

# *Il Trovatore*

## A Guide for Educators



The Met  
ropolitan  
Opera

## A BITTER LOVE TRIANGLE, AN EXPLOSIVE FAMILY SECRET, AND A GYPSY WOMAN

hell-bent on revenge... When Giuseppe Verdi read the story, he knew it was the perfect subject for an opera. The year was 1851. Verdi was quickly becoming the most popular composer in Italy and in need of a splashy new project when he stumbled upon Antonio García Gutiérrez's play *El Trovador*. Its setting was marvelously exotic: medieval Andalusia, ravaged by a bloody civil war, with gypsies and troubadours wandering the rugged mountain landscape. The labyrinthine plot, with its political and romantic rivalries, long-lost brothers, and more than one fatal grudge, was simply spectacular. And it was the ideal vehicle for Verdi's style, which combined incisive musical characterizations with a distinctive flair for drama. García Gutiérrez's play was already wildly popular in Madrid. Yet it was Verdi's extraordinary music that kindled the smoldering Spanish story into an eternal operatic flame.

*Il Trovatore* premiered in 1853, and it spread like wildfire. Within a matter of years, Verdi's masterwork had been performed thousands of times, in all four hemispheres of the globe, and it would soon blaze a trail through pop culture as well. When Gilbert and Sullivan wished to parody the conventions of Italian opera, *Il Trovatore* was their inspiration; when the Marx Brothers spent *A Night at the Opera*, it was *Il Trovatore* they went to see. And when the Glenn Miller band performed a jazzed-up version of the famed "Anvil Chorus," *Il Trovatore* even graced the Billboard Charts. Today, *Il Trovatore* remains as exhilarating and enchanting as ever. And when this remarkable opera is brought to life by the extraordinary artists of the Met, you can be sure that sparks will fly.

This guide presents Verdi's *Il Trovatore* as a thrilling event which that together music, poetry, and visual elements to tell a riveting tale. It is designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the overall experience of this Final Dress Rehearsal performance. The following pages include biographical information on the composer, an introduction to the opera's literary source, and a brief historical essay placing the opera within nineteenth-century artistic trends. A guided listening exercise and synopses designed for young readers will bring the opera's music and story into the classroom, while the activities included at the end of the guide will encourage students to reflect creatively on their experience at *Il Trovatore*, thereby helping them develop the tools and confidence to engage with opera and other performing arts even after they leave the theater itself.

### THE WORK:

#### ***IL TROVATORE***

An opera in four acts, sung in Italian  
Music by Giuseppe Verdi  
Libretto by Salvatore Cammarano and Leone Emanuele Bardare  
Based on the play *El Trovador* by Antonio García Gutiérrez  
First performed January 19, 1853  
at the Teatro Apollo, Rome, Italy

### PRODUCTION

Marco Armiliato, Conductor  
Sir David McVicar, Production  
Charles Edwards, Set Designer  
Brigitte Reiffenstuel, Costume Designer  
Jennifer Tipton, Lighting Designer  
Leah Hausman, Choreographer

### STARRING

Maria Agresta  
LEONORA (soprano)

Anita Rachvelishvili  
AZUCENA (mezzo-soprano)

Yonghoon Lee  
MANRICO (tenor)

Quinn Kelsey  
COUNT DI LUNA (baritone)

Štefan Kocán  
FERRANDO (bass)

Production a gift of The Annenberg  
Foundation

## ABOUT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE



Photo: Johnathan Tichler/  
Metropolitan Opera

The Metropolitan Opera is a vibrant home for the most creative and talented singers, conductors, composers, musicians, stage directors, designers, visual artists, choreographers, and dancers from around the world.

The Metropolitan Opera was founded in 1883, with its first opera house built on Broadway and 39th Street by a group of wealthy businessmen who wanted their own theater. In the company's early years, the management changed course several times, first performing everything in Italian (even *Carmen* and *Lohengrin*), then everything in German (even *Aida* and *Faust*), before finally settling into a policy of performing most works in their original language.

Almost from the beginning, it was clear that the opera house on 39th Street did not have adequate stage facilities. But it was not until the Met joined with other New York institutions in forming Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts that a new home became possible. The new Metropolitan Opera House, which opened at Lincoln Center in September of 1966, was equipped with the finest technical facilities of the day.

Each season the Met stages more than 200 opera performances in New York. More than 800,000 people attend the performances in the opera house during the season, and millions more experience the Met through new media distribution initiatives and state-of-the-art technology.

This guide includes several sections with a variety of background material on *Il Trovatore*.

- **The Source, The Story, and Who's Who in *Il Trovatore***
- **A Timeline: The historical context of the opera's story and composition**
- **A Closer Look: A brief article highlighting an important aspect of Verdi's *Il Trovatore***
- **Guided Listening: A series of musical excerpts with questions and a roadmap to possible student responses**
- **Student Critique: A performance activity, highlighting specific aspects of this production; and topics for wrap-up discussion following students' attendance**
- **Further Resources: Recommendations for additional study, both online and in print**
- **Glossary: Common musical terms found in this guide and in the concert hall**

The materials in this guide will focus on several aspects of *Il Trovatore*:

- The relationship between Verdi's music and Cammarano's libretto
- The historical background of *Il Trovatore* and the political climate in which Antonio García Gutiérrez wrote *El Trovador*
- The depiction of gypsies in nineteenth-century art, literature, and music
- Creative choices made by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera for this production
- The opera as a unified work of art, involving the efforts of composer, librettist, and Met artists

This guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Il Trovatore*, whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes materials for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, and seeks to encourage them to think about opera – and the performing arts as a whole – as a medium of both entertainment and creative expression.



Marty Sohl/  
Metropolitan Opera

## SUMMARY

There is a bloody civil war in Spain. On one side is the royal family of Aragon, defended by the army of the vicious Count di Luna. On the other side are the rebels, led by the courageous gypsy Manrico. The Count knows his main job is to protect the royal family, but he has other things on his mind. He is in love with Leonora, a maid at the Aragon court. Unfortunately for him, Leonora loves someone else, a mysterious young man who sings to her every night from the gardens outside her window. This makes the Count jealous. Spying on Leonora one night, he realizes that the singer is Manrico, the leader of the rebel army. The Count is furious. He vows to kill Manrico.

The Count and Manrico know that they are political enemies and in love with the same woman. What they don't realize is they are also brothers. When the Count was a child, his baby brother got very sick. A local gypsy woman was accused of casting a spell on the baby, and as punishment she was burned at the stake. The gypsy's daughter, Azucena, decided to take revenge by throwing the baby into the flames to die beside her mother. But Azucena made a terrible mistake. Distracted by the heat, smoke, and screams, she accidentally threw her own child onto the fire instead. When she realized what she had done, she took the Count's baby brother, named him Manrico, and raised him as her own son.

Leonora and Manrico decide to get married, but on their wedding day Azucena is arrested by the Count's soldiers. When Manrico tries to save his mother, he is captured as well. Both Manrico and Azucena are thrown in prison and sentenced to death. Leonora begs the Count to save Manrico. She offers to marry him if he will let Manrico go, and the Count agrees. But Leonora would rather die than marry the Count, so when his back is turned she drinks a bottle of poison. She runs to free Manrico. The poison takes effect just as she opens the prison cell, and she dies in Manrico's arms. The Count, realizing he has been tricked, orders that Manrico be executed immediately. Azucena waits until Manrico has died, then finally reveals her terrible secret: "You've killed your own brother!" she screams at the Count. "My mother is avenged!"



