

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIXTH SEASON

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Riccardo Muti Zell Music Director

Yo-Yo Ma Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant

Thursday, June 22, 2017, at 8:00

Friday, June 23, 2017, at 1:30

Saturday, June 24, 2017, at 8:00

Sunday, June 25, 2017, at 3:00

Riccardo Muti Conductor

Riccardo Zanellato Bass

Chicago Symphony Chorus

Duain Wolfe Director

Chicago Children's Choir

Josephine Lee Artistic Director

Verdi

Overture to *Nabucco*

Verdi

Four Choruses

Gli arredi festivi FROM *Nabucco*

Va, pensiero FROM *Nabucco*

Vedi! Le fosche notturne FROM *Il trovatore*

Patria oppressa! FROM *Macbeth*

CHICAGO SYMPHONY CHORUS

Verdi

Overture to *I vespri siciliani*

INTERMISSION

Puccini

Intermezzo from *Manon Lescaut*

Mascagni

Intermezzo from *Cavalleria rusticana*

Boito

Prologue to *Mefistofele*

RICCARDO ZANELLATO

CHICAGO SYMPHONY CHORUS

CHICAGO CHILDREN'S CHOIR

The appearance of this evening's guest artists is made possible with the generous sponsorship of Josef and Margot Lakonishok.

Thursday evening's concert is generously sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Earl Rusnak.

Friday afternoon's performance is generously endowed by Elaine Frank in loving memory of Zollie Frank.

The appearance of the Chicago Symphony Chorus is made possible by a generous gift from Jim and Kay Mabie.

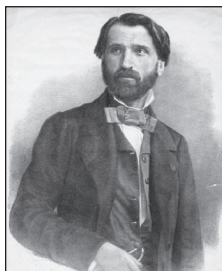
This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Giuseppe Verdi

Born October 10, 1813; Le Roncole, near Busseto, Italy

Died January 27, 1901; Milan, Italy

Overture to *Nabucco*



Early in his career, Verdi became the most talked about composer in Italy. By the end of his long and astonishingly productive life, he was probably the most beloved composer in the world. The range of his life could not have

been greater—from his childhood in a dirt-floored house in Roncole (more of a crossroads than a village) to a retirement marked by the kind of prestige, wealth, and international fame few composers ever enjoy.

“With *Nabucco*,” Verdi wrote, “my career can be said to have begun.” *Nabucco* was his third opera and his first big success. Coming quickly after the dispiriting failure of *Un giorno di regno* (King for a day)—when Verdi seriously considered giving up composition for good, before he had even

written a single work that would keep his name alive—*Nabucco* marked the turning point in his fortunes. From that moment on, not every opera he composed found easy success with the public, but each one drew crowds, demanded attention, and moved him closer to reaching his ideal form of musical theater. In Italy, Verdi was quickly recognized as the voice of the future.

The Overture to *Nabucco* was hastily written after the opera was finished, scarcely in time for the premiere. It is based on themes from the opera, including the big melody of “Va, pensiero” (the great chorus of the Hebrew slaves performed later in this concert), which is never stated full-out, but is instead previewed and glimpsed, in order not to spoil its ultimate effect in the opera. It resounds with the confidence and assurance of a composer who has found his voice. ■

Above: **Verdi**, lithograph by Roberto Focosi, ca. 1841

COMPOSED

1841

FIRST PERFORMANCE

March 9, 1842; Milan, Italy

INSTRUMENTATION

two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

8 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

February 23 and 24, 1956, Orchestra Hall. Fritz Reiner conducting

August 1, 1993, Ravinia Festival. Carlo Rizzi conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCES

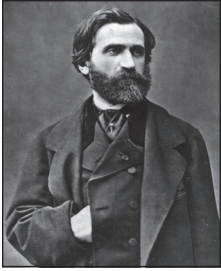
July 26, 2002, Ravinia Festival. Miguel Harth-Bedoya conducting

September 21, 2013, Orchestra Hall. Riccardo Muti conducting

January 27, 2017, Alte Oper, Frankfurt, Germany. Riccardo Muti conducting (performed as an encore)

Giuseppe Verdi

Four Choruses



There was no music at Verdi's funeral, in keeping with his own wishes. A month after his death, when a procession carrying his remains to their final resting place slowly passed through the streets of Milan, they were jammed with

thousands of grieving spectators, and the crowd sang "Va, pensiero," the popular chorus from *Nabucco*. It was a fitting gesture, for at the heart of Verdi's great achievement throughout his creative life was his uncanny ability to stir mass emotion. And it was with choral music that he most dramatically gave voice to the thoughts and feelings of his people, and by extension, all people. In Verdi's hands, the great choruses from the operas became a vehicle for important statements that were often politically daring and inflammatory.

For Verdi, choruses were characters in the drama. The anonymous people listed at the bottom of the cast page—the usual

roundup of knights, ladies-in-waiting, deputies, maidservants, villagers, heralds; or sometimes simply "men, women, and children of the populace"—emerge as real people once the music begins. Verdi spent a lifetime writing for chorus. The introductory choral number was part of the operatic tradition he inherited from Rossini, and indeed music for chorus opens Verdi's first opera, *Oberto*. Sixty years later, he put his pen to paper for the last time to give us his final choral works, the Four Sacred Pieces. In between, Verdi transformed the chorus from a corporate entity into a vehicle for deeply personal thoughts. And although he frequently complained about the quality of the choruses in the opera houses where he worked, he continued to write inventive and increasingly complex music for them to sing. Ultimately, Verdi would take the chorus out of costume and treat it simply as the voice of mankind, in the Requiem Mass, creating a work as compelling as anything he ever put on the stage.

