effect is a content peace.

Then a staccato, malevolent sounding theme briefly previews the danger theme that accompanies the conspirators, Samuel and Tom, who plan to murder the governor. A winding, snake-like phrase introduces the danger theme which accompanies the conspirators. The staccato theme begins fugally in low strings and bassoons.

Musical example 2

The love theme is introduced in measure 35. It is associated with Riccardo's love for Amelia and is the main theme in Riccardo's aria, 'La rivedra nell'estasi' also in the first scene of the first act.

Musical Example 3

After the love theme, the conspirator's theme returns. A swift crescendo to a brutal climax concludes the conspirators theme and melts into the political theme that began the prelude. After hearing the prelude, the audience is thoroughly prepared for the political, amorous, and dangerous drama that will follow. The prelude concludes and a choral ensemble begins the opera.

The opera opens with a hymn of praise to Riccardo, Earl of Warwick, Governor of Boston, Massachusetts. In the early morning, loyal subjects wish their leader peace and happiness.

OSCAR. OFFICERS AND NOBLES

With great emotion
Absorbed in himself
Our good lord and master
Is deep in thought, etc.

Libretto Example 1

At the same time, malcontents conspiring against his life under the leadership of Samuel and Tom express their hatred and determination to seek revenge.

SAMUEL, TOM AND THEIR FOLLOWERS

(softly)

The time is not yet ripe — for everything
Speaks against our acting now.
From this hostile threshold
It is better to withdraw. *etc.*

Libretto example 2

The first scene of the opera expresses two views of Riccardo. Some praise him and some despise him. The hymn begins *sotto voce*, because the deputies, gentlemen, populace, and officers do not wish to wake Riccardo before he has rested fully. An ascending figure in the flutes gives the impression of early morning birds chirping sweetly in the background.

Happy dreams to our lord and pro - tec - tor, Restful sleep may bring peace from your woes. All your
Po - sa in pa - ce, a' bei so - gni ri - sto - ro, o Ric - car - do, il tuo no - bi - le cor. A te'

Musical Example 4 (p. 4 first line)

In contrast to their soft, legato melody, the conspirators, Samuel and Tom, sing a staccato contrasting phrase that expresses their hatred for the king. They sing softly in order to keep their subversive thoughts to themselves, but the melody continues to jump in an agitated manner.

Then the two groups sing together. The hateful conspirators and the loving populace sing opposite viewpoints at the same time- a technique unique to the medium of opera. The flute section emphasizes the tension in the situation with high repeated notes. At the same time, the

flutes maintain the sound of early morning birds. The double function of the flutes is part of this mastery that pervades the ambiguous opening hymn.

Verdi creates a sense of unity between the two groups in an innovative way in this first chorus. The conspirators basically sing the bass line of the hymn, but their rhythmic pattern is different. They sing in a series of sixteenth notes. The result is that "suavity prevails but with an undercurrent of unrest which is wonderfully effective (Budden 378)."

Then the page boy Oscar, sung by a soprano, announces Riccardo's entrance in a spritely recitative. The music swells with tremolo, ascending lines, crescendo, the introduction of brass and a much quicker tempo. Riccardo greets the populace which is waiting with petitions for him. He calls them friends.

Oscar and Riccardo then converse. Riccardo sings a melody that skips childishly with grace note embellishments. The quality of the tune is one that we may expect to accompany Oscar, but it is perhaps too spritely and childlike to accompany a stately ruler. This is the first of several situations in which Oscar acts as an extension of Riccardo himself. The page represents the irresponsible side of Riccardo. The line has a sort of excited and carefree nature that is accentuated by tripping grace notes. Riccardo says that he will watch over his children, but the

a tempo (♩ = 100) (receiving some petitions)

Now show me. You know I'm here to help you. The
Por-ge - te: a me, a me s'a-spet-ta: io

Musical Example 5 (p. 8 forth line)

More regal sounding music in E major accompanies his noble statement. He claims that "power is not good if it does not dry its subject's tears and admires incorrupt glory." But quickly afterwards, the laughing light-hearted music begins again. The statement seems to be off the cuff, and an audience member may wonder whether or not Riccardo truly means what he says. Is he truly a noble leader, or is he childish? Is he being a strong ruler or just acting like one? The audience may doubt Riccardo's seriousness. The ambiguity in Riccardo's nature refers back to Shakespeare's *King Lear* in which the nature of the ruler is also split between a serious nature and a silly one. Riccardo possesses the same kind of ambiguity in his own nature.

spotlight Oscar quickly announces that he has a list of the people that will be invited to a masked ball. Riccardo sees Amelia's name and sweeps off into a lilting aria typical of Verdi in the first act. The tenor sings a glorious melody about the woman he loves. This contains the same melody (Musical Example 3) that was heard in the prelude.

Then Renato enters to meet with the king. His entrance is accompanied by the staccato, fugal theme, already heard in the prelude, that is associated with the conspirators. Perhaps Verdi is already foreshadowing Riccardo's fate, perhaps he is suggesting that Renato is thinking about the conspirators, or perhaps he is indicating the departure of the real conspirators. In a recitative style, Renato says that he notices the king is sad and thinks he knows why. Riccardo fears that Renato knows about his secret feelings for Amelia, Renato's own wife.

In a fast and lively recitative marked *allegro vivo*, Renato tells Riccardo about the threat of conspirators. He sings over a dominant pedal tone in G minor. When he expresses an interest in telling Riccardo the names of the men that want to kill him, fragments of the conspirator's theme reappear.

RICARDO (joyfully)

Ri. And that is all that ails you? Don't you know more? Oh
Ah, gli è di ciò che par-li? Al-tro non sai? Che im-

Re. kill you. *nac-cia.* I shall reveal their names then...
Seu-dir ti piacei no-mi.

Musical Example 6 p.17 first line

Riccardo responds that he does not want to know who the men are. Then Renato wages that it is his duty to warn the king- at that moment the orchestra drops out and the concept of duty is spotlighted by the use of solo voice.

The next section, marked *piu lento*, in Bb major, includes Riccardo's response to Renato. He explains that his people love him and that is all that matters to him. Is Riccardo insane? Is he foolish? Or is he an enlightened ruler that believes in his subjects?

The section ends with Renato's first aria, "Alla vita che t'arride". A strongly rhythmic motive in the orchestra dominates the opening of the aria.

Andante (♩ = 40) RENATO *espr.*

Re. Through your pride and through your cour-age You have won our love and ad - mi-
Al-la vi-tache t'ar-ri-de di spe-ran-se e gau-dio

Musical Example 7 p.18, first line

The staccato flavor alludes to the conspirators without explicitly repeating their theme. A military dotted rhythm and a hymn-like melody express the regal quality of the piece. And the words that

Renato chooses clearly foreshadow the king's death. Renato sings, "Close your door to danger, The shield of your breast will always be your people's love. But hate is swifter than love when seeking to strike its victims."

In Act 1 scene 2, Riccardo is presented with the issue of banishing a witch, named Ulrica. Riccardo has decided to go see her himself and evaluate whether or not she is a witch. He disguises himself as a fisherman. She takes one look at his hand and is horrified by what she sees. Riccardo offers his palm and the 'Prophecy' figure begins. It is characterized by a dotted rhythm and repeated notes. (Budden 390).

It's the hand of a
È la de - stra d'un

Musical Example 8 p.81 2nd line

She pulls away from him, and the prophecy theme does not falter. He finally drags the prophecy out of her. She tells him that he will die soon. The orchestra sounds with fortissimo brass. Riccardo replies that he would be happy to die on the battle field, but she says that he will die at the hand of a friend. The word 'amico' is accompanied, in fact almost covered, by a deafening tutti including bass drum and cymbals. Oscar and the chorus cry out. The aftermath of the shock is left to reverberate for thirteen bars before timid triplets venture to begin a new

She sings in the key of B flat minor which gives her a darker quality

theme. Riccardo proclaims his amusement with the famous quintet with chorus ('E scherzo od e follia') (Budden 380).

But Riccardo laughs at her prediction in the comic, light-hearted 'E scherzo od e follia' in B flat major. He laughs at her abilities as a fortune-teller. His aria has a light mood created by a dotted rhythm.

24. *con eleganza*

It's com - e - dy or fic - tion, this lu - di - crous pre - dic - tion, Com - e - dy or
E scher-zo od è fol - li - a sif-fat-ta pro-fe-zi-a, è scher-zo od è fol-

pp leggierissimo

Musical Example 9 p.84 line 4

His vocal line is doubled by a piccolo that continues to suggest his lighthearted approach to his own death prophecy. But he is accompanied by quiet, light, and elegant string orchestration that suits a regal character. Once again his character uses music to exhibit the ambiguity in his character.

Riccardo's aria becomes the basis for an ensemble. Everyone in the room, including the conspirators, has the opportunity to comment on the prospect of Riccardo's dying. Each character has a different perspective. The different instruments and vocal lines of the various characters helps to express their reaction most clearly.

