

Senior Citizens Music Appreciation Program

Date: July 7, 2025

Time: 10:30-noon

**Bill Fernekes email:**

[bill41@comcast.net](mailto:bill41@comcast.net)

Program Website: <https://williamrfernekes.com>

## Verdi Rarities

### I. Announcements

- A. Blownburg Band Concerts: Hopewell Train Station, 7 pm (rain cancels)  
July 14, 28, Aug. 4

### II. Verdi Before Rigoletto

- A. Giuseppe Verdi wrote 16 operas before Rigoletto (1851), yet many of them are either unknown or poorly known to the general public and music lovers. Today's session will use extracts from 8 of those 16 operas to trace Verdi's development into one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's musical giants
- B. Stylistic Development
  - 1. Verdi did not compose in a vacuum—he was influenced by his predecessors, notably Bellini, Rossini and Donizetti, from whom he learned the importance of dramatic structure, creation of long melodic lines and to carry on the tradition of “prima voce”—in other words, the primacy of the voice in opera. This latter tradition would eventually be contrasted with a different tradition, primarily developed in Germany by Richard Wagner and his adherents, which viewed the orchestra as equal to or more important than the voice in moving forward the story and action in opera.
  - 2. Julian Budden in his magisterial three volume work *The Operas of Verdi* summarized Verdi's ability to absorb traditions and ideas from his predecessors while being an innovator as well.
    - a. “To sum up: throughout these early years Verdi both explored and consolidated. He improved year by year his mastery of the traditional components of Italian opera—the aria, the cabaletta, the stretta and so forth yet he also seized at plots which gave him the opportunity of bypassing them and creating new forms. To the first tendency we owe *Il Trovatore* and *Il Corsaro*, to the second *Rigoletto* and the original *Macbeth*.”  
(Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi, Volume 1: From Oberto to Rigoletto*, London:

Oxford University Press 1973, p. 40)

- b. Definitions: (Source: Don Michael Randel, editor, The Harvard Dictionary of Music, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003)
  - i. Aria—a self-contained composition for solo voice, usually with instrumental accompaniment and occurring within the context of a larger form such as opera, oratorio or cantata. In early 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian opera, the “double aria” became a standard form—beginning with the scena, followed by the cantabile lyrical section, then an interlude changing the mood (tempo di mezzo) and finally the cabaletta, usually faster and at times repeated with choral interjections.
  - ii. Cabaletta—concluding portion of an aria or a duet with several sections.
  - iii. Stretto—a climactic, concluding section in a faster tempo.

### III. Today's Recordings

- A. *Oberto, Conde di San Bonifacio*: Tenor aria “Ciel che feci!”, Carlo Begonzi: 31 Verdi Tenor Arias, Philips 432 486-2
- B. *Nabucco*: Chorus, “Va Pensiero”, Act Three, Nabucco, conducted by Giuseppe Sinopoli, Deutsche Oper Berlin and soloists, DG 410 512-2
- C. *I Due Foscari*: Aria and Cabaletta, “Brezza del Suol Natio”, Act One, Jose Carreras in I Due Foscari, Conducted by Lamberto Gardelli, ORF Symphony Orchestra and Chorus and soloists, Philips 475 8697
- D. *I Masnadieri*: Duet between Amalia and Massimiliano, Act One, I Masnadieri, conducted by Lamberto Gardelli, New Philharmonia Orchestra, Ambrosian Singers and Soloists, Philips 422 423-2
- E. *Macbeth*: Maria Callas as Lady Macbeth, “Vieni! t’afretta! Act One, Followed by brief scena and the cabaletta, in Macbeth, conducted by Victor De Sabata (live performance), La Scala Milan, 1952, EMI 0777 7 64944 2 5
- F. *Il Corsaro*: Seid’s aria and cabaletta, Gian-Piero Mastromei, “Cento leggiadre vergini” in Il Corsaro, conducted by Lamberto Gardelli, New Philharmonia Orchestra, Ambrosian Singers and soloists, Philips 426 118-2
- G. *Rigoletto*: Act One (DVD) Metropolitan Opera, conducted by James Levine with Luciano Pavarotti, Christiane Ede-Pierre, Louis Quilico

IV. Online Resources

- A. Met Opera at Home—Performance during COVID of “Va Pensiero” from *Nabucco* [https://youtu.be/l7D9BZ-sAVs?si=LsSU\\_jLWxuXSLeN2](https://youtu.be/l7D9BZ-sAVs?si=LsSU_jLWxuXSLeN2)
- B. *I Due Foscari*, Renato Bruson, baritone aria,  
[https://youtu.be/0yL2i9TKrRk?si=BWL\\_uxvJQFYHQEeu](https://youtu.be/0yL2i9TKrRk?si=BWL_uxvJQFYHQEeu)
- C. *I Masnadieri*, Marina Rebeka, soprano aria,  
[https://youtu.be/kll14bup7Qg?si=EB\\_1jrE-W--jH-u7](https://youtu.be/kll14bup7Qg?si=EB_1jrE-W--jH-u7)
- D. *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata*, chorus,  
<https://youtu.be/Z4Waa1U0eYE?si=o7gUYb0ldvOpJc3c>
- E. *Ernani*, Maria Callas, soprano aria (1962, recital at Hamburg Opera House)