"Gli arredi festivi," the large opening chorus from *Nabucco*, shows how, even at the earliest stage in his career, Verdi could put his individual stamp on the traditional opera chorus. This is a carefully planned complex of contrasting sections

Above: **Verdi**, ca. 1850

Gli arredi festivi FROM *Nabucco*

Va, pensiero FROM *Nabucco*

COMPOSED

1841

FIRST PERFORMANCE

March 9, 1842; Milan, Italy

INSTRUMENTATION

mixed chorus, two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, four trombones, two harps, timpani, percussion, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

10 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

November 2, 3, and 4, 1989, Orchestra Hall. Chicago Symphony Chorus (Margaret Hillis, director; Terry Edwards, guest chorus master), Sir Georg Solti (November 2 and 3) and Kenneth Jean (November 4) conducting

August 1, 1993, Ravinia Festival. Chicago Symphony Chorus (Duain Wolfe, guest chorus director), Carlo Rizzi conducting ("Va, pensiero")

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCE

September 21, 2013, Orchestra Hall. Chicago Symphony Chorus (Duain Wolfe, director), Riccardo Muti conducting ("Va, pensiero")

CSO RECORDING

1989. Chicago Symphony Chorus (Margaret Hillis, director; Terry Edwards, guest chorus master), Sir Georg Solti conducting. London

that move toward a grand climax, as the Israelites pray for help in fighting Nabucco, the king of Babylon, while his army advances. Verdi begins with a powerful, thunderous chorus—a hint of the famous storm music that will open *Otello* forty-five years later. Then, in music for unison basses over a brass chorale, the Levites call on the temple virgins to pray for deliverance; their reply is accompanied by harp and winds. The chorus ends with all the forces reunited in their powerful plea.

The prototype and best known of Verdi's choruses remains "Va, pensiero" from *Nabucco*. At the La Scala premiere of the opera on March 9, 1842, this powerful chorus of the Hebrew slaves struck such a resonant chord—particularly at a time when Italians were struggling for freedom from foreign control—that, despite the conventional police prohibition of the time, it had to be repeated. By the time of Verdi's death, "Va, pensiero" had become a kind of Italian national

anthem, and the original message of hope for the Hebrew exiles soon spoke of salvation for all mankind. Despite its universality, this was clearly deeply personal music, with a melody that seems to come straight from the heart. The hallmarks of this hauntingly simple music—a long arching melody over throbbing triplets, unison at first and then exploding into choral harmony, to unforgettable effect, only with the third stanza—have often been imitated, but never surpassed.

"Vedi! Le fosche notturne" from *Il trovatore* has always been unusually popular, if for no other reason than the unexpected and exotic sound of clanging anvils, which ultimately gave the chorus its nickname—the anvil chorus. But, in conjuring a bizarre sound world for this gypsy chorus—gypsies were anvil-bearing tinkers by trade in the Middle Ages—Verdi has also written oddly short phrases, unanticipated shifts in accents, and a meandering key scheme, in addition to borrowing the rhythmic panache and insistent triangle

Vedi! Le fosche notturne FROM *Il trovatore*

COMPOSED
1852–53

FIRST PERFORMANCE
January 19, 1853; Rome, Italy

INSTRUMENTATION
mixed chorus, flute and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, four trombones, timpani, percussion, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
3 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
November 2, 3, and 4, 1989, Orchestra Hall. Chicago Symphony Chorus (Margaret Hillis, director; Terry Edwards, guest chorus master), Sir Georg Solti (November 2 and 3) and Kenneth Jean (November 4) conducting

CSO RECORDING
1989. Chicago Symphony Chorus (Margaret Hillis, director; Terry Edwards, guest chorus master), Sir Georg Solti conducting. London

Patria oppressa! FROM *Macbeth*

COMPOSED
1847, revised 1865

FIRST PERFORMANCE
April 19, 1865; Paris, France

INSTRUMENTATION
mixed chorus, flute and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, four trombones, timpani, percussion, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME
6 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
June 26, 1981, Ravinia Festival. Chicago Symphony Chorus (Margaret Hillis, director), James Levine conducting (complete opera)

November 2, 3, and 4, 1989, Orchestra Hall. Chicago Symphony Chorus (Margaret Hillis, director; Terry Edwards, guest chorus master), Sir Georg Solti (November 2 and 3) and Kenneth Jean (November 4) conducting

MOST RECENT CSO PERFORMANCES
September 28, October 1, 4, and 6, 2013, Orchestra Hall. Chicago Symphony Chorus (Duain Wolfe, director), Riccardo Muti conducting (complete opera)

CSO RECORDING
1989. Chicago Symphony Chorus (Margaret Hillis, director; Terry Edwards, guest chorus master), Sir Georg Solti conducting. London

flourishes of the so-called Turkish style familiar from Mozart and Beethoven. With its potent melody and utterly individual sound effects, Verdi paints an unforgettable gypsy portrait in a few quick pages of music. (And Verdi is a master of characterization: these real gypsies don't sound anything like the tame, masquerading gypsies who show up at Flora's party in *La traviata*.)