Ulrica defends her warning. She moves toward Samuel and Tom with an accusing eye. She sings in the key of B flat minor which gives her a darker quality.

To you, my friends, this prophe-cy Is sure-ly no tom-fool-er - y. You do not dare to
 Ah voi, si-gno-ri, a que - ste pa-ro-le mie fu - ne - ste, voi non o - sa-te
 lieve. ta!

Musical Example 10 p.85 line 3

They respond with fear, because they think that she knows that they are conspiring to kill the king. Their bass line is accompanied by a bassoon and is in F major. They use the same menacing, staccato style that is found in the danger theme (compare to Musical Example 2).

SAMUEL
 Her magic vi-sion knows our de-ci-sion, It does not de-serve de -
 La sua pa-ro - - la è dar - - do, è ful - - mi-ne lo

Musical Example 11 p. 85 line 4

Oscar responds with a sad, legato, sustained vocal line in D flat major that is doubled by the oboe, which Verdi often uses to express sadness.

OSCAR
 Ah, a man of his high
 Ah, e tal fia dun - que il

Musical Example 12 p. 86 line 2

He will also use that instrument to express Aida's dilemma throughout that opera.

The entire ensemble seems to be preoccupied with the notion of light versus dark. Everyone, except Riccardo, has a dark, pessimistic view of the king's future. By using them as a foil, Verdi exaggerates Riccardo's light hearted view. Verdi's character, Riccardo, then, can be conceived of as either an easy-going optimist or a fool.

Riccardo's staccato melody returns several times throughout the ensemble as a solo. Each repeat becomes lighter until he is accompanied only by one violin part. The rest of the ensemble and the instruments are darker and heavier.

The final measures of the ensemble comprise a codetta that moves up and down the chromatic scale. The music here has a sort of double nature. It sounds comic and clown-like but also sad and crying. Riccardo and Oscar sing the harmonized line together.

gals — my — blood — with — fear, Con-geals my blood with fear,
ab-ri-vi-den-do va, *ab-ri-vi-den-do va,*

pp
 You do not dare to scoff at me, What could be on your mind,
voi non o-sa-te ri-de-re, *che dun-que in cor vi sta,*

f
 way they all be-lieve What can't be true at all,
co-me fa-da ri-de-re, *la lor cre-du-li-ta,*

f
 It has been he who brought
tut-to co-stei ri-sa,

f
 It has been he who brought
tut-to co-stei ri-sa,

J pp
 Oh, what a bit-ter fear.
ab-ri-vi-den-do va!

pp
 your mind?
dim. vi sta?

f pp
 What can't be true at all.
la lor cre-du-li-ta!

pp
 such news.
ri-sa!

pp
 such news.
ri-sa!

pp
 Great fear!
Or-ror!

pp

Musical Example 13 p. 95 whole page

However, this new melody is second theme is really just a variation of the first. Occurs four times

Ironically Oscar is crying, and Riccardo is laughing,

Renato persuades Ulrica to tell him who will kill him. She finally says that the next man to shake his hand will be the killer. Riccardo challenges the occupants of the room to shake his hand and none do.

At just that moment, Renato, the governor's most trusted friend, enters the room and immediately shakes Riccardo's hand. No one believes that Renato could kill his best friend, and Riccardo decides that Ulrica has made a mistake. Everyone breathes a sigh of relief.

Riccardo, laughing, gives Ulrica a purse full of gold and revokes her banishment. His forgiveness is ironic considering his fate. Ulrica warns him once again to be on guard, but he cuts her off with "non pui!" (No more!).

There are distant cries of Viva Riccardo!. Accompanied by an energetic orchestra, the populace burst in with Silvano at their head. In quick breaths he orders them to kneel before the governor, and his words and melody, which develop into the main theme of the concluding stretta

Long live our King and fa - - ther, Cher-ished by all his na - - tion.
 O fi - glio d'In - ghil - ter - - ra, a - mor di que - sta ter - - ra:

Long live our King and fa - - ther, Cher-ished by all his na - - tion.
 O fi - glio d'In - ghil - ter - - ra, a - mor di que - sta ter - - ra:

Long live our King and fa - - ther, Cher-ished by all his na - - tion.
 O fi - glio d'In - ghil - ter - - ra, a - mor di que - sta ter - - ra:

Musical Example 14 p.101 top line

Riccardo and Oscar sing a second theme which acts as a contrast in the ensemble.

However, this new melody is second theme is really just a variation of the first. Oscar's fears are

RENATO

He spurns— my sage pre-
Non cre-de al pro - - - prio

Yet all the show of glo - - ry Can be a trag - ic sto - - ry,
Ma la soen - tu - ra è co - - sa pur :e' tri - on - fi a - sco - - sa,

SAMUEL

Block - ing our way to ac - - tion, This sy - co - phant - ic
Chiu - de al fe - rir la vi - - a que - sta ser - vil ge -

TOM

Block - ing our way to ac - - tion, This sy - co - phant - ic
Chiu - de al fe - rir la vi - - a que - sta ser - vil ge -

CHORUS OF FOLLOWERS

Block - ing our way to ac - - - tion This sy - co - phant - ic
Chiu - de al fe - rir la vi - - - a que - sta ser - vil ge -

U.

- - dic - - - tion, Ig - - - nor - - - ing
fa - - - to, ma pur mor -

So.

Fate may be hyp - o - crit - i - cal Hid - ing its true in - tent.
là do - ve il fa - to i - po - ori - ta ve - li u - na rea mer - ce.

sa.

fac - - - tion Stoops to the low - est flat - ter - y, Not e - ven know - ing
ni - - - a, che sta lam - ben - do l'i - do - lo, e che non sa il per -

T.

fac - - - tion Stoops to the low - est flat - ter - y, Not e - ven know - ing
ni - - - a, che sta lam - ben - do l'i - do - lo, e che non sa il per -

fac - - - tion, Stoops to the low - est flat - ter - y, Not e - ven know - ing
ni - - - a, che sta lam - ben - do l'i - do - lo, e che non sa il per -

Musical Example 15 (103 whole page)

There is a reprise in which the two main themes combine vertically; and after several modulations, Verdi finishes the act on the tonic chord. Act I, scene 2 opens with Amelia lamenting her guilty love for Riccardo. She meets with the fortune teller, Ulrica and asks to be freed from her passion. Ulrica instructs her to go to the gallows field to find a specific plant that will solve her problem. Riccardo overhears and decides to follow Amelia there.

Act II opens with Amelia going to the gallows at midnight where Riccardo meets her. They sing a beautiful love duet that is cut short by the entrance of Renato who has come to warn Riccardo about approaching conspirators. Amelia hides behind her veil and Renato does not recognize her.

Riccardo leaves Amelia with Renato in an agitated trio that gives the impression of heart pounding hurry. The music calms down subsequently and Renato tries to calm the mystery woman at his side. The orchestra is sparse in contrast to the preceding section.

The conspirators, bloodthirsty, enter from far away with their accompanying theme. Amelia and Renato sing parlante in a sort of breathless way with repeated notes to capture their fear. The music starts fugally but is then sung for the first time in unison.

3a. Be a - lert, pro - ceed with cau - tion, We shall strike with - out a
Av - ven - tia - mo - ci su lu - i, ch  scoc - ca - ta   l'ul - ti -

TOM
 T. Be a - lert, pro - ceed with cau - tion, We shall strike with - out a
Av - ven - tia - mo - ci su lu - i, ch  scoc - ca - ta   l'ul - ti -

warn - ing, We shall strike with - out a warn - ing, with - out a
m'o - ra, ch  scoc - ca - ta   l'ul - ti - m'o - ra, l'ul - ti -

cau - tion. We shall strike with - out a warn - ing, with - out
lui, ch  scoc - ca - ta   l'ul - ti - m'o - ra, l'ul - ti -

Be a - lert, pro - ceed with cau - tion, We shall strike with - out a
Av - ven - tia - mo - ci su lu - i, ch  scoc - ca - ta   l'ul - ti -

They finally present a real threat, and their forces have finally grown strong enough to be dangerous. A winding agitated orchestra builds tension as the conspirators threaten Renato and Amelia. Renato tries to defend her, and the orchestra shifts into a series of sixteenth note triplets. Amelia intervenes and accidentally drops her veil. As Renato sees her, the orchestra expresses the horror of the situation. Forte sixteenth note runs oscillate up and down and then rise chromatically to a fortissimo heart stopping cry from Renato as he realizes that the woman before him is his wife.

The music settles into a breathless disbelief. As the conspirators grasp the horror of the situation, they exploit it. They sing a mocking derision that begins with staccato octave leaps. The orchestra indicates *con eleganza* and the light-hearted, elegant tune is sickening in its context. The conspirator's heartless response continues with a mocking staccato line that rises by quarter-note whole steps.

leggermente

S. wife. *sa!* Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha. Oh, how de-lightful a sit-u-
 Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, e che bac-ca-no sul ca-so

T. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha. Oh, how de-lightful a sit-u-
 Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, e che bac-ca-no sul ca-so

stacc. assai

In addition to the drama of the events, there is a great deal of laughter in the score that keeps the story from being maudlin. The conspirators mocking is one example. But Oscar's gaiety and Riccardo's irony are also examples of comedy in Verdi's composition. Verdi caught the jocular mood of Riccardo's visit to the fortune teller perfectly. In this opera, Verdi shows the

influence of his French contemporary, Offenbach, who was known for comic opera parodies of Greek Gods and making fun of society using French wit.

