

Verdi and the Orchestra

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 - The Romantic Period
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- General Observations about Verdi's Orchestration
 - Contemporary Influences
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Overview

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- Creating Atmosphere
- Lady Macbeth and Lady Macbeth 18 years later
- Coloring a Theme
- The Strings
- The Woodwinds
- The Uses of Silence



Overview

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Social and Cultural Conditions

- Urbanization and Industrialization
- Railways and Telegraph
- National and Revolutionary Spirit



19th Century

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The Romantic Period

- 1815 - 1910
- Emotional and Intuitive Reality
- Orchestral Texture as Expression
- Chromatic and Harmonic Innovations
- Romantic Conception of the Artist



19th Century

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The Romantic Conception of the Artist - Virtuosity

I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata, Act III, Ch. 17, Preludio
Franco Fantini, Violinist
Kultur DVD, Teatro alla Scala, Gianandrea Gavazzeni, Conductor



19th Century

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The Orchestra

- The Conductor
- Professionalism
- Technical Improvements in Instruments
- Contributions of the Opera
- Size and Composition



19th Century

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Size and Composition of the Orchestra
Milan, La Scala
1814 and 1890

	<u>1814</u>	<u>1890</u>
Woodwinds	6 (no piccolos, bassoons or bass clarinet)	13
Horns	7 (no English horn, tuba or cornet)	12
Percussion	2 (timpani, no harp)	7
Violins	25	16+14
Violas	6	10
Cellos + basses	4 + 8	11+11
Totals	58	95



19th Century



David Van Edwards



Theorbo



Nick Byrne



Ophicleide

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- The 18th Century
- The Neapolitan Style in Italy
- *Recitativo Accompagnato*
- Rossini's Innovations



Opera as Music Drama

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- Contemporary Influences
 - Paris Grand Opera
 - Wagner?
- First Principle – A Dramatic Artist
 - “Good orchestration is not variety and unique effects. Orchestration is good if it has a meaning.”
Travis, Francis, p.55
- Rehearsing and Conducting



Verdi's Orchestration

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A Deputy colleague, Quintino Sella, asked him, “When you are composing one of your stupendous pieces of music, how does the idea present itself to your mind/ Do you work out the main theme first and then add accompaniment to it, and then afterward consider the nature of the accompaniment, whether it shall be for flutes or violins and so forth?”

Verdi answered, “No, no, no. The idea comes complete, and above all I feel the color of which you speak, whether it should be for flutes, violins and so forth. My difficulty is in writing down the musical thought quickly enough to capture it in its integrity just as it comes into my mind.”

As recounted in Martin, George, p. 414.



Verdi's Orchestration

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Traditional Opera Structure



1. Scene Structure

Act I Ernani scheme, from Martin, George, pp. 130-131

Scene 1 Chorus: Drinking song

Ernani: short recitativo, slow aria, short chorus, faster aria

Scene 2 Elvira: short recitativo, slow aria, short chorus, faster aria

Don Carlo: short recitativo, slow aria,

Little finale: faster duet with Evira, recitativo as Ernani enters, faster trio

Silva: short recitativo, slow aria, short recitativo, faster aria

Bigger finale: short recitativo, all slow, all fast

Grand finale: recitativo, all faster, all fastest



Verdi's Orchestration

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2. How the structure slows the drama:

Introduction to the Drinking Song

La Traviata, Act I, scene 1

DVD Video DVD, A Franco Zeffirelli Film, The Metropolitan Opera, James Levine, Conductor

3. Traditional Aria Structure

- Woodwind introduction, string melody, woodwind color
- Melody, embellishments; slower and faster



Verdi's Orchestration

- Traditional Opera Structure

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- “Um-ta”

I Lombardi, Act II, scene 1

Jose Carreras as Oronte, “La mia letizia infondere vorrei”

- - Born to focus attention on the voice
- - Mostly disappears with the aria

- Compare: Aida, Act II, scene 2

Deutsche Grammophon DVD, The Metropolitan Opera, James Levine, Conductor, 1989

Aprile Milo as Aida, “Numi, pietà”



Verdi's Orchestration

– Traditional Opera Structure

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Uneven development

- Using what works
- The “galley years”
- Learning from experience

Early operas – Oberto and Un Giorno di Regno

- Block instrumentation
- The voice is the thing
- Some *basso continuo*
- Pure “um-ta”
- Doubling the voice
- Unsophisticated

Nabucco, Act IV, Scene 1, “O prodi miei, seguitemi”

Image DVD, Teatro di San Carlo, Paolo Carignani, Conductor, 1998

Renato Bruson as Nabucco



Verdi's Orchestration

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Creating Atmosphere

Tomb Scene – Ernani

Kultur DVD, Teatro alla Scala, Riccardo Muti, Conductor, 1982

Renato Bruson as Don Carlo



Relating Orchestration to the Drama

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Storm scene – Otello

*Deutsche Grammophon DVD, The Metropolitan Opera, James Levine,
Conductor, 1996*

Act I, “*Una vela! Una vela!*”

- Lightening, thunder, commotion, lull
- The human element
- Direct entry to the action



Relating Orchestration to the Drama

- Creating Atmosphere

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Lady Macbeth and Lady Macbeth 18 years later

RM Art DVD, Opernhaus Zurich, Franz Welser-Most, Conductor, 2001

Paoletta Marrocu, Lady Macbeth - Act IV, Scene 2, "*Una macchia*"
Act II, Scene 1, "*La luce langue*"

- Comparison
- Second principle
- Standard aria accompaniment v individualization



Relating Orchestration to the Drama

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Coloring a Theme

1. Aida's theme in the Overture
2. Aida's entry in Act II, scene 1.
3. Aida's entry, Act III.



Relating Orchestration to the Drama

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The Strings

Attila, Overture

Opus Arte DVD, Teatro alla Scala, Riccardo Muti, Conductor, 1982

- First extended passage
- Triple octaves in violins and cellos

La Traviata, Act IV, Prelude

- If violins could weep
- String divisi
- Allegro staccato



Relating Orchestration to the Drama

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Aida, Act III, Scene 1, Introduction

*Deutsche Grammophon DVD, The Metropolitan Opera, James Levine,
Conductor, 1989*

- Four string techniques
- Precise directions



Relating Orchestration to the Drama

- The Strings

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The Woodwinds

La Traviata, Act II, Ch. 12, Introduction to Letter Writing Scene

Teresa Stratas as Violetta

- The Instrumental Aria

La Forza del Destino, Act II, Scene 1, “*La vita e inferno all’infelice*”

Pioneer Classics DVD, The Metropolitan Opera, James Levine, Conductor, 1986

Giuseppe Giacomini as Don Alvaro



Relating Orchestration to the Drama

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Otello, Act IV, “Piangea cantanda”

Renee Fleming as Desdemona

- Woodwinds can weep too
- Piccolo, flutes and clarinets



Relating Orchestration to the Drama

- The Woodwinds

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The Uses of Silence

- Silent orchestra
Otello, Act II, scene 1: "Credo in un Dio Crudel"
James Morris as Iago
- Silent voice
Otello, Act IV, Otello's entry into Desdemona's chamber
Placido Domingo as Otello, Renee Fleming as Desdemona



Relating Orchestration to the Drama

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