Marty Sohl/  
Metropolitan Opera

## THE SOURCE: *EL TROVADOR*, BY ANTONIO GARCÍA GUTIÉRREZ

The Romantic dramatist Antonio García Gutiérrez grew up in a Spain ravaged by war. When he was born in 1813, the Napoleonic Wars were battering the Iberian Peninsula. Napoleon was defeated in 1814, but Spaniards immediately found themselves facing a new political crisis in the form of King Ferdinand VII, a merciless dictator intent on silencing anyone he viewed as a threat to his autocratic rule. Intellectuals were hit particularly hard by Ferdinand's purges; in 1833, the King forcibly closed all of Spain's universities. If this horrifically dark cloud had a silver lining, however, it was that the sudden closure of the universities gave García Gutiérrez, then a young medical student in Cádiz, an excuse to pursue his true passion: writing. For two years, García Gutiérrez eked out a living translating French plays and novels. Yet he knew as well as anyone how powerful the social and psychological effects of war could be, and in 1835 he channeled his experiences into a searing drama of love and loss set against the backdrop of bloody civil strife. García Gutiérrez could have set his play during any period. Love triangles, vengeance, and war are all timeless narrative catalysts; in fact, the Met's current production sets *Il Trovatore* during the Napoleonic Wars. But one facet of García Gutiérrez's story strongly suggested a medieval setting—namely, that the soldier Manrico romances Leonora with song. Beginning in the twelfth century, a small number of soldiers began to write poems and songs. These singer-songwriter-soldiers, known as "troubadours," played a vital role in European cultural history. García Gutiérrez thus chose to set his play in the fifteenth century, during the war of succession that followed the death of King Martin I in 1409. He named his leading man Manrique, a name shared by several fifteenth-century Spanish troubadours, and specified that his hero was a soldier in the army of James, Count of Urgel, one of the claimants to Martin's throne. *El Trovador* ("The Troubadour") premiered in 1836. It was an immediate hit.

No one knows how Verdi discovered García Gutiérrez's play. In 1851, when Verdi and Cammarano began to work on their opera, *El Trovador* had never been performed in Italy, nor translated into Italian. But however it crossed Verdi's path, García Gutiérrez's play provided exactly what the great composer was looking for: a storyline dripping with drama, powerful leading roles, and myriad opportunities for stunning music. The rest, as they say, is history.

Marty Sohl/  
Metropolitan Opera



# SYNOPSIS

## **Act I: "The Duel"**

Spain is torn apart by a bloody civil war. On one side are the rebels, followers of Prince Urgel, led by the notorious Manrico; on the other side are the supporters of the royal family of Aragon, led by a local nobleman, the Count di Luna. But when night falls and the day's fighting is over, the Count turns his attention to a different battle: he is in love with Leonora, a lady in waiting at the court of Aragon. The Count has heard a rumor that Leonora is in love with an unknown soldier, and he jealously stands watch outside her window every night.

The Count's soldiers wait outside the palace walls. To pass the time, their captain, Ferrando, tells them a story. Many years ago, the Count's baby brother fell ill. The child soon recovered, but a gypsy woman was accused of bewitching the baby and burned at the stake. As the flames lit up the evening sky, the old gypsy's daughter cast a curse on the family. It was only later that the di Lunas realized their baby was missing, and when a tiny, charred skeleton was found on the very spot where the gypsy had been burned, the family knew their beloved child was gone forever. Ever since, the Count has searched for the gypsy's daughter, hoping to avenge his brother's death.

In the palace gardens, Leonora tells her maid, Ines, that she has fallen in love with a troubadour who comes to serenade her every night. Ines cautions Leonora to be careful, but Leonora ignores the warning. As Ines leaves, the troubadour's song is heard in the distance. Leonora rushes into the garden; she sees a man standing in the shadows and embraces him, assuming he is the troubadour. In fact, it is the Count di Luna. Just then, the troubadour enters. He is horrified to find his beloved in the arms of the Count. Leonora tries to reassure him. But when the Count recognizes the troubadour as none other than Manrico, his political enemy, he flies into a rage. He challenges Manrico to a duel, and as they draw their swords the curtain falls.

## **Act II: "The Gypsy"**

In the foothills of the mountains, gypsy blacksmiths work over a great fire pit. Manrico's mother, Azucena, enters. Staring into the fire, she sings a sinister song about a woman burned at the stake. Manrico arrives, badly injured after a battle with the Count's army. The gypsies leave to sell their wares, and Azucena and Manrico are left alone. With a bitter voice, Azucena tells Manrico that the gypsy woman burned alive by the di Luna family was, in fact, her mother. In a desperate act of revenge, she grabbed the Count's baby brother and hurled him into the fire, only to realize that, distracted and confused by the smoke and screams, she had thrown her own child onto the flames instead. Manrico is confused: he is Azucena's son, is he not? Azucena realizes she has said too much and quickly changes the subject. She asks Manrico about his duel with the Count. Manrico replies that he could have killed the Count, but, to his own surprise, something held him back and he let the Count go.

A messenger arrives at the camp with good and bad news. Manrico's rebel army has taken over Castellor fortress, a major strategic point. But Leonora, believing Manrico to have died in the battle, has decided to join a convent. Despite his mother's protests, Manrico rushes to Castellor to stop her. The Count has also heard the false news of Manrico's death, and

he arrives at Castellor with his army. He drags Leonora from the convent and demands that she marry him. When Manrico arrives, neither Leonora nor the Count can believe their eyes. Manrico's army attacks, and during the battle the Count stumbles. Manrico draws a knife to stab him but, once again, cannot bring himself to strike the fatal blow.

### Act III: "The Gypsy's Son"

Di Luna's soldiers capture Azucena and take her to their camp. The captain Ferrando recognizes her as the gypsy who killed the Count's brother, and tells her she will be executed. Azucena calls out to Manrico to save her. Hearing this, the Count realizes he has found not only his brother's murderess, but also the mother of his enemy. He declares that Azucena will burn at the stake, just like her mother. Inside the fortress, Leonora and Manrico are preparing for their wedding. But when Manrico's friend Ruiz bursts in with news of Azucena's arrest, Manrico immediately declares that he will save Azucena or die trying.

### Act IV: "The Execution"

Manrico's attempt to save Azucena has failed, and he has been taken prisoner. Ruiz brings Leonora to the fortress where Manrico is imprisoned. Although Manrico is to be executed that very day, Leonora has a plan to save him. She offers to marry the Count di Luna if he will release Manrico; the Count agrees. As soon as his back is turned, however, Leonora pulls a vial of poison from her pocket and drinks it.

Meanwhile, in a filthy prison cell, Azucena and Manrico await their fate. Delirious, Azucena recalls the flames, screams, and fear of her mother's execution, then imagines returning with her son to their peaceful mountain home. To Manrico's surprise, Leonora appears. Opening the cell door, she tells Manrico to escape as quickly as possible. At first, Manrico doesn't understand why Leonora won't come with him. Then he realizes that she intends to stay with the Count. Manrico is heartbroken and furious, assuming that Leonora has fallen in love with the Count. But when Leonora collapses, Manrico finally understands the sacrifice she has made. With her dying breath, Leonora tells Manrico she loves him. The Count enters in time to hear Leonora's last words. Outraged, he orders that Manrico be executed immediately. Manrico is dragged away. Azucena wakes up and asks where her son is. "He is dead," the Count cruelly replies. With a gruesome laugh the old gypsy reveals her terrible secret. "He was your brother!" she screams. "My mother is avenged!"

#### VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

#### SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

#### MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian "mezzo"=middle, medium)

#### CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

#### COUNTERTENOR

a male singing voice whose vocal range is equivalent to that of a contralto, mezzo-soprano, or (less frequently) a soprano, usually through the use of falsetto

#### TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

#### BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

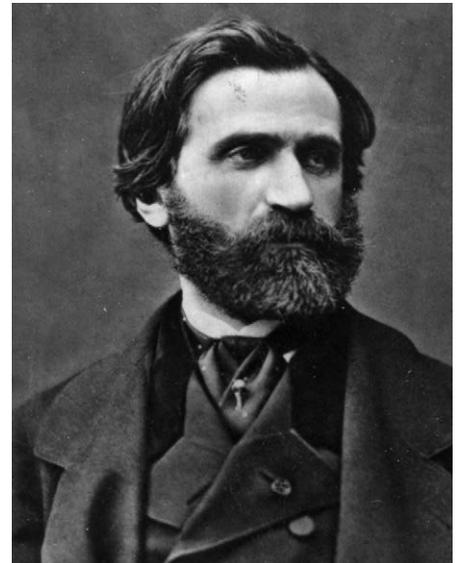
#### BASS

the lowest male voice

# WHO'S WHO IN *IL TROVATORE*

Character		Pronunciation Guide	Voice Type	The Lowdown
Azucena	An old gypsy woman	ah-dzoo-CHEH-nah	mezzo-soprano	When she was a young woman, she saw her mother burned at the stake. She has been driven by thoughts of revenge ever since.
Manrico	Her son, a rebel fighting for Prince Urgel	mahn-REE-koh	tenor	A rebel soldier, he must choose between his mother, his politics, and his love for a woman at the enemy's court.
Leonora	A lady-in-waiting to the Princess of Aragon	lay-oh-NO-rah	soprano	She fell in love with Manrico when she heard him singing. Now, she will make the ultimate sacrifice to save him.
Count di Luna	A nobleman from Aragon	Count dee LOO-nah	baritone	He is desperately in love with Leonora, but she loves his enemy Manrico.
Ines	Leonora's maid	ee-NEHS	soprano	Leonora's friend and confidante, she fears that Leonora and Manrico's love will lead to their downfall.
Ferrando	A captain in the Count's army	fehr-RAHN-doh	bass	A devoted friend of the di Luna family, he knows all about their tragic history.
Ruiz	A soldier in Manrico's army	roo-EES	tenor	Manrico's sidekick and friend.

- **1813** On July 5, Antonio García Gutierrez is born in Andalusia, a region in Southern Spain. Five months later, on October 9 or 10 (the exact date is uncertain), Giuseppe Verdi is born in Roncole, a village near Parma, Italy.
  
- **1818** Verdi is not from a musical family; nevertheless, his innkeeper parents soon recognize their son's prodigious musical talents. Verdi receives his first music lessons at the age of four, and at nine he is given a job as the organist at San Michele, a church across the street from his parents' inn.
  
- **1823** By the age of ten, Verdi has outgrown the musical offerings of his hometown. He moves to the nearby city of Busseto, where he takes music lessons at the church of San Bartolomeo and studies Latin, rhetoric, and literature. In 1831, Verdi moves into the home of Antonio Barezzi, a wealthy merchant and enthusiastic amateur musician. Barezzi gives Verdi money for his studies; in return, Verdi gives music lessons to Barezzi's daughter, Margherita.
  
- **1832** Verdi moves to Milan, the operatic capital of Italy. He hopes to study at the Milan Conservatory, but his application is rejected for bureaucratic reasons. (Ironically, the conservatory will officially be renamed "The Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory" after the composer's death.)
  
- **1836** Antonio García Gutiérrez's play *El Trovador* premieres in Madrid. Verdi returns to Busseto for a job at the local cathedral, and on May 4 he marries Margherita Barezzi; the couple will have two children over the next two years, neither of whom will survive past the age of eighteen months.
  
- **1839** In February, Verdi returns to Milan. In November, his first opera is premiered at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan's most famous opera house. The opera is successful enough that Bartolomeo Merelli, the impresario in charge of La Scala, signs Verdi to a contract for three more operas.
  
- **1840** In contrast to the successes of 1839, 1840 is one of the worst years of Verdi's life. His wife Margherita dies on June 18, and his second opera, *Un Giorno di Regno*, is a total flop.
  
- **1842** On March 9, La Scala hosts the premiere of Verdi's third opera, *Nabucco*. It is an extraordinary success. Singing the powerhouse role of the anti-heroine Abigaille is Giuseppina Strepponi, a riveting young soprano who will become the love of Verdi's life.



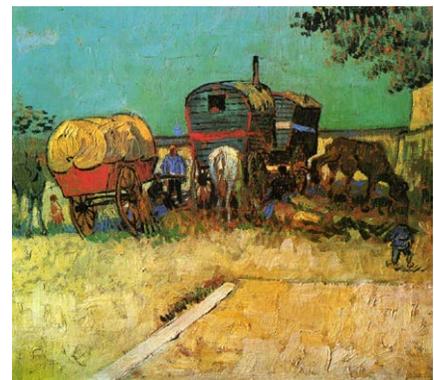
- **1844-49** The success of *Nabucco* launches a period of extraordinary productivity for Verdi. In the space of five years, he will compose no fewer than eleven operas and will enjoy premieres in all of the major operatic capitals of Italy, as well as London and Paris.
- **1847** Verdi moves to Paris and begins living with Giuseppina Strepponi.
- **1849** Verdi returns to Busseto, bringing Strepponi with him. In provincial Italy, the idea of an unmarried couple living together causes a scandal. Two years later, Verdi and Strepponi move to a country estate in the nearby town of Sant'Agata. The couple will eventually marry in 1859.
- **1851** In March, while in Venice for the premiere of *Rigoletto*, Verdi writes to the librettist Salvatore Cammarano suggesting that they write an opera based on *El Trovador*. Unfortunately, tragedy is about to strike Verdi's life once again: his mother dies in June.
- **1852** In July, Cammarano suddenly dies, leaving the libretto for *Il Trovatore* incomplete. The poet Leone Emanuele Bardare is hired to finish it.
- **1853** On January 19, *Il Trovatore* premieres at the Teatro Apollo in Rome. Audiences and critics shower praise on the new opera, which soon spreads like wildfire around the globe. By the end of the year, *Il Trovatore* has been performed across the Italian peninsula, as well as in Greece and Malta. In 1854, it appears in Spain, Portugal, Austria, Hungary, Ukraine, Poland, Moldavia, Turkey, and Brazil. In 1855, it is cheered by audiences in Romania, Russia, Argentina, Uruguay, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. 1856 sees *Il Trovatore* in Mexico, Chile, and Peru, and by the end of the decade the opera will be known in Germany, Slovenia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, and the country of Georgia. The number of *Il Trovatore* performances already reaches well into the thousands. In 1862, Verdi will write to a friend, "You can now hear *Il Trovatore* everywhere—even in the Indies or the middle of Africa."
- **1861** For centuries, the region now known as Italy has been a political patchwork of tiny city states, principalities, and duchies. In 1861, King Victor Emmanuel II helps found a unified Kingdom of Italy. The new prime minister, Camillo Cavour, encourages Verdi to enter politics. The famous composer will serve in the Italian parliament until 1865.
- **1883** On October 26, *Il Trovatore* is performed for the first time at the Metropolitan Opera. In fact, the Met had opened just four days before, on October 22, and the inclusion of *Il Trovatore* in their very first week of performances is a striking testament to the opera's worldwide popularity.
- **1901** Verdi dies on January 27. The funeral is small, in accordance with the composer's wishes. But one month later a memorial procession through the streets of Milan is attended by thousands. Verdi is mourned as a national hero: just one man, yet a towering figure who embodied an entire country's political aspirations and artistic pride.