Single-pitch parlante and a dotted jerking rhythm express Amelia's horror and Renato's disbelief in a way that sounds like it is difficult for them to speak. The tension of the situation is emphasized by interspersed oscillating thirty-second notes.

Musical Example 18 p. 163 2nd line

After the shock wears off, a sustained, crying sort of melody line takes over with soaring triplets in both their singing lines and the orchestra.

The conspirators laugh with taunts and, for the first time, Renato stops singing in the same style as Amelia and begins to sing in the staccato style of the conspirators. Even before the plot suggests that Renato is now whole heartedly against Riccardo, the music gives away his newly hardened heart. Amelia emphasizes the growing gap between her and her husband by singing sustained half notes and quarter notes in contrast to his sixteenth note melody that rhythmically matches the conspirators.

Musical Example 20 p. 173 bottom line

hand, *qua le,* Where can I find a hand That
qual man pie to sa, qual

such hate-ful trea-son, I can't en-dure— Such bit-ter shame—
sbra-na-to il co-ro, per sem-pre m'ha! dim. sbra-na-to il cor

light-ful a sit-u-a-tion. Oh, what
ca-no sul ca-so stra-no, e che com-

light-ful a sit-u-a-tion. Oh, what
ca-no sul ca-so stra-no, e che com-

light-ful a sit-u-a-tion. Oh, what
ca-no sul ca-so stra-no, e che com-

Musical Example 19 p. 169

In typical Italian style, the music overpowers the words at this point and the ensemble continues on a purely musical level without plot advancement. The section concludes with Renato asking to meet with the conspirators. He has turned completely against Riccardo and wants to plan against his life. The conspirators slink away laughing all the way. Using many repeated notes that express a tight-lipped white rage, Renato tells Amelia that he will indeed escort her home. She pleads with him.

RENATO (remains alone with Amelia, says to her furiously)

I have sworn, up-on my hon-or, to es-cort you to the
Ho giu-ra-to che al-le por-te vad-dur-roi del-la cit-

a-tion. Oh, what gos-sip around the town.
stra-no, e che com-men-ti per la cit-ta!

Musical Example 20 p. 173 bottom line

The conspirators, in a gradual diminuendo as they exit, continue to sing their mocking laugh. A fortissimo orchestra concludes the act and summarizes the horror of the event definitively. The act ends powerfully with oscillating chords leading to a solid cadence.

The musical score consists of three staves. The top two staves are for Soprano (S.) and Tenor (T.), and the bottom staff is for Bass. The lyrics are as follows:

morendo *dim.* *sempre più p*

S. gos - sip in this town. ha ha ha ha ha. Think of the
 can per la cit - tà! , ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, e che bac -

morendo *dim.* *sempre più p*

T. gos - sip in this town. ha ha ha ha ha. Think of the
 can per la cit - tà! , ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, e che bac -

B. gos - sip in this town. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha. Think of the
 can per la cit - tà! ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, e che bac -

In Act III, scene 1, Renato's fury is expressed in a dramatic recitative in which he calls for Amelia's death. She responds with a beautiful, weeping prayer-like aria in which she expresses her final wish to see their child. Renato sends her away. He turns to the portrait of Riccardo which hangs on his wall and begins a soliloquy, the famous aria 'Eri Tu', that explains how he feels about the situation. He defines Riccardo, not Amelia, as the true villain, and exhibits clear signs that he is no longer a trusted friend, but has become a vengeful enemy.

Two sides of Renato become evident in his soliloquy. The opening cabaletta exhibits his disgust for the king. His anger is expressed musically with the use of chromatics and militant rhythms. Staccato triplets sound like the evil conspirators theme.

B.

fash - - ion All the faith-ful de - vo - tion, All the love of your dear - est
 gui - - sa dell' a - mi - co tuo pri - mo, dell' a - mi - co tuo pri - mo la

p

Musical Example 22 p. 185, 2nd line

The following cavatina is a strong contrast to the earlier section. He laments losing Amelia's love and sadly remembers when she did love him. Sextet arpeggios accompany the plaintive melody that is very lyrical and full of chromatics. The use of thirds creates the sweet sound of love.

me - - lia, so pure and so
 me - - lia si bel - - la, si

pp

B.

beau - - ti - ful In my
 can - - di - da sul mio

After the aria, the conspirators' theme reoccurs announcing the entrance of Samuel and Tom.

Allegro moderato ($\text{♩} = 63$)

ppp stacc. assai

pp

Musical Example 24 p. 188 2nd line

The men discuss plans for murdering Riccardo. Each wants to be the one to pull the trigger, so Amelia is called in to pull one of their names out of a vase to determine who the murderer will be. She pulls out Renato's name.

Soon after Oscar brightly pops in to invite Renato and Amelia to a masked ball that very evening hosted by Riccardo. Renato decides that they will attend and that it will provide the perfect opportunity for the assassination.

Riccardo symbolizes Verdi's hope for the future ruler of his emerging country. Up to this point in the opera, an audience member may question Verdi's motivation. Why would he choose such a foolish man as the model for a king? But Verdi is painting a portrait of the ideal ruler in the context of history. Verdi requires Riccardo to satisfy the test of balancing the power of an absolute ruler with the commitment to the people that exist in a democracy. His love relationship with Amelia and the preservation of that relationship represents his self-interested will, while his decision to send her away from him represents Riccardo's commitment to what is just and ethical.

For Verdi, Riccardo's decision to send Amelia away from him is a triumph of virtue over absolute rule. What self-interested king would choose to be miserable? If Riccardo were an absolute monarch, he would let Amelia become his mistress, or he could banish Renato and marry Amelia. After all, he does have complete power.

But Verdi exalts Riccardo's choice to remain committed to what is fair and moral. To sign the form that sends Amelia away is a victory for idealism, justice, and modern government.

"Gustavus and Boccanegra (somewhat anachronistically in the case of the latter) are presented as harbingers of a much longed-for, more humane and civilized society, in which the barbarous codes of feudal factionalism are banished for ever. Writing these works in the later

1850's, Verdi surely hoped, and perhaps believed that Victor Emmanuel of Piedmont might fill such a role for all Italy when the great moment came (Bonavia 126)."

The final act decreases the importance of public issues and increases the importance of private issues that affect rulers. It is a precursor to *Otello* which addresses the subject of private issues affecting a ruler's ability to govern. And it remembers Shakespeare's plays *King Lear* and *Julius Caesar*.

Act II, Scene 2 opens with the recurrence of the love theme accompanied by 32nd note trills and a staccato descending bass line. As the scene begins, Riccardo is sitting at a writing table in a sumptuous room at the palace. The lyrical melody indicates that he is thinking of Amelia. In recitative, he hopes for her safe return home. The lyrical melody is heard like a memory in the orchestra (compare to Musical Example 3).

Andante mosso quasi Allegro (♩ = 63)

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with various note values, including quarter and eighth notes, and rests. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a rhythmic pattern of staccato eighth notes, creating a descending bass line. The tempo marking 'Andante mosso quasi Allegro' and the metronome marking '(♩ = 63)' are positioned above the first staff. The dynamic marking 'p espr.' is placed at the beginning of the melody.

Musical Example 25, p.216 top line

Then the thought of Amelia is interrupted as Riccardo explains that a sacred sense of honor must divide them.

To express his public side, the orchestra shifts to a sort of militant staccato eighth note pattern that is very repetitive harmonically. And Riccardo explains that he will order Renato and Amelia to go to England. His vocal line becomes more lyrical as he says that he will say no

words of parting and their love must perish. This section ends on a conclusive perfect authentic cadence in F minor.

In contrast, his private side is expressed when he is about to sign the document to send them away, and the lyrical love theme returns in the orchestra. He drops the pen. He expresses doubt, but then quickly becomes determined and signs the document and seals his life to lonely sorrow in an resigned, piano, somewhat chromatic descending line.

Musical Example 26 p. 217, 3rd line

Ri. *f* *pp*

Ah, now I've cho-sen A life of lone-ly sor - row.
ah l'ho se - gnato il sa - cri - fi - zio mi - o!

p *pp* *f* *pp*

Musical Example 26 p. 217, 3rd line

The music shifts into three-quarter time for the famous tenor aria, "Ma se m'e forza perdeti.' In this aria, Riccardo expressively explains that fate may keep them apart, but their souls are bound forever. The orchestra becomes agitated and Riccardo's melody line alludes to the love theme.

Musical Example 27, p. 218 3rd line

Ri. *sight. cor.*

But now an_ill fore-
Ed or qual reo pre-

Musical Example 27, p. 218 3rd line

Riccardo hears music offstage from the Masquerade ball with its quick staccato rhythm.