Throughout Verdi's career, the patriotic chorus was one of his signature numbers. In 1847, before he had written a note of *Macbeth*, Verdi told his librettist to pay particular attention to the text for a chorus of Scottish exiles at the beginning of act 4, "the one moment of real pathos in the opera." When Verdi revised *Macbeth* for Paris in 1865, he decided to replace the original version of "Patria oppressa!" with the magnificent chorus performed in this concert. This is a work of great

originality, beginning with the unusual opening brass chorale over timpani rolls. Throughout, the harmony is bold and unorthodox, and the splendor and subtlety of the choral writing looks forward to the Requiem and the Four Sacred Pieces.

What we hear in these four works is not so much a sequence of operatic choruses as a gallery of people. From the beginning, Verdi understood human nature better than most composers, and he could capture character and spirit in a few notes. He was not necessarily interested in the great figures of myth or legend, but he was fascinated by people so commonplace that they might be mistaken for you or me. People have always found themselves—or their loved ones, or their adversaries—in the pages of Verdi's operas. That was his genius. ■

GLI ARREDI FESTIVI FROM NABUCCO **(Act 1, Scene 1)**

Interior of the Temple of Solomon. Hebrews, Levites, and Hebrew virgins

All

Gli arredi festivi giù cadano infranti,
il popolo di Giuda di lutto
s'ammanti!
Ministro dell'ira del Nume sdegnato
il rege d'Assiria su noi già piombò!
Di barbare schiere l'atroce ululato
nel santo delubro del Nume tuonò!

The festive decorations fall down broken,
the people of Judah clothe themselves
in mourning!
Minister of an angry God's wrath,
the King of Assyria has fallen on us now!
The barbarous howlings of barbarian legions
have thundered in the holy temple of the Lord!

Levites

I candidi veli, fanciulle, squarciate,
le supplici braccia gridando levate;
d'un labbro innocente la viva preghiera
è grato profumo che sale al Signor.
Pregate, fanciulle! Per voi della fiera
nemica falange sia nullo il furor!

Rend your white veils, maidens,
raise your arms in supplication;
the fervent prayer of innocent lips
is a pleasing perfume that rises to the Lord.
Pray, maidens! Through you may the fury
of the savage enemy legions be as nothing!

Virgins

Gran Nume, che voli sull'ale
dei venti,
che il folgor sprigiona dai
nembi frementi,
disperdi, distruggi d'Assiria le schiere,
di David la figlia ritorna al goior.

Almighty God, who flies on the wings
of the wind,
who frees the lighting flash from the
quivering cloud,
disperse, destroy the legions of Assyria,
let the daughter of David rejoice once more.

Peccammo! . . . Ma in cielo le nostre
preghiere
ottengan pietade, perdono al fallir! . . .

We have sinned! But in heaven may
our prayers
obtain mercy and forgiveness for our frailty!

All

Deh! l'empio non gridi,
con baldo blasfema:

Oh, let not the wicked cry
with blasphemous presumption:

Hebrews and Levites

“Il Dio d’Israello si cela per tema?”

“Does the God of Israel hide himself for fear?”

All

Non far che i tuoi figli divengano preda
d’un folle che sprezza l’eterno poter!
non far che sul trono davidico sieda
fra gl’idoli stolti l’assiro stranier!

Do not let your children fall prey
to a madman who scorns your everlasting might!
Do not permit the Assyrian foe to sit
among his false idols on the throne of David!

VA, PENSIERO FROM *NABUCCO* (Act 3, Scene 2)

The banks of the Euphrates. Hebrews in chains, at forced labor

Hebrews

Va, pensiero, sull’ali dorate;
va, ti posa sui clivi, sui colli,
ove olezzano tepide e molli
l’aure dolci del suolo natal!
Del Giordano le rive saluta,
di Sionne le torri atterrate . . .
Oh mia patria sì bella e perduta!
Oh, membranza sì cara
e fatal!

Arpa d’or dei fatidici vati,
perché muta dal salice pendì?
Le memorie nel petto raccendi,
ci favella del tempo che fu!
O simile di Sòlima ai fati
traggi un suono di crudo lamento,
o t’ispiri il Signore un concerto
che ne infonda al patire virtù!

Fly thoughts on wings of gold,
go settle upon the slopes and the hills,
where, soft and mild, the sweet airs
of our native land smell fragrant!
Greet the banks of Jordan
and Zion’s toppled towers . . .
Oh, my country so lovely and lost!
Oh, remembrance so dear
and fraught with despair!

Golden harp of the prophetic seers,
why dost thou hang mute upon the willow?
Rekindle our bosom’s memories,
and speak of times gone by!
Mindful of Jerusalem’s fate,
either give fourth an air of sad lamentation,
or else allow the Lord to imbue us
with fortitude to bear our sufferings!

Text (Choruses from *Nabucco*): **Temistocle Solera, after the play *Nabuchodonosor* by Auguste Anicet-Bourgeois and Francis Cornue and the ballet *Nabuccodonosor* by Antonio Cortesi**

VEDI! LE FOSCHE NOTTURNE FROM IL TROVATORE

(Act 2, Scene 1)

It is dawn. A ruined house on the slopes of a mountain in Biscay, inside of which, partly visible, a great fire is burning.

Gypsies

Vedi! le fosche notturne spoglie
de' cieli sveste l'immensa vòlta;
sembra una vedova che alfin si toglie
I bruni panni ond'era involta.

See! The heavens' great vault
removes its gloomy nighttime tatters;
like a widow who takes off at last
the dark clothes that enfolded her.

(The men, picking up their tools)

All'opra, all'opra! Dagli. Martella.

To work, to work! At it. Hammer.

Chi del gitano i giorni abbellà?
La zingarella!

Who brightens the gypsy man's day?
The gypsy maid!