## SORCERY, SEDUCTION, AND PREJUDICE: THE ROMA IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ARTS AND CULTURE

The Roma people (commonly called “gypsies”) are everywhere in nineteenth-century art, literature, and music. Francisco Goya painted Roma in Spain, Vincent van Gogh painted them in France, and the American John Singer Sargent painted them on his visits to Europe. In Victor Hugo’s Paris, the hunchback of Notre Dame fell in love with the beautiful gypsy Esmeralda, while in Charlotte Brontë’s England, gypsy fortune tellers visited Jane Eyre. From Pablo de Sarasate to Johannes Brahms, composers across Europe made use of gypsy-inspired themes to color their compositions, and the gypsies in Verdi’s *Il Trovatore* and George Bizet’s *Carmen* are among the most famous opera characters ever created. But why were these people so ubiquitous in European art? How were they depicted? And what can these depictions tell us about the European cultures that were simultaneously transfixed and repulsed by these nomads?

A travelling people, the Roma had been in Europe at least since the fifteenth century, yet they were never integrated into mainstream European society. Thus, although they inhabited the cities and countrysides of Europe, they always maintained a mysterious, exotic allure. For storytellers, this was profoundly useful, since gypsies could add an exotic touch of glamour to otherwise familiar settings. Old gypsy women were associated with fortune telling and sorcery; young gypsy women were thought of as dark-haired, smoky-eyed beauties, capable of ensnaring naive (non-gypsy) men with their charms. These twin powers of magic and seduction made gypsies simultaneously entralling and threatening—and perfect fodder for stories and plays, where love and enchantment are always excellent narrative catalysts. Unfortunately for the Roma themselves, their status as perpetual outsiders (both in artistic depictions and in reality) meant they were often viewed with mistrust and fear. Rumors and myths about gypsies were rampant, and gypsies were frequently victims of bigotry and violence.

When it came to depicting gypsies in literature or art, certain choices were practically *de rigueur*. Gypsies were widely perceived to have swarthy features, and were known for wearing brightly colored clothing, especially headscarves; they were also known for their music. Nineteenth-century composers loved to imitate gypsy bands by featuring violins and percussion, lilting melodies and dance-like rhythms, and sudden changes of mood and intensity. Opera was an ideal medium for representing gypsies, since the librettist, composer, and designers could draw on a range of standardized symbols to create a detailed and captivating character. In fact, it was the character of Azucena that made Verdi fall in love with García Gutiérrez’s play, since she offered him the opportunity to write supremely catchy gypsy-inspired music while also illustrating the brutal treatment gypsies faced at the hands of despotic noblemen. The resulting opera was both infinitely hummable and deeply tragic, and it made Verdi a star.



**An Encampment of Gypsies With Caravans,  
Vincent van Gogh**

The Guided Listening Activities are designed to introduce students to a selection of memorable moments from the opera. They include information on what is happening dramatically, a description of the musical style, and a roadmap of musical features to listen for. Guided Listening Activities can be used by students and teachers of varying levels of musical experience.

## IN PREPARATION

For this activity, teachers will need access to a recording of *Il Trovatore* and the libretto.

## "TACEA LA NOTTE PLACIDA-DI TALE AMOR"

Leonora has fallen in love with a mysterious man who sings to her every night. Her maid Ines asks what first kindled the flame of Leonora's love, and Leonora tells her the story in this number. This scene is structured as a "double aria," with two distinct sections that each serve a specific dramatic purpose. It is worth familiarizing yourself with this musical structure, since it is one of the building blocks of Verdi's operas and is used throughout *Il Trovatore*.

What to listen for:

- The "double aria" format (explained below) and the dramatic structure of the scene as a whole
- How the orchestra creates the emotional backdrop for Leonora's story
- The many kinds of ornamentation that make the arias sound flashy and virtuosic

- (00:00) The first aria in a "double aria" scene is called a cantabile. It establishes or describes a dramatic problem, something that will be solved over the course of the opera. Like any good storyteller, Leonora begins by setting the scene. "It all began on a calm and lovely night," she tells Ines. Her melody is gentle and quiet, and the static accompaniment perfectly represents the stillness of the night she describes.
- (00:49) The distant sound of a lute is the first indication that something is about to happen. As Leonora sings, she slowly gets louder; this is called a crescendo.
- (01:28) Leonora recalls hearing the unknown voice for the first time. The melody rises until it reaches its apex on the words "it was a troubadour!"
- (02:08) The music starts over as Leonora continues telling her story. Notice how each phrase ups the dramatic ante. First, she describes the troubadour saying her name. Then, she describes rushing to her balcony to see the troubadour. And finally, she describes falling in love at first sight—the love that will, of course, spark the opera's great love triangle.
- (04:05) Overcome by feeling, Leonora launches into a soaring melody. Notice that Verdi sometimes uses many individual notes to set a single syllable of text; this is called a "melisma."
- (04:26) Between the two solos of the double aria form, there is usually a portion of dialogue (or a monologue sung to simpler music than the surrounding arias) that furthers the drama of the scene. Here, Ines expresses her concern about Leonora's romance. Ask your students how this section compares to what came before. Does it help them understand what is going on in the plot? Why and how?
- (05:16) The second aria is called a cabaletta, and it is used to express the main character's emotions and plans for future action. Here, Leonora tells Ines that she would rather die than live without her beloved troubadour. Cabalettas are always very virtuosic, and are a great opportunity for a singer to show off their vocal powers. As the orchestra introduces this second aria, ask your students to think about what emotions the music evokes or inspires.
- (05:35) Leonora begins singing, repeating the nimble melody the orchestra just played. Her melody is full of ornaments, little embellishments that make the melody lively and impressive. Listen especially to the glittering trills, and the way the melody leaps from note to note. In fact, there is a special word for this very high, very impressive style of singing: *coloratura*.
- (06:04) One of the best ways for a composer to emphasize a word is to repeat it. Listen to how many times Leonora says the word *morirò*, "I will die [if I can't love him]." There can be no doubt as to Leonora's feelings! Also listen for the giant melisma at (01:09).
- (06:29) Ines is still terribly concerned, but Leonora pays no attention to her.
- (06:43) Leonora returns to the beginning of the cabaletta, and sings the whole thing again. "Words cannot describe the passion I feel," she says. This is a subtle but beautiful comment, since the purpose of the cabaletta is to let the music (rather than the words) do the explaining, sparkling like the metaphorical flames that fill Leonora's heart.

## "DI GELOSO AMOR SPREZZATO"

Night falls, and Leonora hears the song of her beloved troubadour. She rushes to the garden and embraces the man she sees standing in the shadows beneath her window. Unfortunately, the man is actually the Count di Luna—and the troubadour is horrified when he sees Leonora in the Count's arms. Leonora tries to explain: in the darkness, she mistook the Count for the troubadour. The Count is hurt to hear Leonora say this, because he loves her desperately. Insult is soon added to injury, however, when Count di Luna recognizes the mysterious troubadour as Manrico, his mortal enemy. Furious, the Count swears to kill Manrico.