RICCARDO
parlante

(Dance music is heard offstage.) Ah, she'll be com-ing... I'd like to see her, To
Ah, des-sa è là, — po-trei ve-der-la, an-

Musical Example p. 220 3rd line

In a light parlante he says that he knows that she will be coming to the ball and that he would like to see her. He is arguing to himself about the wisdom of going to the ball when Oscar enters with a letter for him. The party music pauses while Oscar explains that an unknown lady has given him the message to deliver to Riccardo. Riccardo reads the paper. The letter warns Riccardo not to go to the ball because someone is planning his assassination.

Riccardo immediately replies that he does not want the conspirators to think that he is afraid and decides to go to the ball as the raucous and somewhat unsettling dance music begins again. The true reason as to why Riccardo wants to go to the ball is confusing. Does he really not want the conspirators to think he is a coward? Or does he just want an excuse to see Amelia again? Or perhaps he is so distraught over the idea of sending her away that he is happy to die. Regardless why Riccardo decides to go, the decision is the twist of plot that gives the opera its tragic ending. Riccardo is excited about seeing Amelia one last time and bursts into an enthusiastic revival of their love theme now in the key of F major.

RICARDO (bursts forth excitedly,
con entusiasmo)

Ri. Yes, I must see my love a-gain, Ra-diant as nev-er-be-fore!
Sì, ri-ve-der-ti, A-me-lia, e-nel-la tua-bel-tà,

Musical Example 29 p. 222 4th line

The scene changes as a large curtain opens and reveals the ballroom and a large, loud chorus that sings the ballroom theme that was introduced in the last part of Riccardo's soliloquy. The people at the party celebrate happiness and cheer.

The raucous B flat chorus, which has a circular quality to it, ends abruptly as Samuel and Tom enter in a costume accompanied, of course by their theme which is, this time, elaborated with increased orchestration and trills. They bitterly whisper their intent in quick eighth and sixteenth notes.

Re. mur-der! But he won't come. Find-ing him here is
mor-te! Ma non ver-rà. Qui l'a-spet-tar-lo è

SAMUEL

Sa. You're jok-ing!
Che par-li?

TOM

T. You're jok-ing!
Che par-li?

The foolish Oscar runs into Renato and begins to follow him around the party annoying him. The music is light, elegant, and staccato in E flat major. Oscar tells Renato that the governor is present, but will not tell the description of the ruler's costume. Renato tries to coerce the information out of him. Oscar eludes him and sings a delightful, lighthearted aria with a staccato refrain, Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la- playful and light.

This lighthearted party aria is followed quickly by a return of the ballroom theme with the chorus. Accompanied by the conspirators threatening theme, Renato tells Oscar that it is urgent that he talk with Riccardo. Finally Oscar concedes and tells Renato what Riccardo is wearing. The loud quick music of the ballroom theme soars again with the chorus.

Riccardo, dressed in a black robe with a scarlet ribbon, enters the ballroom and meets with Amelia who is dressed in a white robe. The music has a hauntingly noble triple meter sound reminiscent of a Mozartean minuet. The music expresses the noble quality of Riccardo, but also builds tension by being the opposite of what the ear would expect. The characters are at the height of danger and the tension should be at a high point, but instead the music is engaged in a light, regal dance. The lovers seem even more frantic against such a refined backdrop.

The orchestration becomes increasingly agitated and the lovers argue because Amelia wants Riccardo to flee and save himself, and he wants to savor these moments with his love, Amelia. He tells her that he is sending her away and they are in the process of exchanging farewells when Renato comes between them and stabs Riccardo. The orchestra swirls into horror and confusion in a series of chromatic sixteenth notes accompanied by chordal eighth notes. Amelia screams, and Oscar runs to Riccardo's side. The crowd exposes Renato as the killer and,

they once again react with disbelief. The crowd is outraged and angry and plan for revenge against Renato.

But Riccardo, with light ethereal orchestral accompaniment that might represent heaven, tells the crowd to let go of Renato. He explains in soft tones that he is dying, he loved Amelia but never did anything to smear her honorable name. He gives Renato the letter that would send him and Amelia as ambassadors to England.

The principle characters all react with different emotions. Amelia wants someone to help him. Oscar grieves. And Renato begs for remorse. The music changes again and Riccardo grants Renato pardon. A light beautiful hymn of praise follows in which everyone celebrates Riccardo.

(Samuel and Tom are always seen in the background)

RENATO *ppp*

Re. Gracious Lord, do not de -
Cor si gran - - dee ge - ne -

Lord, do not de - prive us Of this
gran - - dee ge - - ne - - ro - - so tu es

Lord, do not de - prive us Of this
gran - - dee ge - - ne - - ro - - so tu es

AMELIA
estremamente p

A. Heav - - - - en pre - serve him!
Di - - - - o pie - - to - - - so,

ppp OSCAR

O. Heav - - - - en pre - serve him!
Di - - - - o pie - - to - - - so,

Re. prive us
ro - - - so,

SAMUEL *pp*

Gracious Lord, do not de -
Co - re gran - - dee ge - ne -

great - - - - King and pro - tect - - - or! Grant his
ser - - - - sa, o Dio pie - - to - - so: ras - - - gio in

great - - - - King and pro - tect - - - or! Grant his
ser - - - - sa, o Dio pie - - to - - so: ras - - - gio in

He lives to tell the people that they were his beloved children and then breathes out his last goodbye. A fast response to the horror of the night ends the opera quickly after Riccardo's death.

Verdi has painted a portrait of a good ruler. Riccardo is an honorable man, even if he does have human faults. At a time when Italy was shifting into a large government, Verdi wanted to stress the attributes of good politicians and define them as human. The period of absolute rule was outdated and ineffective. Verdi used the music and plot of his opera to create his vision of an ideal ruler.

Verdi's *Aida* also delves into the realm of politics, but not under the premise of the nature of a good ruler. *Aida* tells the story of individual conflict with an unjust system. Similar to *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Aida* does study the conflict of rulers that are torn between national duty and personal happiness. Yet the conflict in *Aida* is more pronounced because the two lovers are torn apart, not by the pressure and guilt of carrying on an adulterous relationship, but instead by a system that will not allow them to be together. The state forbids Aida and Radames to be together because they are from different countries and their sympathies toward one another are viewed as treason. Radames is punished for his love for Aida unconditionally and unjustly.

In this way, the lovers compare easily with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Surely Verdi, an avid reader of Shakespeare, had read and studied the play about fated love. The two works are similar in that they both set innocent lovers against an unbending and intolerant society. In both cases, the lovers die trying to escape the wrath of an unjust system. In Shakespeare's play, the society is not clearly faulted for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, rather, a confusion and mistake lead to their deaths. Verdi's drama, on the other hand, develops the notion that society is solely the guilty party. It is clear in the opera that the political powers are directly

responsible for the death of the lovers. Because of the age of the lovers and the clear relationship between political power and death, *Aida* is a more mature story than Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Nonetheless, both dramas deal with similar issues making it an interesting comparison.

It is also interesting to put *Aida* into the context of the time period in which it was written, focusing on the political similarities between the drama and the political climate of Verdi's Italy. Verdi, throughout many of his operas, sets national duty against personal happiness. In *Aida*, he makes the conflict very clear. Aida is the princess of Ethiopia and has an incredible sense of duty and loyalty to her country. Egypt and Ethiopia are at war. Aida is captured and enslaved by the Egyptians, but they do not know her rank. She is given the position of a hand maiden to Amneris, the princess of Egypt. While at the Egyptian court, Aida falls in love with Radames, an Egyptian soldier who leads troops against her people. She laments the torment of being caught between doing her duty to her country and having happiness with the man she loves.

Typical of the Risorgimento, Verdi obviously portrayed the Egyptians as symbolic of the Austrians, and likewise related the Ethiopians to the Italians. He characterizes the Egyptians as power-hungry, depicting their leaders as stubborn, obstinate and close-minded. Egyptian rulers in the opera are religious, which suggests that religion and politics are a bad mix. Amneris sings an angry tirade at the opera's conclusion cursing the priests for being such heartless rulers. Verdi composed the opera soon after Rome, the papal state, was united with the rest of the nation. Thus, the problem of compromising church and state was certainly on his mind.

Historically, Rome was controlled by the Pope and was thus protected by the French, who were for the most part Catholic. The Pope declaration of papal infallibility on July 18, 1870, during Vatican Council I, offended the Enlightened French leaders. On the next day, Napoleon

III, egged on by Bismark, declared war on Prussia. On September 20, the French troops left Rome, because Napoleon III disagreed with the Pope's dogma and hoped to increase his troops in Prussia. The vulnerable city did not stand a chance against the Italian army and after a short bombardment in the name of Victor Emmanuele, the Papal State, the oldest sovereignty in Europe, ceased to exist. The Pope withdrew to the Vatican.