(The men briefly interrupt their work, saying to the women):

Versami un tratto; lena e coraggio
il corpo e l'anima traggon dal bere.

Pour me a draught; the body and soul draw
strength and courage from drinking.

(The women pour wine into crude cups)

Oh guarda, guarda! . . . Del sole un raggio
brilla più vivido nel tuo bicchiere!
All'opra, all'opra! . . .

Oh, look, look! . . . A ray of the sun
sparkles brighter in my (your) glass!
To work, to work! . . .

Chi del gitano i giorni abbellà?
La zingarella!

Who brightens the gypsy man's day?
The gypsy maid!

PATRIA OPPRESSA! FROM MACBETH

(Act 4, Scene 1)

*A deserted spot on the borders of England and Scotland, the forest of Birnam in the distance.
Scottish refugees, men, women, and children*

Patria oppressa! il dolce nome
no, di madre aver non puoi,
or che tutta a' figli tuoi
sei conversa in un avel.
D'orfanelli e di piangenti
chi lo sposo e chi la prole
al venir del nuovo sole
s'alza un grido e fere il ciel.
A quel grido il ciel risponde
quasi voglia impietosito
propagar per l'infinito,
patria oppressa, il tuo dolor.
Suona a morto ognor la squilla,
ma nessuno audace è tanto
che pur doni un vano pianto
a chi soffre ed a chi muor.
Patria oppressa!
Patria mia, oh patria!

Oppressed country! The sweet name
of mother, no, cannot be thine,
now that for thy children
thou art converted all to a tomb!
The cry of orphans and bereaved,
lamenting the loss of husbands or children
at the coming of each new morn,
flies up and wounds the heavens.
To that cry heaven makes response
as if, moved to pity, it would
propagate in the infinite
thy sufferings, oppressed country!
The bell eternally tolls to death,
but no man makes so bold
as to shed a useless tear
for those who suffer and those who die.
Oppressed country!
My country, oh my country!

Text: **Francesco Maria Piave and Andrea Maffei, after Shakespeare**

Giuseppe Verdi

Overture to *I vespri siciliani*



I vespri siciliani (The Sicilian vespers) was composed following Verdi's great mid-century trio of *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, and *La traviata*, and it was followed within the next two years by one of the composer's most adventuresome

works, the first version of *Simon Boccanegra*. Although *I vespri siciliani* has never achieved the popularity of its immediate neighbors (*Boccanegra*, admittedly, only in its much later revision), this is the work of the mature Verdi, a composer with an unrivaled sense of music and drama. Verdi's grand opera—it was premiered in French in Paris in 1855, translated into Italian in

1861, and has since become better known as *I vespri siciliani*—deals with the French occupation of the island of Sicily during the thirteenth century, and the uprising by the people of Palermo on Easter Sunday 1282. (The vesper bells signal the start of the uprising.)

The monumental overture is his last composed according to the post-Rossini, sonata-form blueprint. Verdi begins with a slow introduction, haunted by premonitions of tragedy. The allegro that follows explodes with music of high drama and is filled with soaring lyrical melody—hallmarks of all Verdi's scores, yet characteristics that are personalized, tailored to the specific nature and setting of each story, and made to seem fresh and utterly individual time and time again. ■

Above: **Verdi, carte de visite (calling card) by André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri, Paris, ca. 1855**

COMPOSED

1855

FIRST PERFORMANCE

June 13, 1855; Paris, France

INSTRUMENTATION

one flute and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones and tuba, percussion, strings

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

9 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

July 27, 1939, Ravinia Festival. Artur Rodzinski conducting

April 4 and 5, 1957, Orchestra Hall. Fritz Reiner conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCES

June 29, 1996, Ravinia Festival. Christoph Eschenbach conducting

September 21, 2013, Orchestra Hall. Riccardo Muti conducting

January 23, 2017; Musikvereinsaal, Vienna, Austria. Riccardo Muti conducting (performed as an encore)

In Memoriam



PHOTO BY DAN DRY

PHILIP GOSSETT (1941–2017)

These performances are dedicated to the memory of musicologist and historian, Philip Gossett.

A former member of the Board of Trustees of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association and professor of musicology at the University of Chicago and Sapienza University of Rome, Philip Gossett was renowned as a specialist in nineteenth-century Italian opera. His passing is cause for great sadness in the music world, but his work and contributions in the field of musicology represent a treasure that will remain forever.

Giacomo Puccini

Born December 22, 1858; Lucca, Italy

Died November 29, 1924; Brussels, Belgium

Intermezzo from *Manon Lescaut*

Pietro Mascagni

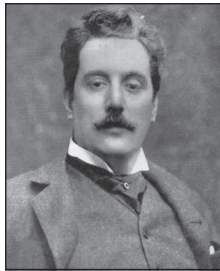
Born December 7, 1863; Livorno, Italy

Died August 2, 1945; Rome, Italy

Intermezzo from *Cavalleria rusticana*

In the six years between Verdi's final operatic masterpieces, *Otello* and *Falstaff*, two new contenders to the throne emerged: Giacomo Puccini and Pietro Mascagni. Before they became popular and famous enough to consider themselves rivals, they were friends and roommates at the Milan Conservatory in the early 1880s. (Perpetually short on money, they cooked together in their room, against house rules.)