What to listen for:

- How Verdi weaves together the three voices; a scene for multiple voices is called an ensemble (in contrast to an aria, which is for a single voice)
- How the various characters sing together or against one another, and how this reflects the characters' interactions
- How Verdi creates excitement and momentum by varying the rhythm, tempo, and dynamics

- (00:06) The count is exploding with jealousy, and his music is full of fiery passion and unstoppable rage. Start by listening to the orchestra, where a very loud burst of sound is immediately followed by a series of very quiet pulses. The repeated contrast between forte ("loud") and piano ("soft") makes the music sound frenzied and unstable—just like the Count. At the end of each phrase (before the next big forte explosion arrives), the count sings four very quick notes. The second of these occurs on the word *fuoco*, which means "fire." The lyrics of *Il Trovatore* are full of fire-based metaphors; why do you think this is?
- (00:20) The melody changes, and the Count expresses the most important lines of his text: "You, Leonora, said you love him. That is why he must die." The big crescendo that accompanies this line mimics the Count's surging wave of anger.
- (00:50) In polite conversation, you usually wait for the other person to stop talking before you begin. This is also true in opera, where composers traditionally let one character's melody come to an end before beginning the next character's phrase. But Manrico and Leonora come crashing in on the last note of the Count's line. This is called an "elision," and it perfectly illustrates the crisis that is unfolding. Manrico and Leonora are desperate to respond to the Count's threats and can't afford to wait politely for him to finish his tirade.
- (01:04) Listen carefully to the repeated rhythmic pattern that is the basis of Leonora and Manrico's melody: fast-fast-long; fast-fast-long. The punchy fast notes seem to tumble into the long note, and the overall effect is both driving and frantic.
- (01:17) Now it's the Count's turn to interrupt, as another musical elision brings us back to his opening music. Once again, it's worth noticing the word he sings on the four quick notes: "estinguere," which means "extinguish" or "quench." The fire metaphor is still present!
- (01:26) As the Count repeats his adamant declaration of revenge ("you said you love him, and for that he cannot live"), the orchestra follows his melody. This adds emphasis to these words, the most important in the scene.
- (01:34) For the first time, all three characters sing at same time, but the Count still stands in opposition to Leonora and Manrico, since Leonora and Manrico sing one melody together while the Count sings something different.
- (02:10) This is the finale of Act I, and Verdi wants to end with a bang. In addition to a full set of strings, Verdi uses eighteen brass and wind instruments and lots of percussion—in other words, his entire orchestra!

## "VEDI! LE FOSCHE NOTTURNE"

In the gypsy camp, blacksmiths work around a blazing fire. The sparks fly as they hammer pieces of iron against heavy metal blocks (called "anvils"). This scene, often called "the Anvil Chorus," is one of the most famous pieces ever written for opera, and it has been parodied or quoted by numerous composers including Gilbert and Sullivan (in the chorus "With Catlike Tread," from *The Pirates of Penzance*) and the Glenn Miller band (in their 1941 hit "Anvil Chorus").

What to listen for:

- The duple meter (you can easily count "one-two-one-two" as you listen)
- How Verdi uses the orchestra to evoke leaping flames and other special effects

- (00:00) The curtain rises. All of the strings and winds play the same heavy melody. Ask your students what this music sounds like: leaping flames? dancing goblins? children playing hopscotch? There are no right or wrong answers; rather, this is a good time for your students to think creatively about the music they are hearing and what kinds of ideas, emotions, events, and/or characters it evokes.
- (00:23) The short, biting notes played by the strings sound like dancing flames. If you listen carefully, you might hear the bright, shiny sound of the triangle. Verdi uses this instrument because its timbre perfectly evokes the sparks flying from the gypsies' hammers.
- (00:39) The gypsies begin singing: "See how the sky casts off the gloom of night, just as a widow discards her clothes of mourning." The workers clearly have women on their mind, since they see daybreak as black-clad widow pulling back her veil to reveal her face.
- (01:05) As the gypsies strike the anvils, they sing a chorus with a powerful rhythm. Notice how the beats are organized in groups of two; this is called "duple meter." You may wish to have your students stomp their feet while they listen; the alternation of right and left will help them feel these two-beat groups. Songs like this are used by manual laborers around the world who must coordinate actions. In fact, this is exactly how Verdi wanted the song to be used; he even specified that the basses (the singers with the lowest voices) should hammer on the odd-numbered beats, while the tenors (male singers with higher voices) should hammer on the even-numbered beats!
- (01:35) The gypsies rest from their work as the opening music returns.
- (02:06) The melody of (00:37) is repeated, now with new words that imagine the sunlight sparkling in cups of wine.
- (02:24) The gypsies pick up their hammers again, and return to striking the anvils.
- (02:36) The chorus ends as the blacksmiths remind us what brightens their day: a gypsy sweetheart. But the gypsy that will appear as soon as this chorus is over is not a beautiful young woman; it's the angry, aged crone Azucena.

## "STRIDE LA VAMPA!"

Azucena sits in the gypsy camp, staring at the fire. She tells a terrifying story about a woman she saw burned at the stake. We will soon learn that the woman was actually Azucena's mother, tortured and killed by the di Luna family, and Azucena has spent her whole life waiting for revenge.

What to listen for:

- The "triple meter" (you can count "ONE-two-three-ONE-two-three")
- The lilting melody
- The use of violins to add a dash of "gypsy" flair

- (00:00) Listen to the organization of notes in the orchestra: one heavy note, followed by two lighter beats. This is called "triple meter," and it offers a striking contrast to the powerful duple meter of the Anvil Chorus that immediately precedes it.
- (00:03) Azucena begins singing. Her melody mixes long, sustained notes with shimmering trills. Perhaps these trills are the shaking of her voice as she recalls the fearful events of her story. Perhaps they illustrate the sparks of the fire she remembers. In any case, they make her melody sound creepy and mysterious.
- (00:23) On the word "urli," ("screams,") Azucena's melody suddenly leaps upward and changes from muffled piano to a powerful forte. We might think that these are the screams of the woman being led to the stake, but in fact they are the "joyful shouts" of the crowd gathered to watch her execution, a particularly ghastly reminder of how cruel humans can be!
- (01:03) Azucena sings a shimmering trill, then her voice rises as she recalls the flames reaching "higher and higher into the sky."
- (01:15) Azucena stops singing, and the orchestra takes over for a few seconds. Listen to the winding melody played by the oboe and clarinet. It is reminiscent of curling wisps of smoke rising out of a smoldering fire.
- (01:28) The main melody begins again. This time, pay attention to how the violins echo Azucena's trills. This is important, because violins were often associated with gypsy bands.
- (01:49) Once again, the screams ("gride") Azucena recalls are not her mother's, but the "savage cries of joy" of the watching crowd.
- (02:29) Azucena's aria may not sound as fancy as Leonora's cabaletta. But it is incredibly difficult. The long trill, with its big crescendo, requires phenomenal stamina and control.

## IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the *My Highs & Lows* reproducible handout found in the back of this guide.

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *IL TROVATORE*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1d

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

## ENCOURAGING STUDENT RESPONSE IN ATTENDING THE FINAL DRESS REHEARSAL

Watching and listening to a performance is a unique experience that takes students beyond the printed page to an immersion in images, sound, interpretation, technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities help students analyze different aspects of the experience and engage critically with the performance. They will consider the creative choices that have been made for the particular production they are watching and examine different aspects of the performance.