Italy was completely unified in 1870, when Rome was included, but Verdi was still not content. Verdi disliked organized religion and despised the fact that the Pope would be included as a political leader in Italy. Verdi could not reconcile Roman politics with the politics of all of Italy. The government of the new nation of Italy and the government of the Papal state were very different and in Verdi's eyes, often contradictory. he could not imagine how to mix parliament with the College of Cardinals, the liberty of the press with the inquisition, civil law with Syllabus, or the Pope with the king of Italy. It was while Verdi was pondering these political issues that he began to compose *Aida*, and the themes and sentiments of the political climate took root in the drama. (Arblaster 139)

Verdi was often considered nonreligious. But it may be more appropriate to consider him against the conventionality of the organized church. He was a champion of promoting personal freedom. He despised conformity and claimed the right to live his personal life as he pleased, free from the pressure or censure of conventional opinion. No fact from his life clarifies his religious stance better than his relationship with Guiseppina Streponi. They lived together for fourteen years before they were married. For that reason, Verdi received much public ridicule. He explained his opinions on that issue in a letter to his first wife's father and long time friend.

Verdi borrowed from other great composers, he remained quintessentially Italian.

Verdi wrote, "all I have meant to say is that I claim my right to freedom of action, because all men have a right to do it, and because my nature rebels against mere conformity (Arblaster 140)."

Verdi places personal freedom against political duty in *Aida*, and he pushes the point by making the state clerical. He truly tells the story of an unmalleable system at odds with the freedom of the individual. Arblaster describes the plot as "the absolute triumph of a system over all those individuals and groups who oppose or deviate from it (141)." Because Radames inadvertently betrayed his country, he is not forgiven. Bonavia describes the story as an admirable blend of the heroic and the pitiful. The main characters are caught in an unresolvable dilemma and are incapable of escape because they are trapped under the rule of intolerant rulers.

Aida is not only about politics, it was also surrounded by politics. In fact three very different political events shaped the opera.

The first one concerns the politics within music itself. Nationalism was a large part of the musical world during the Romantic period. Verdi wrote mostly in a traditional Italian style. He composed operas that emphasized the glory of the singer and tended to suspend plot advancement at times to allow for arias and vocal grandeur. But Verdi was not confined to only Italian influence, and he did look to other countries for musical influence. He sometimes preferred a French grand opera style, for example, *Don Carlos*. And he often included large spectacle scenes that echo that compositional style.

Also parts of *Aida* resemble other French composers, including, among others, Meyerbeer, the composer of *Les Huguenots*. Verdi and Meyerbeer are similar mostly because they wrote in the French opera style using grand spectacle and ballet. But despite the fact that Verdi borrowed from other great composers, he remained quintessentially Italian.

But Verdi also studied another nationalistic style, Germanic. He was often compared and contrasted with Richard Wagner, who was at his height of popularity throughout Europe. Verdi read about him in French, since Wagner's articles on musical criticism theory and aesthetics were not printed in Italian. Like Wagner, Verdi made a move toward longer movements and more continuous music. He did not include breaks for applause after each vocal showcase, because the bel canto glorification of the voice began to go out of style. Arias and vocal showpieces began to have the dramatic purpose of character development. Both Verdi and Wagner used more continuous music and a greater degree of character development in their operas. Verdi may have been copying Wagner. Or he may be merely reflecting a trait of the late Romantic operatic tradition.

Critics and audiences acclaimed *Aida* because they were enthralled from the very first hearing, whereas Wagner's operas have to be heard over and over again. But Verdi was uninterested in the opinions of critics. He said they never said anything noble or even slightly right.

Verdi has often been acclaimed as a melodist. Martin describes Verdi's melodies as full and singable. Although very interested in melody, Verdi said, "do not be exclusively a melodist. In music there is something more than melody, more than harmony. There is music. Perhaps this sounds like a riddle to you. Let me explain; Beethoven was not a melodist; Palestrina was not a melodist."

He was interested in the work of other composers, contemporary and long dead. He decided the best exercise for the study of counterpoint and harmonic development would be a composition of the liturgical polyphonic type, which required knowledge of an austere style

(Martin 227). He wrote a mass to practice these new compositional techniques. Perhaps they were inspired by Wagner's success as a polyphonic composer.

By the late 1860's, Verdi was not really interested in opera composition; he was attempting to retire, but the urging of his fans was undeniable. He decided to compose an opera that incorporated lightly some of his newfound techniques. The question was; what subject would he write about? In fact it was DuLocle, the librettist of Verdi's previous opera, *Don Carlo*, and a good friend who urged Verdi to compose again by submitting subjects for his approval. But Verdi was not pleased with the suggestions. None of the subjects appealed to him. But DuLocle did not tire. When Verdi expressed some interest in a contemporary Spanish play by Ayala, DuLocle sent it to him. He also slipped in an "Egyptian sketch" of four printed pages. Verdi praised the outline warmly.

DuLocle had made the rough outline from an old story written by the French Egyptologist Auguste Edouard Mariette, who received the title, *Bey*, from the Egyptian government for his extensive research of the Egyptian culture including decoding hieroglyphics using the Rosetta Stone and discovering the Sphinx. Mariette was a highly respected archeologist, but apparently he was skilled as a story-teller as well. Despite evidence that proves Mariette as the sole source of *Aida*, he never received full credit, not to mention payment, for the story of *Aida*. Somehow, Verdi assumed that the sketch for the plot came from the khedive of Egypt himself. And DuLocle did not clarify Verdi's misconception. The source of *Aida* has been a source of debate ever since.

DuLocle originally wrote the libretto for the opera in French, but Verdi wanted it changed to Italian. He used the popular and well-established Antonio Ghislanzoni to translate

DuLocle's work. The two wrote countless letters about tedious details of the libretto. *Aida* only took four months to compose.

The khedive of Egypt wanted a new opera for the opening of the Cairo Opera House, which was built near the same time as the Suez Canal. Egypt was in the midst of a historical period in which they felt close to Europe and encouraged European culture and fineries. And opera was part of that. The khedive was very interested in Verdi composing an opera for him, but Verdi would not agree. The opera house opened with a production of *Rigoletto*.

The khedive finally got his wish. Verdi's new opera *Aida* was complete and ready for rehearsal and performance in Cairo in January 1870. But like so many of Verdi's operas war played a part, not only in the plot, but also in the production. The premiere was delayed because of military conflicts due to the Franco-Prussian war. Germany and France had been at war, and France, which was caught off guard, had suffered a messy defeat. Mariette Bey was stuck in Paris, which was then under siege by the German Army. The scenery and costumes were impossible to get out of Paris. It would be impossible to produce the opera in January as was agreed.

The hot-tempered Verdi planned to have *Aida* produced at La Scala despite the insistent requests of Mariette Bey who spoke for the khedive. He pleaded with Verdi to allow the Egyptian khedive to maintain the rights to the opera. Verdi refused.

But the khedive had not lost hope of producing *Aida* at the Italian Theater in Cairo. He selected singers and a conductor for the affair. Finally Verdi consented and accepted an offer for the performance from Mariette. However, he also secured the property rights so that he could

perform *Aida* at La Scala during the carnival season. He placed a great importance on the La Scala performance.

He had almost six months before the Cairo premiere and he changed many parts of the opera. *Aida* was first performed on Christmas Eve in Cairo 1871, and was a great triumph. The khedive invited critics from Europe, specifically Filippi and Reyer, who both praised the performance.

Nonetheless, Verdi remodeled the opera for its Italian premiere. He composed an overture to replace the prelude. The new overture was interwoven with the principal motifs from the opera, which was a technique he liked to use (Martin 23). Nowadays, conductors usually revert back to the original prelude. The LaScala overture is rarely heard in the opera houses of the world.

Verdi wrote in a letter to the conductor "you will see at the end of the overture, that trombones and double-bass roar out the priests' song; violins and wind instruments shriek Amneris' jealousy, Aida's aria is played fortissimo by the trumpets." (Martin 23)

By the time he wrote *Aida*, Verdi had mastered the technique of integration. His music passionately intertwines the thematic content with the plot. Furthermore, he added Risorgimento themes to the mix. In his maturity, Verdi could both make a thematic point with his operas and also create a piece of music that could stand on its own as art. The themes and the art of the opera are in a perfect balance.

And Verdi continued his success. He repeated the careful balance to create incredible operas over and over throughout his maturity as a composer. In the words of Bernard Shaw- "It is

not often that a man's strength is so immense that he can remain an athlete after bartering half of it to old age for experience."

Aida was certainly not Verdi's first or last successful opera. But the triumph of the opera helps to prove Verdi's successful balance. His ability to balance the art with the message is unquestionable. Even from the prelude, Verdi begins to weave his careful formula.

Aida, like *Un Ballo in Maschera*, begins softly. The pianissimo violins sneak up on an audience in such a way that it is difficult to determine whether the notes are coming from the imagination or from the orchestra.