Mascagni drew attention first. His earliest completed opera, *Cavalleria rusticana*, was a phenomenal success at its premiere in Rome in 1890. It was soon staged to great acclaim at all the major opera houses in Europe and in the United States. In July 1891, the Berlin correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune* wrote: "Never perhaps in the entire history of operatic history has a work by an unknown composer been



performed in every musical center of importance in Europe in less than six months after its initial production." The reporter called Mascagni "a recently unknown but now almost world-famous Italian youth." (Mascagni was twenty-six years old.) On September 30 of that year—only days before the inaugural concerts of the Chicago Orchestra (as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra was called at that point)—Chicago became the second U.S. city to stage *Cavalleria*

rusticana (the U.S. premiere had been given in Philadelphia earlier in the month). Little more than two weeks later, the new Chicago Orchestra, in the second program it ever played, performed the now-famous Intermezzo from *Cavalleria rusticana* at a concert in Rockford, Illinois, on October 19 (the Orchestra's first concerts in Chicago's Auditorium Theatre had

Above: Studio portraits of Puccini and Mascagni

Intermezzo from *Manon Lescaut*

COMPOSED

1892–93

trombones and tuba, timpani,
percussion, strings

FIRST PERFORMANCE

February 1, 1893; Turin, Italy

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

6 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION

three flutes and piccolo, two oboes
and english horn, two clarinets
and bass clarinet, two bassoons,
four horns, three trumpets, three

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES

November 23, 1957, Orchestra Hall.
Fritz Reiner conducting

July 7, 1959, Ravinia Festival. Walter
Hendl conducting

MOST RECENT

CSO PERFORMANCES

June 29, 1996, Ravinia Festival.
Christoph Eschenbach conducting

June 9, 2007, Orchestra Hall.
Emmanuel Villaume conducting

These are the Chicago Symphony
Orchestra's first subscription
concert performances.

taken place on October 16 and 17). And on December 4, when the touring Metropolitan Opera produced Mascagni's opera for the first time, at the Auditorium, the Chicago Orchestra was in the pit. "The orchestra played excellently as a rule," the *Tribune* reported, "Mascagni's effective and unusually beautiful orchestral score being accorded a careful and finished interpretation." The intermezzo was so enthusiastically received that it had to be repeated before the opera could continue, as had often happened in European opera houses.

In 1893, with the premiere of *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini also became a new name to reckon with. *Manon Lescaut* was not his first opera—both its predecessors, *Le villi* and *Edgar*, had floundered at the box office—but it was his earliest great success, and the first in a series of his exceptionally popular stage works. Since La Scala was already fully booked with rehearsals for Verdi's long-awaited *Falstaff* by the time Puccini finished his score, the premiere of *Manon Lescaut* was set for the Teatro Regio in Turin. It was not only a hit, but also the greatest triumph of Puccini's career—an unqualified success with both the critics and the public, more so even than the operas that followed over the next decade: *La bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*. Ricordi, the publisher for both Puccini and Verdi, cleverly offered Verdi's *Falstaff*, which opened eight days later, in a package deal with *Manon Lescaut*, insisting that opera houses contract to present both. Little



Postcard from the poster printed by Ricordi for the premiere of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* on February 1, 1893. Teatro Regio, Turin. Art by Vespasiano Bignami

more than a year after the premiere, newspapers reported that Puccini's opera had been performed 338 times in Italy and thirty times in South America. *Manon Lescaut* and *La bohème* were both introduced to Chicago in April 1898—the first Puccini operas staged in the city.

The two intermezzos performed this week—one from each of these operas—are among the few purely orchestral pieces by either Mascagni or Puccini. George Bernard Shaw wisely pointed out the symphonic element in the instrumental writing in the first act of *Manon Lescaut*, but it is the intermezzo—essentially a prelude to act 3—that reveals Puccini's gift for imbuing purely orchestral music with a sense of theater. This is music of movement and great drama—it fills in a large

Intermezzo from *Cavalleria rusticana*

COMPOSED
1890

FIRST PERFORMANCE
May 17, 1890; Rome, Italy

INSTRUMENTATION
one flute and piccolo, two oboes,
organ, strings

**APPROXIMATE
PERFORMANCE TIME**
4 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCES
October 19, 1891; Grand Opera
House, Rockford, Illinois. Theodore
Thomas conducting
December 15 and 16, 1893,
Auditorium Theatre. Theodore
Thomas conducting

July 1, 1937, Ravinia Festival. Gennaro
Papi conducting

**MOST RECENT
CSO PERFORMANCES**
July 2, 1976, Ravinia Festival. James
Levine conducting
June 9, 2007, Orchestra Hall.
Emmanuel Villaume conducting



Depiction of a scene from the premiere of *Cavalleria rusticana* on May 17, 1890. Teatro Costanzi, Rome

gap in the story that occurs between acts 2 and 3, beginning with Manon's imprisonment for theft and her journey to Le Havre, where she is to be deported to America. With its dark mood—the brooding opening for solo strings is particularly effective—and urgent melody, it is a masterpiece of compressed emotion and implied action. Built from recalled themes taken from acts 1 and 2, it also stands alone as a small but powerful piece of orchestral writing.