The Student Critique activity incorporates a reproducible sheet. Students should bring this activity sheet to the final dress rehearsal and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activity directs attention to details of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed.

The activity sheet is called *My Highs & Lows*. It serves to guide students toward a consistent set of objective observations, as well as to help them articulate their own opinions. It is designed to enrich the students' understanding of the art form as a whole. The ratings system encourages students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that require careful, critical thinking.

The *My Highs & Lows* handout can be found at the back of this guide.

## FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

Start the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did students like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? The discussion offers an opportunity to apply the notes on students' *My Highs & Lows* sheet, as well as their thoughts about the visual design of the Met production—in short, to see themselves as *Il Trovatore* experts.

At heart, *Il Trovatore* is a story about stories. In the opening scene, the army commander tells the story of the Duke's baby brother. At the beginning of Act II, Azucena tells the same story from a different perspective. And Leonora tells Ines about hearing Manrico's music. As a storytelling medium, opera presents unique opportunities and challenges. Now that your students have seen *Il Trovatore*, ask them how the many elements of the performance—music, acting, costumes, stage sets, wigs, makeup, etc.—work together to tell *Il Trovatore's* wild tale. The following questions may facilitate your discussion.

- Opera is an unusual form of storytelling because it has music from beginning to end. How did Verdi's music contribute to the story? Did it make the story more exciting, emotional, and/or interesting? Was there anything you particularly liked (or didn't like) about having music all the way through the performance?
- How does opera compare to other forms of art that feature music? You might consider songs, musicals, or music videos, to name a few.
- Which character had the most interesting costumes? Did the costumes help you identify characters? How so?
- The Met's production, directed by David McVicar, is constructed on a giant turntable: the stage can literally rotate from one scene to the next! Did you like this effect? Did it help you follow what was going on?
- Do you think Azucena was right to hide Manrico's true identity from him? Why or why not? Is this lie important to the opera's story?
- The tragedy that catalyzes *Il Trovatore* is the false assumption that Azucena, a gypsy, must have placed a spell on the Count's baby brother. How might the story have been different if Azucena had been welcomed into the Count's home, rather than rebuffed? Do you think there is a message about tolerance embedded in *Il Trovatore*? Can you think of any groups of people who face discrimination because they look different or have different customs or beliefs?

Today, there are many different ways to tell a story: a Netflix or television series, a graphic novel, a collection of photos on Instagram, etc. Ask your students to imagine they have been hired to tell one of the stories in *Il Trovatore* using any medium they choose. How would they do it?

Lastly, remember that opera is a multimedia art form: any and all aspects of the performance your students have just seen—including the act of seeing it live—are important factors contributing to the overall experience. Ask them for any final thoughts and impressions. What did they find most memorable?

### IN PRINT

Berger, William. *Verdi with a Vengeance: An Energetic Guide to the Life and Complete Works of the King of Opera*. New York: Vintage Books, 2000.

*An excellent and accessible introduction to Verdi, with a good overview of Verdi's life and times and insightful commentary on each of Verdi's operas.*

Chusid, Martin. *Verdi's Il Trovatore: The Quintessential Italian Melodrama*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012.

*A detailed study of Il Trovatore, with extensive analyses of the work's creation, music, and literary source.*

Kehew, Robert, ed. *Lark in the Morning: The Verses of the Troubadours, A Bilingual Edition*. Translated by Ezra Pound, W.D. Snodgrass, and Robert Kehew. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

*Ideal for students who wish to learn more about the troubadours, Kehew's anthology features a good introduction and beautiful translations of some of the most medieval era's most famous poems.*

Taruskin, Richard. "Verdi: Artist, Politician, Farmer (Class of 1813, II)." In *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol 3: The Nineteenth Century, 563-615. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

*Taruskin's chapter on Verdi, from his six-volume history of Western music, is a detailed, insightful, and very well written introduction to the great composer's work.*

### ONLINE

García Gutiérrez, Antonio. *El Trovador*. Edited with notes and vocabulary by H.H. Vaughan. Heath's Modern Language Series. Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1908. Available in html and other formats via Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/29677>), and as an online facsimile via the Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/details/eltrovadoredited00garc>).

*García Gutiérrez's play, in its entirety, in Spanish. The brief introduction to García Gutiérrez's life is in English, as are the extensive annotations. This is a great resource for advanced students of Spanish literature who wish to delve into García Gutiérrez's work.*

The Metropolitan Opera. "Carmen: 'L'amour est un oiseau rebelle' (Elina Garanca)" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2snTkaD64U>).

*After reading the "Closer Look" essay in this Final Dress Guide, your students may enjoy seeing this scene from the Met's 2010 Live in HD broadcast of Carmen. This is one of the most famous arias ever written.*

Timson, David, and narrated by Richard Smillie. *Opera Explained: Verdi, Il Trovatore*. Audio-book available via Naxos ([www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com)) or Spotify ([www.spotify.com](http://www.spotify.com)).

*Timson's audio-book offers an excellent introduction to Verdi and Il Trovatore. The best part is the lengthy plot description, which includes musical excerpts to guide listeners through Verdi's rich musical terrain.*

Willson, Flora. "Crossed wires and 'too many deaths': The troubled genesis of Verdi's *Il trovatore*." Excerpt from The Royal Opera House's program book for *Il Trovatore*, 2016 (<http://www.roh.org.uk/news/crossed-wires-and-too-many-deaths-the-troubled-genesis-of-verdis-il-trovatore>).

*The story of Il Trovatore's creation, from Verdi's decision to adapt García Gutiérrez's play through the work's phenomenally successful premiere.*

## act/scene

Acts and scenes are ways of categorizing sections of operas. An act is a large-scale division of an opera, and each opera will typically include from two to five acts. Acts can be subdivided into scenes, which are often differentiated by a change in setting or characters.

## adagio

Literally “at ease,” adagio is a tempo marking that indicates a slow speed. An adagio tempo marking indicates that the performer should play in a slow and leisurely style.

## allegro

Italian for “cheerful” or “joyful,” Allegro is the most common tempo marking in Western music, indicating a moderately fast to quick speed.

## aria

A song for solo voice accompanied by orchestra. In opera, arias mostly appear during a pause in dramatic action when a character is reflecting musically on his or her emotions. Most arias are lyrical, with a tune that can be hummed, and many arias include musical repetition. For example, the earliest arias in opera consist of music sung with different stanzas of text (strophic arias). Another type of aria, da capo arias, became common by the eighteenth century and feature the return of the opening music and text after a contrasting middle section. Nineteenth-century Italian arias often feature a two-part form that showcases an intensification of emotion from the first section (the cantabile) to the second section (the cabaletta).

## articulation

The smoothness or hardness with which a note is begun and ended. Articulation is a way of indicating the degree to which each note connects to the next, and can be seen while watching the bow of a stringed instrument player. A note can be attacked sharply and made short, or it can flow smoothly into the next note.

## baritone

Literally “deep sounding,” a baritone is what a typical male voice sounds like—the term refers to a male singer with a low but not extremely low vocal range. A baritone will sing notes that are higher than those sung by a bass and lower than those sung by a tenor. Uncommon until the nineteenth century, baritone roles have grown in popularity in opera since the works of Verdi, who often reserved the voice type for villains.