And also like *Un Ballo in Maschera*, the prelude is of significant musical importance. The opposing forces that create the conflict in the opera are the title character, vulnerable, sympathetic, and emotional, and the priests who represent an oppression, absolute power, and religious rule- all of which existed in Risorgimento Italy and all of which Verdi despised. *Aida* in many ways captures many of the themes that Verdi touches on in his other operas and ties them down into one complete and clear story. *Aida* is an individual fighting against an unbending system. She is doomed from the start.

Aida's lamenting theme, often heard in the oboes, suggests repressed yearning. The melody builds in a rough fugue that emphasizes the many entrances and gradually crescendoes. Accompanied by sensuous harmonies, the theme is revealed gradually. (Budden 199) The mood of her theme can be likened to the mood of the Risorgimento itself. The sound is wayward and desolate. It wistfully ascends and then sighs, as if she is giving up on hope.

Andante mosso. (♩ = 76)

65

Piano.

pp

ppp

Musical Example 32

The priest theme at first seems harmless with a simple descending line in the low strings. The direction of the line contrasts with Aida's rising theme. But similar to Aida's theme, the priest theme grows fugally. At its climax it is dreadfully threatening with low fortissimo brass and kettledrums.

ppp

ppp
m. d.

pp

Musical Example 33

The prelude concludes with the two themes in competition with a fuller orchestra. Aida's theme grows increasingly sweeter and then the priest theme reoccurs in a more agitated mood. The prelude reaches a very loud climax and then descends into a very, very soft conclusion that remembers the pianissimo beginning of the prelude.

Aida is often hailed as an example of spectacle opera. And certainly with parades, elephants, and Egyptian temples the description has justification. But the actual plot of the opera is much more intimate. Aida is an Ethiopian princess who has been captured by the Egyptians. The Egyptians do not know that she is royalty, and they enslave her and make her a handmaiden to the Egyptian princess, Amneris. Aida is in love with Radames, a handsome general in the Egyptian army and he loves her. There are two problems with their relationship that cause conflict in the opera. For one, Amneris is also in love with Radames, and her jealousy rages. But also, Egypt and Ethiopia are at war and Radames kills Aida's loyal subjects. She is tormented as she tries to decide between true love and her duty as the protectorate of her country.

The plot thickens when Aida's father, Amonasro, king of Ethiopia, is captured by the Egyptians. He tells Aida to find out military secrets from Radames in order to save her country. She reluctantly pulls the information out of Radames, but to her horror, Amneris overhears the two and in a fit of jealousy, she orders Radames to be tried for treason.

The truest evil in the opera comes forward in the form of the priests who unbendingly declare Radames a traitor, even though he did not know that Aida was a princess and was tricked in many ways. Even Amneris cries for him to be saved. Although Radames does not love Amneris, she does not see justice in his execution. But the priests do not falter and they decide to kill him because in a trial he will not defend himself.

Radames is locked in a tomb in which he will eventually suffocate. Aida, who cannot bear to live without him, gets into the tomb as well. They die singing a hopeful love duet with Amneris praying above their tomb requesting mercy from the heavens.

The opera opens with Ramfis, the High Priest, and Radames discussing military plans.

Ramfis, regally accompanied by cellos in a loose canon, announces that the Goddess Isis has helped him choose who the general of the army will be.

To contrast with the dark, heavy sound of the priests' power, Radames' hopeful response is punctuated by fanfares on trumpets and trombones.

Musical Example 33

Recitative.

Radamès. *Se quel guerrier io fos-si! se il mio so-gno si av-ve-ras-se!*
 What if 'tis I am chosen, and my dream be now ac-complish'd!

Piano.

Allegro vivo. (♩ = 126.) *con entusiasmo*

Un e-ser-ci-to di
 Of a glorious ar-my

Musical Example 34 p6 line 1 and 2

'Celeste Aida' defines Radames love for Aida and, traditional to Italian opera, provides a showcase for the beautiful tenor voice. Soft strings, low-lying flute, oboe, bassoon and muted violins create a warm simple mood for the love song. His voice is reinforced by clarinet, bassoon and cello, while flute arpeggios paint the sound of romantic love.

Andantino. (♩ = 116.)
con espress.

Ce - le - ste A - i - da, for - ma - di -
Heav'n - ly A - i - da, beau - ty - re -

p *m.s.*

The musical score consists of two systems. The top system is a vocal line in G major, 6/8 time, with a tempo of Andantino (♩ = 116) and the instruction 'con espress.'. It features a melodic line with a long note on 'da,' in the first system and a triplet of eighth notes in the second system. The bottom system is a piano accompaniment in G major, 6/8 time, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a mezzo-soprano (*m.s.*) marking. It includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand.

Musical Example 35

Amneris enters and stands watching Radames. She first sings her adoration of Radames in a gracious tone accompanied by courtly triplets. But in an aside, the Amneris's jealous nature begins to show. She suspects that Radames is in love with someone else and she expresses her fears in a melody that has been aptly compared to a caged beast pacing angrily up and down. (Martin). The two engage in an agitated duet.

Aida enters to her theme played by clarinet above tremolo strings. Amneris returns to her stately theme to greet her handmaiden whom she calls 'sister.' Aida is in tears. She says that she is upset because of the war, but Amneris suspects otherwise.

The scene ends with a trio. The characters express their individual interior thoughts simultaneously. Aida is the last character to enter the ensemble. She expresses hopeless love in a sustained line, while Amneris and Radames sing in an agitated recitative. A pulsing timpani unifies the ensemble.

no, fate, sul - - la mia pa - -
o'er E - gypt loom -

Rea schia - va, — tre-ma ch'io
Oh thou base vas-sal, tremble lest

lei ba - le - - na
rage are flash - ing,

Brass instruments announce the coming of Ramfis to proclaim war and announce Radames as the leader. The people, represented by a chorus, call for war in a rousing ensemble. The repeated war cry, "guerra, guerra, guerra" which means "war, war, war" builds excitement for the battle. Radames leaves to be consecrated and armed. As he exits, Amneris calls to him, 'Ritorna Vincitor' which means 'Return Victorious.' Everyone, including Aida, repeats the cry for victory.

Then Aida is left alone to ask herself how she could bear to wish anyone victory over her own father, family and compatriots. As the solo starts, the audience is hardly aware that a long solo scene is unfolding. Verdi uses Amneris' words to link this scene with the previous one. This illustrates a departure from the traditional number's opera.

Furthermore, Verdi uses an untraditional form for Aida's lament. Her solo divides into five-parts. The first section is an agitated recitative, a relatively orthodox beginning of the solo. Echoing Amneris, Aida then puts into words her inner-conflict that will be the tragedy of the entire opera.

Return victorious!
 And from my lips language so impious!
 Victor over my father,
 over him who wages war
 that I may be restored to a country,
 a kingdom and an illustrious name
 that here I am forced to hide!
 Victor over my brothers!
 Even now I see him,
 stained with their blood so cherished,
 amid the clamorous triumph
 of Egyptian battalions.
 Behind his chariot comes a king,
 my father, his fettered captive!
 O gods watching over me,
 wipe out these insane words.
 To a father's breast
 restore his daughter:
 oh, scatter their armies,
 forever crush our foe!
 Ah! what wild words do I utter?

And my love?
 Can I forget a love
 that like a bright ray of the sun
 consoled me,
 a captive pining?
 Shall I invoke destruction on Radames,
 on him whom I love?
 Ah! never yet on this earth
 lived one whose heart
 was crushed beneath such anguish!
 Those sacred names of father, of lover,
 I dare not utter or even recall;
 for one, for the other,
 confused, trembling,
 I would weep and pray.
 But my prayers seem
 transformed to blasphemy;
 to suffer is a crime, dark sin to weep.
 In deep night my soul is lost,
 in this anguish I would die.
 Merciful gods, look from on high!
 Pity these tears hopelessly shed.
 Love, mystic power, mystic and dread,
 break my weak heart, let me die!

Libretto Example 3

Aida is torn between her national duty and her personal love. The second part of the solo focuses on her country and her commitment to her father. The vocal lines rise and fall, as does the volume, to create the sensation of waves. She pushes herself almost to the point of hysterics, loud and high, and then calms herself, soft and low in pitch. She is on a roller coaster of emotion. Her vocal line is reinforced by the bass line, while other instruments are tied over the bar line to avoid a strong downbeat. As a result, the music, like Aida, seems a little lost and indecisive.

Più mosso. ($\text{♩} = 100.$)

L'in - sa - na pa - ro - la o Nu - mi sper - de - te! al
 Ye Gods watch - ing o'er me, Those words deem un - spo - ken! A

Musical Example 36 p.54 top line

This musical section, in E minor, is faster and more urgent than the recitative. She is pulled in two opposite direction until she sings out on a high B flat, "Ah! Sventurata! Che dissi?" which means "Ah Unfortunate one, what did I say?"

The third section addresses her love for Radames. It is much calmer, marked andante, and implements her theme from the prelude. The section begins in F major, marked with gentle clarinet and tremolo strings. The melody is very smooth, but the harmony creates agitation by dramatic shifts at key moments. Aida's love shifts into fear for Radames' death. The music shifts into A flat major. The orchestra rises in pitch and volume to support a high A flat. Once again she is overcome with emotion as she sings of her anguish.