The intermezzo from Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* does not represent a scene change or a shift in time. Instead, it converts all the tension accumulated in the drama up to this point into a necessary moment of repose and pent-up passion. Its big singing melody, as famous as any in music, grows more insistent until a single repeated note seems to carry the weight of the entire tragedy. In the opera, the intermezzo marks the end of the Easter church service against which the story has been unfolding—hence the presence of the organ in the instrumentation—but the underlying intensity suggests that the drama is far from over. Mascagni's intermezzo has become popular far out of proportion to its modest dimensions (it has often been used in film, from the opening credits of Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull* to the

- 1813 Birth of Giuseppe Verdi, Le Roncole, near Busseto, October 9
- 1842 Verdi: *Nabucco* premiere, La Scala, Milan, March 9
- Birth of Arrigo Boito, Padua, February 24
- 1847 Verdi: *Macbeth*, premiere of original version, Florence, March 14
- 1853 Verdi: *Il trovatore* premiere, Rome, January 19
- 1855 Verdi: *I vespri siciliani* premiere, Paris, June 13
- 1858 Birth of Giacomo Puccini, Lucca, December 22
- 1863 Birth of Pietro Mascagni, Livorno, December 7
- 1865 Verdi: *Macbeth*, premiere of revised version, Paris, April 1
- 1868 Boito: *Mefistofele* premiere, La Scala, Milan, March 5
- 1871 Verdi: *Aida* premiere, Cairo, December 24
- 1874 Verdi: Requiem premiere, Milan, May 22
- 1875 Boito: *Mefistofele*, premiere of revised version, Bologna, October 4
- 1887 Verdi: *Otello* premiere, La Scala, Milan, February 5
- 1890 Mascagni: *Cavalleria rusticana* premiere, Rome, May 17
- 1893 Puccini: *Manon Lescaut* premiere, Turin, February 1
- Verdi: *Falstaff* premiere, La Scala, Milan, February 9
- 1901 Death of Verdi, Milan, January 27
- 1918 Death of Boito, Milan, June 10
- 1924 Death of Puccini, Brussels, November 29
- 1945 Death of Mascagni, Rome, August 2

conclusion of Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* trilogy), but like all the indelible moments in music, it remains inexhaustible. ■

Arrigo Boito

Born February 24, 1842; Padua, Italy

Died June 10, 1918; Milan, Italy

Prologue to *Mefistofele*



Arrigo Boito is best known today as the brilliant librettist of Verdi's last two operas, *Otello* and *Falstaff*. But unlike the other great librettists in operatic history—Lorenzo da Ponte, Mozart's collaborator; or Hugo von

Hofmannsthal, the partner of Richard Strauss—Boito was himself a highly accomplished composer. He enrolled at the Milan Conservatory in 1853, where his main teacher was Alberto Mazzucato, later principal conductor at La Scala. Boito was already composing an opera on the Faust legend when he met Verdi for the first time, in Paris in 1862, and agreed to write the text to Verdi's *Inno delle nazioni* (Hymn of nations), commissioned for the world's fair in London. Later that year, Boito decided to put his own opera aside—according to Mazzucato's son, he had been working on it since he was a student—when Gounod's *Faust* was triumphantly received in its first La Scala performances. In 1863, Boito and Verdi had a falling out, prompted by Boito's outspoken views on the provincialism of Italian artistic tradition—a rift that would not be healed for sixteen years, when they were brought together again by the prospect of collaborating on *Otello*.

From the beginning, Boito had planned to write two operas, *Margherita* (after the woman seduced by Faust) and *Elena* (after a reborn Helen of Troy), based on the two parts of Goethe's poetic drama, which he himself was adapting as his text. But when he returned to the project in 1866, he decided to combine them into a single large-scale opera that he called *Mefistofele*—the tale seen from the point of view of Mephistopheles, the demonic character who drives the action, rather than Faust. Boito finished the score in 1867 and began to prepare for the premiere of the opera at La Scala, which had never before staged an opera with a libretto written by its composer. (Boito's decision to print and distribute the libretto in advance was also unprecedented.) Mazzucato was supposed to conduct, but when Boito refused to make the cuts he suggested in order to tighten Boito's long and unwieldy score—a prologue, four acts, and an epilogue—he backed out, and Boito had to lead his own work, making him that rarest of musical packages: the conductor-composer-librettist.

The premiere, on March 5, 1868, which lasted well past midnight, was a historic fiasco. Only the prologue—the single portion of the opera that is performed this week—was well received. When the opera was given a second time, it was split over two evenings, with the prologue performed *both* nights and with a ballet, *Brahma*, by Constantino Dall'Argine, added at the end.

Above: **Boito, in his youth.** TCS 1.2726, Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University

COMPOSED

1860–67, revised 1875

FIRST PERFORMANCE

March 5, 1868; Milan, Italy

INSTRUMENTATION

solo baritone, mixed chorus, children's chorus, two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three

trombones and tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps, organ, strings, and an offstage *banda* of four horns, six trumpets, six trombones, tuba, and percussion

APPROXIMATE PERFORMANCE TIME

26 minutes

FIRST CSO PERFORMANCE

March 2, 1897, Auditorium Theatre. Pol Plançon as soloist, Metropolitan Opera Chorus (Carlo Corsi, director), Luigi Mancinelli conducting (complete opera)

These are the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's first subscription concert performances.

The ballet alone was enthusiastically applauded. Boito withdrew his opera, defeated and shaken, and turned his attention to other matters.