## baroque

A period of music history lasting from approximately 1600 to 1750. The beginning of the Baroque period coincides with the invention of opera as a genre, and its end coincides with the death of the composer Johann Sebastian Bach. The Baroque period saw the rise of modern tonality, an expansion of performing forces, and increased ornamentation. The term “baroque” means bizarre or exaggerated, and was used by critics in the Eighteenth century critics who preferred a simpler and less-ornamented style.

## bass

The lowest sounding line in music. Bass also refers to the lowest singing range for the male voice. Opera composers often choose a bass voice to sing one of two opposite types of roles: comic characters or dramatic and serious characters. For example, Mozart and Rossini wrote comic parts for bass voice, using musical repetition and low register for comic effect. Wagner and Mozart wrote serious parts for bass voice, focusing on the gravity that a low register can contribute to the overall musical texture.

## bel canto

Referring to the Italian vocal style of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, bel canto singing emphasizes lyricism and ornamentation in order to showcase the beauty of the singer's voice. Its focus on lyrical embellishment directly contrasts with a contemporary Germanic focus on a weighty, dramatic style. Bel canto singing is most closely associated with the music of Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, and Gaetano Donizetti.

## cadenza

An ornamented musical elaboration played in a free style by a soloist to display his or her virtuosity. Cadenzas are typically improvised—that is, created by a performer on the spot—though they can also be written out in advance. They most frequently occur near the end of a piece, at a point of harmonic tension when the piece is about to conclude.

## chorus

A section of an opera in which a large group of singers performs together, typically with orchestral accompaniment. Most choruses include at least four different vocal lines, in registers from low to high, with multiple singers per part. The singers are typically from a particular group of people who play a certain role on stage—soldiers, peasants, prisoners, and so on. Choruses may offer a moral or commentary on the plot, or participate in the dramatic action.

## Classical

A period of music history lasting from approximately 1750 to 1830, bordered by the earlier Baroque period and the later Romantic period. Contrasting with the ornamentation common to the preceding Baroque period, Classical music is characterized by simple and elegant melodies, regular harmonic accompaniment, and contrasts between melodic themes. The composers most closely associated with the Classical period include Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven.

## coloratura

A rapid and elaborate ornamentation by a solo singer, particularly common in operas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Requiring vocal agility and a wide and high range, coloratura showcases the virtuosity of a singer by featuring repeating melodic figures, rapid scales, trills, and other embellishments.

## conductor

The person who directs the orchestra, setting the tempo, giving interpretive directions to the musicians, and generally holding all the musical elements of a performance together. In orchestra performance, the conductor typically stands on a podium in front of the players and uses a baton to communicate the meter and tempo, and his or her non-baton hand to indicate dynamics, phrasing, and articulation to the musicians. The gestures of a conductor can be likened to a non-verbal language that the musicians understand.

## contralto

A deep female voice, with a vocal range that extends lower than that of a mezzo-soprano. Contraltos are known for having a very wide range and for the power and depth of sound with which they can sing. As is the case for roles for basses, many of the earliest roles in opera for contraltos are comic roles, though nineteenth-century composers also wrote dramatic roles for female singers with a lower range.

## crescendo

A gradual raising of volume in music achieved by increasing the dynamic level. When music crescendos, the performers begin at a softer dynamic level and become incrementally louder. One of the most famous types of crescendos in opera, the Rossini crescendo, includes an increase in volume together with repeating melodic and rhythmic phrases, higher instrumental registers, and the gradual addition of instruments in order to create a particularly dramatic effect.

## diminuendo

A gradual lowering of volume in music achieved by decreasing the dynamic level. During a diminuendo, the performers begin at a louder dynamic level and become incrementally softer.

## dynamics

A musical trait pertaining to loudness and softness. During the eighteenth century, composers began indicating their desired intensity of volume in music by writing words such as piano (soft) and forte (loud) into the musical score. Dynamics encompass a spectrum from pianissimo (very soft) to piano (soft) to mezzo piano (moderately soft), all the way up to fortissimo (very loud). Music can shift to another dynamic level either suddenly or gradually, through a crescendo or diminuendo.

## ensemble

A musical piece for two or more soloists, accompanied by orchestra. Types of ensembles include duets (for two soloists), trios (for three soloists), and quartets (for four soloists). Sometimes singers will respond directly to one another during an ensemble. At other times, singers will each sing to themselves as if the other singers were not on stage. In ensembles, multiple characters may simultaneously express very different emotions from one another.

## finale

The last portion of an act, a finale consists of several musical sections that accompany an escalating dramatic tension. Finales frequently consist of multiple ensembles with different numbers of characters. When it occurs at the end of an early act in the opera, a finale may create a messy situation—and the resolution of this situation will only happen in subsequent acts. One type of finale common in comic operas, a chain finale, features characters entering or exiting from the stage to create unexpected combinations of characters, in turn increasing the opera's dramatic tension.

## forte

Meaning "loud" or "strong" in Italian, forte is a dynamic level in music that indicates a loud volume. Adding the suffix "-issimo" to a word serves as an intensifier—since forte means "loud," fortissimo means "very loud."

## harmony

The simultaneous sounding of pitches to produce chords, and the relationship between different chords as they succeed one another. Throughout much of Western music, systems of rules govern these progressions to help create our sense of musical tension, expectation, and conclusion. Tonal harmony is based on progressions of chords in relationship to a tonic (or home) key. In the 19th century, as composers sought novel sounds to reflect the originality of their invention, they began to employ chords and progressions of greater dissonance and greater distance from the home key. As such dissonances moved beyond mere sound effects into the musical structure itself, the traditional theory of tonal harmony began to become insufficient as a way to understand and describe musical structure.

## intermission

A break between acts of an opera. At the beginning of an intermission, the curtain will fall (that is, close) on stage, and the lights in the auditorium, called the house lights, will become brighter. Intermissions provide audiences with a chance to walk around, talk with one another, and reflect on what they have seen and what could happen next. The break in the performance may also correspond with a change of time or scene in the story of the opera—the next act may take place hours or months later, or be set in a different location. Usually lights will dim and a bell may sound to indicate that the intermission is drawing to a close and the opera is about to resume.

## legato

A type of articulation in which a melody is played with smooth connection between the notes. A legato passage does not include any pauses between notes or any accents at the beginnings of notes, as the notes blend into one another without a break. In contrast, a passage that is played staccato features notes played in a separated manner.

## Leitmotif

From the German for “leading motive,” a leitmotif is a recurring musical idea, or motive, that represents a particular person, object, idea, emotion, or place. This musical idea is usually a few seconds in length and can occur in the music’s melody, harmony, rhythm, or a combination of the three. Leitmotifs are most closely associated with the operas of Richard Wagner, where they are used repeatedly throughout the opera to provide unity; they also less frequently appear in operas of other composers, including Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Strauss.

## libretto

The text of an opera, including all the words that are said or sung by performers. Until the early eighteenth century, a composer would frequently set music to a pre-existing libretto, and any given libretto could thus be set to music multiple times by different composers. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, collaboration between the author of the libretto, known as the librettist, and the composer became more frequent. Some opera composers, most notably Richard Wagner, are known for writing their own text.

## maestro

A title of respect used to address a conductor. The term is often applied to conductors with several decades of experience. However, performers often use this honorific when addressing the conductor.

## melody

A succession of pitches that form an understandable unit. The melody of a piece consists of the tune that a listener can hum or sing. During arias, the singer will usually sing the main melody, though other instruments may play parts of the melody. Sometimes, such as during ensembles, multiple melodies can occur simultaneously.