In the fourth section, fast, agitated, and melodious, Aida laments her horrible situation. She scolds herself for both being unfaithful to her country and unfaithful to her love. The mood of this section has a new strength to it, almost as if Aida is telling herself to be strong and use logic not emotion. Her rhythm is march-like including many dotted eighth notes. Accented repeated notes sound determined and courageous. But triplet runs in the orchestra establish that nervous agitation and fear remain.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The second system also has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is E minor (three flats). The time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

mu - ta_ de - lit - to è il pian - to a me_ col - pa il so -
 pheming, To suf - fer is a crime, dark sin to

spir_ in not - te cu - pa la men - te è per -
 sigh; Thro' dark - est night I do wan - der as

The fifth section, a prayer aria, uses ethereal, tremolo in the strings. In an expressive cantabile, she asks for mercy from the heavens. Her vocal phrases are long and smooth. Slow triplets heighten lyrical expression. She ends the aria with a plea for mercy. 'Pieta, pieta, del mio soffrir' which means "have mercy for my suffering." The orchestra sound dies away as she finishes and exits the stage.

The shifting form of the solo carefully mirrors the shifts in Aida's own mind. She is lost in a confusing mesh of loyalties and is being emotionally pulled in many different directions at once. The music that Verdi uses carefully exemplifies her dramatic dilemma.

The second scene of Act I is shrouded in religious mystery. Radames is blessed before battle and presented to the almighty Pfta. An exotic melody, very modal in character, accompanies the ceremony and ends act one.

In the first scene of act two, Amneris is being pampered by handmaidens and serenaded by a female chorus. Loud harps add an exotic flair to the chorus. To comply with the French grand opera tradition, Verdi included a ballet. Moorish slave boys dance to a lively tune accented with triangles, cymbals and piccolo. (Although Verdi's goal was to sound Egyptian, he used Turkish instruments to attempt his goal. The result is a generally foreign and exotic sound.)

Dance of young Moorish Slaves.
The female slaves continue
attiring Amneris.

leggerissimo
ppp

When Aida enters, Amneris succeeds in tricking her into believing that Radames is dead.

Aida's extreme reaction to the news proves that she is indeed in love with the general. Amneris reveals her lie and Aida is horrified. Amneris emphasizes the fact that she has found Aida out while Aida cowers with apologies.

A distant military band approaches and interrupts their confrontation. A choral salutation announces the entrance of a great triumphal parade.

The famous triumphal march includes a trio section for trumpets. A grand hymn continues the energy. A military flavor is created with dotted rhythms. The singable melody in duple meter is full of regal pride and march-like using both triplets and dotted rhythms.

The image shows a musical score for two soprano parts. The lyrics are: "Re che il Del-ta E-gypt's roy-al mas-ter is". The score includes vocal lines with lyrics and a piano accompaniment line with musical notation. The lyrics are repeated for both parts.

Musical Example 39 p. 112 whole page

a tempo come prima.

Chorus of People.

ff

Gloria all' E-git-to, ad I - si - de che il sa-cro suol pro - teg - ge! Al
 Glo - ry to I - sis, who from all Ward-eth a - way dis - as - ter! To

SOPRANO II.

Gloria all' E-git-to, ad I - si - de che il sa-cro suol pro - teg - ge! Al
 Glo - ry to I - sis, who from all Ward-eth a - way dis - as - ter! To

TENOR.

Gloria all' E-git-to, ad I - si - de che il sa-cro suol pro - teg - ge! Al
 Glo - ry to I - sis, who from all Ward-eth a - way dis - as - ter! To

BASS.

Gloria all' E-git-to, ad I - si - de che il sa-cro suol pro - teg - ge! Al
 Glo - ry to I - sis, who from all Ward-eth a - way dis - as - ter! To

ff a tempo come prima.

ff

ff

Re che il Del - ta reg - ge, al Re che il Del - ta reg -
 E - gypt's roy - al mas - ter, to E - gypt's roy - al mas -

Re che il Del - ta reg - ge, al Re che il Del - ta reg -
 E - gypt's roy - al mas - ter, to E - gypt's roy - al mas -

Re che il Del - ta reg - ge, al Re che il Del - ta reg - ge
 E - gypt's roy - al mas - ter, to E - gypt's roy - al mas - ter

Re che il Del - ta reg - ge, al Re che il Del - ta reg -
 E - gypt's roy - al mas - ter, to E - gypt's roy - al mas -

Musical Example 39 p. 112 whole page

A parade begins to music of fanfare and muscle. The character of the tune captures victory. The piece continues with a diverting dance interlude marked by various contrasting sections.

Ballabile.
Più mosso. (♩ = 144)

p staccato
 (A group of dancing-girls appears, bringing the spoils of the conquered)

Musical example p. 122

Musical Example 40 p.122

Then a choral reprise continues the festivities with a division of the male and female voices.

After the joyous festivities calm, dark strings introduce the prisoners. The strings play the priests' theme (see Musical Example 2) Aida recognizes her father among the prisoners. She cries out to him, but he quickly deters her from announcing him as the king. The Egyptians do not recognize him and he tells them that the king was slain on the battle field. The enslaved prisoners request mercy from the Egyptians in a respectful plea. Amonasro and then Aida sing a beautiful melody in which they address the king, 'Ma tu re, tu signore possente' which means "But you King, hard, most powerful."

Amonasro requests the pity of the victors. And Radames complies, reiterating the plea. The priests finally compromise with him and decide to free all the others, but hold Aida and her father in captivity. The band and chorus resume their hymn 'Gloria all' Egitto' with a separate vocal parts for the main characters. The priests' intractable melody is especially highlighted.

During the loud chorus, Amonasro, much faster and in the minor key, whispers to Aida that they will soon be revenged.

love. (to Aida)
Amonasro.

Fa cor: de - la tua pa - tria i lie - tie - ven - tia -
 Take heart: there yet some hope is left, Thy coun - try's fate a -

Musical example p. 188

Act 3, which takes place on the banks of the Nile, begins with a flute solo against strings that creates a shimmering mood to imitate moonlight on the flowing river. Pianissimo volume, muted violins and cellos using harmonics support the mystic and beautiful mood.

Amneris and Ramfis go into the temple on the banks of the Nile in order to pray because Amneris and Radames are planned to be married the next day. A male chorus accompanies her entrance into the temple.

Then Aida's theme is heard in the flutes over agitated, but flowing tremolo strings that announce her entrance. Aida is planning to meet Radames outside the temple. She fears that he will say farewell to her. The music sounds stormy with dramatic swells that emphasize her distress.

f

Ni - lo i cu - pi vor - ti - ci
 Ni - lus, thy dark and rush - ing stream

mf

She uses recitative at first. Then her distressed solo turns into the aria 'O Patria Mia.'

Verdi uses music to help develop characters in many of his operas. *Aida* is no exception. The opera's heroine is torn tragically between loyalty to her own country and love for an Egyptian soldier. She laments her predicament in "O, Patria Mia" (O my country).

A lonesome, winding theme accompanies Aida throughout the opera and symbolizes her tragic situation. That theme, played by oboes, begins "O Patria Mia." The stream of legato triplets are a mournful representation of her weeping. Trills interrupt the tearful triplets like a gasp or sniffle.

The music continues into a cantabile, a more singable section, in which Aida fondly remembers her homeland with blue skies and soft breezes. She gains strength from these memories of home. Tremolo strings and a pedal tone support her fervor, but the key of A minor emphasizes her lament. Sixteenth-note rhythms precede the accented beats in measures 14, 15 and 16. These rhythms have a military quality that show Aida's patriotism and remind the listener that Ethiopia and Egypt are at war.

Musical score for "O Patria Mia" from Verdi's *Aida*. The score shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 3/8 time and features a recitative-like melody with lyrics: "più ti ri-ve-drò! oh pa-tria mia, oh pa-tria / more shall I be-hold! My na-tive land, my na-tive". The piano accompaniment includes a tremolo in the right hand and a pedal point in the left hand. Dynamics include piano (*p*) and crescendo (*cresc.*).

Musical example 42

Aida's love for her country reaches a climax as she continues her homeland description. Full chords support her words syllabically. Tremolo strings and pedal tones continue to feed the energy. But her melody, a descending line, continues the mournful feeling.

"O Patria mia, Mai piu ti rivedro" (O, my country, no more shall I behold) is the aria's most important phrase. These words finish the climatic section and return Aida to the tragedy of her situation. It is fragments of this phrase that complete the aria. She weeps part of this phrase in a chromatic ascending line. She echoes the melody from the oboes in the orchestra. The parallel minor key emphasizes her sadness. She continues to weep in a winding duet with the oboe in measures 24-26.

stabile.