Over the next few years, Boito wrote articles about opera, made Italian translations of German lieder, worked for the competing publishing houses of Lucca and Ricordi, started and gave up on another opera (*Nerone*), and then finally decided to revise and shorten *Mefistofele*, encouraged by a highly successful performance of the prologue in Trieste in 1871. (The revisions were extensive, and included changing the role of Faust from a baritone to a tenor.) A new version of *Mefistofele* was finally staged at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna in October 1875. This time the reception was enthusiastic. A performance in Venice the following year was even more successful. *Mefistofele* began to make the rounds of the world's major houses, arriving in Boston, where it was performed for the first time in this country in 1880. *Mefistofele* had become the most successful opera not by Verdi to come out of Verdi's Italy. (The Chicago Orchestra played in the pit when it was presented by the Metropolitan Opera at the Auditorium on March 2, 1897.) The opera has never been a repertory standard, but it has always had its proponents. In the twentieth century, Arturo Toscanini became a great champion, and after Boito's death in 1918, he helped prepare the manuscript of Boito's only other opera, the unfinished *Nerone*, for performance and led the premiere at La Scala in 1924.

Mefistofele is unlike any other work in Italian opera, and at first even some of Italy's most perceptive musicians were not sure what to think of its daring. Giulio Ricordi, the publisher, wondered whether Boito avoided writing big, traditional melodies "for fear of losing touch with the text." Verdi was put off by Boito's boldly unconventional harmonic progressions (so unlike anything in his own music), particularly the magnificent sequence of discordant chords, resolving from one into another, that characterize

long stretches of the prologue: "I had always read and understood that the Prologue in Heaven was a thing of spontaneity, of genius . . . yet hearing how the harmonies of that piece are almost all based on dissonances, I seemed to be—not in Heaven certainly." But Boito's language, highly individual and even experimental, cast a new light on the Italian opera tradition. The Prologue in Heaven—the title comes directly from Goethe—is one of the truly magnificent scenes in opera, and it is all the more powerful for its dazzling unconventionality. Long regarded as the high point of Boito's composing career, it has often been performed by itself. Toscanini chose it as the finale of the historic concert on May 11, 1946, that reopened the restored La Scala theater after the Second World War (along with many other landmarks of Italian music, several of them on this week's program: the overture and "Va, pensiero" from *Nabucco*, the Overture to *I vespri siciliani*, and the Intermezzo from *Manon Lescaut*.)

The Prologue to *Mefistofele* is in four connected sections. In the opening scene, brilliant, echoing trumpet calls (sounding from afar) accompany a chorus of angels singing in praise of God; their broad and noble theme, later repeated to great effect, anchors the entire prologue. In the second part—a roguish, swaggering scherzo—Mefistofele appears and addresses God directly, wagering that he can win the soul of Faust. Speaking through a *chorus mysticus*, God accepts. Mefistofele vanishes as a chorus of cherubs begins a song of celestial joys. Finally, a grand complex of massed choruses—penitent women, cherubs, the heavenly host—resumes the song of praise, rising in waves to a dazzling climax. ■

Phillip Huscher has been the program annotator for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1987.

PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN

Cumulus of clouds. The blare of seven trumpets. Seven strokes of thunder. The Heavenly Hosts invisible behind the clouds. Mystical Chorus. Cherubim. Penitent women. Then Mefistofele alone in the shadows

Heavenly Hosts

Ave, Signor degli angeli e dei santi,
e dei volanti cherubini d'or,
dall'eterna armonia dell' Universo
nel glauco spazio immerse
emana un verso di supremo amor;
e s'erge a to per l'aure azzurre
e cave in suon soave.
Ave, Ave, Ave, Ave.

Hail, Lord of angels and of saints,
and of the gold winged cherubim,
from the eternal harmony of the Universe,
submerged in the celestial space
an ode of supreme love emanates
gloriously rising up to you across
the empty celestial spaces.
Hail, Hail, Hail, Hail.

(Mefistofele appears)

Mefistofele

Ave, Signor.
Perdona se il mio gergo
si lascia un po' da tergo
le superne teodie del paradiso;
perdona se il mio viso non porta il raggio
che inghirlanda i crini degli alti cherubini;
perdona se dicendo io corro rischio
di buscare qualche fischio.
Il Dio piccin . . . della piccina terra
ognor traligna ed erra.
E, al par di grillo saltellante,
a caso spinge fra gli astri il naso,
poi con tenace fatuità superba
fa il suo trillo nell'erba.
Boriosa polve! tracotato atòmo!
Fantasma dell' uomo!
E tale il fa quell'ebbra
illusione ch'egli chiama:
ragion, ragione. Ah!
Sì, Maestro divino, in bujo fondo
crolla il padrone del mondo.
E non mi dà più il cuor,
Tant'è fiaccato, di tentarlo al mal.

Hail, Lord.
Forgive, if my language
leaves behind the superior
harmonies of Paradise;
Forgive me if my face does not bear the rays
which crown the manes of the noble cherubim;
forgive if, in speaking out, I risk
being hissed at.
The little God . . . of the little Earth
stumbles and errs every so often
and, like a hopping cricket,
accidentally pokes its nose among the stars,
then, with tenaciously fatuous pride,
trills in the grass!
Vain dust! Insolent atom!
Ghost of man!
Made such by that
demented illusion He calls
reason, reason. Ah!
Yes, Lord, in deep darkness,
the master of the world crumbles.
Nor have I heart,
so enfeebled he is, to tempt him to sin.

Mystical Chorus *(Off-stage)*

T'è noto Faust?

Do you know Faust?

Il più bizzarro pazzo
ch'io mi conosca, in curiosa forma
ei ti serve da senno.
Inassopita bramosia di saper
il fa tapino ed anelante;
egli vorrebbe quasi trasumanar
e nulla scienza al cupo
suo delirio è confine.
Io mi sobbarco ad adescarlo
per modo ch'ei si trovi
nelle mie reti, vuoi to farne scommessa?