## mezzo-soprano

A female voice with a range between that of a contralto and soprano. A mezzo-soprano's voice is slightly deeper than that of a soprano, so mezzo-sopranos are often cast in supporting roles as older women, including nurses, confidantes, or maids.

## opera buffa

A term applied to Italian comic operas from the mid-eighteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries. The plot of an opera buffa often features scenes and characters from everyday life and addresses a light or sentimental subject, concluding with a happy ending.

## opera seria

An eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Italian opera employing a noble and serious style. The plot of an opera seria often upholds morality by presenting conflicting emotions such as love versus duty, or by modeling enlightened rulers.

## operetta

Featuring spoken dialogue, songs, and dances, an operetta is a short theatrical piece. Shorter in duration than operas, operettas typically feature a light subject matter, incorporate melodies composed in a popular style, and feature spoken dialogue. Most popular from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the genre is the precursor of the American musical.

## ornamentation

An embellishment to the melody, rhythm, or harmony of music, intended to make a melody more expressive or ornate. Ornamentation can be either indicated through symbols written into the music or improvised by the performer.

## overture

An instrumental piece that occurs before the first act as an introduction to an opera. After the conductor enters the orchestra pit and takes a bow, the music for the overture begins. Most overtures are a few minutes in duration, and set the mood for the opera—even featuring musical themes that will occur later in the opera.

## piano

Abbreviated *p* in a musical score, piano indicates a soft dynamic level. Musicians may achieve a piano sound by using less bow, less air, or less force. In opera, soft music will often correspond with emotions of sadness or moments in the plot when a character is reflecting on a course of action or emotional state. Pianissimo is “very soft,” and can be so quiet that an audience may need to listen carefully in order to discern its melody and harmony.

## pitch

The quality of a musical sound corresponding to its perceived highness or lowness. Scientifically, pitch can be measured as the number of vibrations (or repetitions) of a sound wave per second, which is called its frequency. A sound with a low frequency, like a bass drum, will sound low and have a low pitch, while a sound with a high frequency, like a siren, will sound high.

## prima donna

Meaning “first lady” in Italian, the prima donna is the leading female role in an opera. The term may apply to the role or to the singer herself, who usually sings in the soprano register and is the star of the show. Since the nineteenth century, the term has also been applied to a singer of any gender with a self-centered and demanding personality.

## recitative

A type of vocal writing between speech and song that imitates the accents and inflections of natural speech. Composers often employ recitative for passages of text that involve quick dialogue and the advancement of plot, since the style allows singers to move rapidly through a large amount of text. Recitative may be accompanied either by keyboard or by the whole orchestra.

## rhythm

Rhythm refers to the way music unfolds over time; it is a series of durations in a range from long to short. Along with pitch, it is a basic and indispensable parameter of music. Rhythm is perceived in relation to an underlying beat and within the context of a meter. Western musical notation indicates to the performer the exact duration of each note or rest.

## Romantic

A period of music history lasting from approximately 1830 to 1900. Beginning in literature and later adopted by composers, romanticism reflected a newfound focus on individuality, nature, and emotional extremes. Music from the Romantic period often explores music’s redemptive power, focusing on the sublimity of nature, love, and the mysterious. Composers began to experiment with shortening and lengthening the standard forms and durations of musical works, and also added more expressive harmonies to convey the originality of their musical vision.

## score

The complete musical notation for a piece, the score includes notated lines for all of the different instrumental and vocal parts that unite to constitute a musical composition. In an opera orchestra, the conductor follows the score during rehearsals and performances, while each performer follows his or her individual part.

## Singspiel

Literally “sung play,” a Singspiel is an opera with spoken dialogue. Singspiels are typically in German and are from the Classical or early Romantic eras. The plot of a Singspiel is usually comic in nature, and its music may include songs, choruses, and instrumental numbers that are separated by spoken dialogue.

## solo

A piece, musical passage, or line for a lone singer or other performer, with or without instrumental accompaniment. The most common type of solo in opera is the aria, which is composed for a single voice with orchestral accompaniment.

## soprano

The highest singing range for the female voice. Roles composed for soprano singers are typically among the leading roles in the opera and require soprano singers to show off their virtuosic flexibility and range.

## tempo

Literally “time” in Italian, tempo refers to the speed of a piece of music. Tempo is indicated in a score by a variety of conventional (often Italian) words—such as *allegro*, *adagio*, *vivace*, *moderato*, *grave*, and many more—that not only provide direction on the composer’s desired rate of speed, but also carry associations of gesture and character. For instance, *vivace* indicates not only a brisk speed but also a lively spirit. Additional tempo markings may indicate when a composer asks for a section of music to be sped up (such as “*accelerando*”) or slowed down (such as “*rallentando*”).

## tenor

The highest natural male vocal range. By the nineteenth century, the tenor had become the most common vocal range for male leading roles in operas. Tenor roles often feature high-pitched notes for male voice in order to showcase the singer’s range and power. A related voice type is the countertenor, with a range above that of a tenor and similar to that of a contralto.

## theme/motive

Themes are the melodic ideas that are musical building blocks for a piece. A theme is often recognizable as a distinct tune and may reappear in its original form or in altered form throughout the piece. A motif (or motive) is a brief musical idea that recurs throughout a musical work. Motives can be based on a melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic component, and their repetition makes them recognizable to the listener. In opera, musical motives are often symbolically associated with specific characters or dramatic ideas.

## timbre

Pronounced TAM-bruh, a French word that means “sound color.” It refers to the complex combination of characteristics that give each instrument or voice its unique sound. Just as we can recognize each other by the differences in our speaking voices, operatic singing voices are distinguishable by their unique timbres. Listeners can also identify orchestral instruments by their timbre without being able to see them. The creative combination of different instrumental timbres is one of the artistic aspects of orchestration.

## trill

A rapid alternation between two pitches that are adjacent to one another. Trills are a type of ornamentation, serving to embellish the melodic line, and appear regularly within *coloratura* passages. Trills also may appear near the end of a piece in order to prolong the musical tension before the music concludes.

## verismo

A movement in Italian theater and opera in the late 19th century that embraced realism and explored areas of society previously ignored on the stage: the poor, the lower-class, and the criminal. Its characters are driven by passion to defy reason, morality, and the law. In order to reflect these emotional extremes, composers of verismo opera developed a musical style that communicates raw and unfiltered passions. Musically, verismo operas react against the forced ornamentation of the *bel canto* style and instead emphasize a more natural setting of the text to music. Before its exploration on the operatic stage, the verismo aesthetic first developed within the realm of literature.

January 19, 2017

Conducted by Marco Armiliato

Reviewed by \_\_\_\_\_

THE STARS:	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
Maria Agresta as Leonora	*****	
Yonghoon Lee as Manrico	*****	
Anita Rachvelishvili as Azucena	*****	
Quinn Kelsey as the Count di Luna	*****	
Štefan Kocán as Ferrando	*****	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
The story of the Count's baby brother			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Leonora explains how she met the troubadour			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Leonora makes a mistake and the Count challenges Manrico to a duel			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
The Anvil Chorus			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Azucena's story			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Ruiz brings news of the battle			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
The Count thinks of Leonora's shining smile			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
A chorus of nuns			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
A fight in the convent			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Azucena is captured			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Leonora and Manrico wait for their wedding			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Manrico will save Azucena or die trying			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Leonora sings outside Manrico's prison			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Leonora and the Count strike a bargain			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Azucena and Manrico in prison			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Leonora comes to save Manrico			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	
Leonora's last words			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Azucena's revenge			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5