O fre-sche
Yes, fra-grant

val-lyo que-to a-sil be-a-to che un di pro
val-leys, your shel-ter-ing bow-ers Once 'twas my

dolciss. *sfumate*

Musical example: Aida's weeping

She returns to the climactic theme in F major for a measure and a half in an attempt to regain her strength and courage, but then she breaks into a tearful sadness as her melody descends by leaps.

She concludes this section as she started it, in mental anguish and despair. Aida remains in her tragic state.

He tells Amonasro suddenly appears and Aida reacts with both surprise and fear, 'Ciel! Mio Padre' literally means, 'heavens! My father.'" They speak in recitative and he tells her that he knows that she loves Radames.

He then begins a sweet cantabile about their beautiful homeland. With no dotted rhythms, this is one of the few times when Amonasro does not sound like a militant general. He describes forests and valleys. His vocal line is harmonized in sweet thirds by the orchestra. And staccato sixteenth-notes in the strings and a repeated A pedal tone maintain an even pulse.

cantabile, dolciss.

Ri - ve - drai le fo - re - ste im - bal - sa - ma - te, le fre - sche
Once a - gain shalt thou on our balm - y for - ests, our ver - dant

dolciss.

Musical Example 43 p. 218

The music changes to a more militant sound when Amonasro begins to discuss the war that rages in his country. Dotted rhythms emphasize the memory of battle.

burst. *pariante*

di. In ar - mi o - ra si de - sta il po - pol
ment. Our peo - ple arm'd are pant - ing For the

Poco più animato. (♩ = 116)

fz *pp*

He tells Aida to find out from Radames where the Egyptian troops will be so that the Ethiopian army can defeat them. She is horrified and refuses. Fortissimo, stormy blasts underscore his anger while pulsing brass echoes the character's racing heartbeats.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows a vocal line in bass clef with lyrics: "dun - E - que! sor - get - te e - gi - zie co - gypt! fierce na - tion Our cit - ies de -". The second system shows a piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs, with dynamic markings *ff* and *mf*.

Musical Example 45 p. 224

She is horrified that he would ask her to trick the man that she loves and he is equally horrified that she would not be loyal to her country. They have a loud fight and he tells her that she is no daughter of his.

Violins play very high and legato cellos calm down the scene while Aida sings 'Pieta' which means 'have mercy' in a pianissimo voice that sounds like crying. Amonasro consoles her by telling her to remember her country. The most important moment in this scene comes at this point. She decides to sacrifice her own happiness in order to do her duty to her country. With tears in her eyes, she says "O patria, o partria, quanto mi costi!" She succumbs to her father's will and agrees to find out the placement of the troops from Radames. Amonasro hides in the bushes.

Radames enters overcome with love for Aida. He sings in soaring lines.

Aida.

Radamès. ...

con trasporto

T'ar-resta, Advancenot!

Pur ti ri - veg - - go, miadolce A - i - da -
 Again I see - - - thee, my own A - i - da -

cresc.

m.s.

m.d. *m.s.*

Musical Example 45 p. 233 2nd line

She acts coy. He continues to try to convince her of his love, but she continues to deny him. He breaks into his love theme a second time, but it is interrupted by the music from the fight between Aida and Amonasro. The orchestra plays military dotted rhythms as Aida tries to convince him to flee to Ethiopia with her. The sad oboe accompanies her pleas. Finally he complies and they sing his love theme together in an excited allegro.

molto riten.

molto riten.

Vie-ni me - - co, insiem fug -
 Fol-low me, - - - to - geth - er

gia - mo que - sta ter - - - ra di do -
 fly - ing, Where all love doth still a -

Vie-ni me - - co, insiem fug -
 Fol-low me, - - - to - geth - er

gia - mo que - sta ter - - - ra di do -
 fly - ing, Where all love doth still a -

Musical Example 45 p. 248

He tells her the secret of where the troops are going to march through, and Amonasro jumps out of the bushes. In a hectic and high-energy terzetto, Radames scolds himself for telling the secret plans of the army to the other side. At the same time, Amonasro tells Radames not to worry that he will inherit the Ethiopian throne. And Aida tries to calm both men down. The result is a spirited ensemble.

At about that moment Amneris leaves the temple and finds Radames and Aida. She comprehends the situation quickly and calls Radames a traitor and he is arrested.

In Act IV, Verdi develops the character of Amneris, and she becomes more sympathetic. Amneris still loves Radames and when she actually thinks that he is innocent, she blames jealousy for making her so angry that she called Radames a traitor. She calls him to her, and she offers to get him out of his trouble if he will denounce Aida. He says he would rather face death and the trial scene begins.

The priests' descending theme begins the scene as Amneris sings breathlessly. She wonders who can save Radames from the wrath of the unbending priests. The priests begin with a monophonic chant. The actual trial is simple; they ask him three times to defend himself and when he does not, they sentence him to death.

Amneris is furious with the priests and she condemns them in an angry tirade. Amneris is an interesting character because she is both despicable and sympathetic. She is selfish and spoiled by her position in Egyptian court. In contrast, she truly loves Radames, and her love leads her to be unselfish and forgiving.

The priests ignore her screams at them for being heartless. She sings in angry accented triplets that sound like sobs through tears. Furious strings play loudly under her in oscillating thirty second notes

molto accentato.

Sa - cer - do - - ti: com - pi - ste un de - lit - to! Ti - gri in - fa - mi di san - gue as - se -
Priests of I - sis, your sentence is o - dious! Ti - gers, ev - er ex - ult - ing in

Lo stesso movimento.
col canto

ff **ppp**

Musical Example 46 p. 288

Like the other characters of the opera, Amneris' life is dramatically shaped by the political structure under which she lives. Verdi may be arguing that absolute rule and religious rule is unhealthy both for the citizens, Aida and Radames, and for the rulers themselves including Amneris.

But in the end, even Amneris, who has everything to gain from supporting the priests and who would benefit from their crooked system, denounces them. She curses the unbending priests.

and PRIESTS

Radames, we have decided your fate;
you will die the death of the disgraced;
beneath the altar of the outraged god
you will find a living tomb.

AMNERIS

A living tomb!
Oh, the wretches!
Ever vengeful, bloodthirsty and blind,
they call themselves ministers
of heaven!

PRIESTS

(from the judgment chamber)
Traitor! Traitor! Traitor!

Libretto Example 4

AMNERIS

Earthly justice and heaven's you insult,
your sentence falls on the guiltless.
No! He is no traitor, etc.
Have pity, mercy!

RAMFIS and PRIESTS

He shall die!
He is a traitor, etc.
Traitor! Traitor!

AMNERIS

(as Ramfis and the priests go out)
Impious body! A curse upon you!
Heaven's vengeance will fall on you!
Curses on you!

AMNERIS

Priests: you have committed a crime!
Tigers ever exulting in bloodshed,
earthly justice and heaven's you insult,
your sentence falls on the guiltless.

RAMFIS, then PRIESTS

He is a traitor!
He shall die!

AMNERIS
(to Ramfis)

Priest: you know you have
inflicted death
on one whom I once treasured.
May a broken heart's curses and
his blood
fall on your guilty head.

RAMFIS, then PRIESTS

He is a traitor!
He shall die!

When Radames is placed in a tomb, at first he appears to be alone, but then Aida steps out of the shadows. She has come to die with the man she loves. Ethereal strings drip angel soft harmonics as the two sing of their hope for heaven. Amneris prays above the grave in a weeping pieta and the two lovers die unjustly.

Aida sacrifices herself because she can find no middle ground between her nationalistic duty and her love for Radames. She does her what her country requires of her in life, and she commits herself to Radames and dies for her love.

In *Aida*, Verdi wrote an opera that captures the hopelessness of life, both in the imagination and in real life, as shown in Italian history. To be faithful to what is right, regardless of the results- including death- is Verdi's prayer.

And Verdi certainly fulfilled his own wish. Verdi often had to fight to get his operas past Austrian censors. Despite the fear of punishment, he insisted on having them preformed. And Verdi's private life was no different. He was as much an integrated and just man at home as he was on the stage.

His goal was a unified Italy, and his goal was certainly achieved. Verdi may have been born a Frenchman, and lived under the Austrian flag. But he died an Italian.

His operas were a cultural adhesive and a political speech. His work was both what the people of the new Italy wanted and needed. And he became a cultural icon.

Verdi celebrates Aida and Riccardo as heroes. Their characters are models of Italian heroes, committed to Italy above all else. But Verdi too is an Italian hero.

Upon Verdi's death in 1901, a crowd of 200,000 Italians gathered in the streets of Milan to celebrate him. They mourned the loss of the man that politically inspired a splintered region to

bind together and become a new nation. But they also mourned the man that mastered musical techniques to create beautiful melodies that resound in the hearts of not only Italians, but anyone who hears them. He used opera to communicate important political messages despite Austrian censors. And he encouraged a group of divided people to become a nation. It is no surprise that 200,000 Italians attended his funeral. As the procession past through the streets of Milan, the crowd spontaneously burst into song. They sang the chorus from *Nabucco*. They used his medium and his words to honor him as a great politician, a great musician, and a great man.

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