Mefistofele

The strangest madman
I have ever known; his wisdom
serves you in a curious way.
His unrelenting lust for knowledge
makes him miserable and anxious;
He aspires to transcend his human limits
and no science can put boundaries
to his delirium.
I intend to lure him so that
he can fall into my net.
Will you place a wager?

E sia!

So be it!

Mystical Chorus

Sia! Vecchio padre, a un rude gioco
t'avventurasti.
Ei morderà nel dolce pomo dei vizi
e sovra il re del ciel . . .
avrò vittoria!

Mefistofele

So be it! Old father, you have agreed
to a dangerous game.
He will bite into the sweet apple of vice
and I shall triumph over
the King of Heaven!

Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus!

Heavenly Hosts

Holy! Holy! Holy!

(Di tratto in tratto m'è piacevole cosa
veder il vecchio e dal guastarmi seco
molto mi guardo; è bello udir l'Eterno
col Diavolo parlare
sì umanamente.)

Mefistofele

(Every so often it pleases me
to see the Old one; I take much care
not to alienate him: it is a fine thing to hear
speak to the Devil
the Eternal one in such a human way.)

Siam nimbi volanti dai limbi
nei santi splendori vaganti,
siam cori di bimbi, d'amori.

Cherubim

(Behind the clouds)

We are fleeting clouds from limbo
wandering in heavenly splendors,
We are choirs of infants, of loves.

E' lo sciame legger degli angioletti;
come dell'api ne ho ribrezzo e noia.

Mefistofele

This swarm of cherubim disgusts
and annoys me like bees.

(Vanishes)

Cherubim

(Off-stage boys' chorus)

Un giorno nel fango mortale,
perdemmo la gioia dell'ale,
l'aureola di luce e di fiori;
ma sciolti dal lugubre bando
pregando, cantando, danzando,
noi torniamo fra gli angeli ancor.
La danza in angelica spira gira,
si gira, si gira, si gira.
Fratelli, teniamci per mano,
fin l'ultimo cielo lontano
noi sempre dobbiamo danzar;
fratelli, le morbide penne
non cessino il volo perenne
che intorno al Santissimo Altar.

One day, caught in human mud,
we lost the joy of flight
the halo of light and flowers;
but released from that gloomy
exile, praying, singing, dancing
we return to the angels once more.
Our dance, in angelical spiral turns.
Spins, and spins, and spins.
Brothers, let us hold hands:
to the final, farthest sky,
we must keep on dancing;
brothers, our soft wings must not cease
their perennial flight until we gather
around the holiest altar.

Cherubim

Siam nimbi volanti dai limbi,
nei santi splendori vaganti,
siam cori di bimbi, d'amori.

We are fleeting clouds from limbo
wandering in heavenly splendors;
we are choirs of infants, of loves.

Penitent Women

(From earth)

Salve Regina!
S'innalzi un'eco
dal mondo cieco
alla divina reggia del ciel.
Col nostro canto,
col nostro pianto
domiam l'intenso
foco del senso,
col nostro canto
mite e fedel.
Odi la pia
prece serena.

Hail, Queen of Heaven!
Let an echo rise
from this blind world
to the divine kingdom of heaven.
With our song
with our weeping
we tame the intense
fire of the senses,
with our meek and
faithful song.
Heed the pious,
serene prayer.

Cherubim

Sugli astri, sui venti, sui mondi,
sui limpidi azzurri profondi,
sui raggi del sol . . .
la danza in angelica spira
si gira, si gira, si gira

Over stars, over wind, over worlds,
over the clear, blue skies,
over the rays of the sun . . .
our dance in an angelical spiral
spins, and spins, and spins.

Heavenly Hosts

Oriam, oriam, per quei morienti, oriam.

Let us pray for the dying, let us pray.

Penitent Women

Odi la pia prece serena.
Ave Maria gratia plena.
Il pentimento lagrime spande
di queste blande turbe il lamento
accolga il cielo.

Heed the pious, serene prayer.
Hail Mary, full of grace.
Shed tears of repentance.
May the lament of these meek crowds
be welcome in heaven.

Heavenly Hosts

Oriam per quelle di morienti ignave
anime schiave,
sì per quell'anime schiave preghiam.

Let us pray for the enslaved souls
of the dying,
for those enslaved souls, yes, let us pray.

Cherubim

Siam nimbi volanti dai limbi,
nei santi splendori vaganti.

We are fleeting clouds from limbo,
wandering in heavenly splendors.

All

Odi la pia prece serena.
Ave, Ave, Ave! Ah!
Signor degli angeli e dei santi,
e delle sfere erranti,
e dei volanti cherubini d'or.

Heed the pious, serene prayer.
Hail, Hail, Hail! Ah!
Lord of angels and saints,
of wandering spheres,
and of the gold-winged cherubim.

Penitent Women and Heavenly Hosts

Dall'eterna annonia dell' Universo
nel glauco spazio immerso
emana un verso di supremo amor;
e s'erge a te per l'aure azzurre
e cave in suon soave.
Ave, Ave!

From the eternal harmony of the Universe
submerged in the celestial space
an ode of supreme love emanates;
gloriously rising up to you
across the empty celestial spaces.
Hail, Hail!

Cherubim

Ave, Ave, Signor degli Angeli, e dei santi,
Ave Signor.
S'erge a te per l'aure azzurre
e cave in suon soave.

Hail, Hail, Lord of Angels and of Saints,
Hail, Lord,
rises to you gloriously
across the empty celestial spaces.

Text: **Arrigo Boito, after Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's play *Faust***
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