

Gabriella MINARINI, *Giuseppe Verdi e L'allestimento di «Attila» a La Fenice: Venezia 17 marzo 1846*, Firenze, Edizioni Cooperativa Firenze 2000, 2014, 366 pp.

The title of this publication seems to suggest a rather specific focus—the production of the world premiere of Giuseppe Verdi's *Attila* in a specific location and at a specific time. In this light, the volume puzzlingly delivers less and more. On one hand, Gabriella Minarini has gathered a large quantity of documents, presented in full in Part II (173-337). Many of these documents (especially Verdi's correspondence) are available or referenced in various studies, from Marcello Conati's *La bottega della musica* (which is adequately referenced throughout the volume) to Helen M. Greenwald's 2012 critical edition of the opera (which goes unmentioned); a variety of archival records, however, as well as letters between the establishment of La Fenice and various external parties, are not as familiar, and although they are not life-changing in terms of revising familiar narratives of the genesis of *Attila*, they are informative, and it is useful to find them transcribed in full in one place (it might have been productive, perhaps, to publish these according to the norms of the volumes of correspondence published by the Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani, rather than in diplomatic transcription).

On the other hand, Part I of Minarini's text is broader than one might infer from the title. The author clarifies her approach in a brief *Premessa*: although the claim that "non più di una trentina di documenti" concerning the creation and production of the opera are currently known (7) is difficult to understand, the argument for a contextual discussion that looks beyond the circumstances pertaining to this individual opera is perfectly reasonable. Coherently with that argument, the discussion doesn't merely focus on *Attila*, but revolves "around" it; in so doing it shifts in and out of focus perhaps more than it would be advisable, and at times it is difficult to identify a sense of direction or purpose, as numerous digressions provide mostly accurate but rarely original information on Verdi, his collaborators, and his works of the early 1840s. Chapter 1 discusses this period drawing mostly on correspondence, and examines the composer's relationship with friends, librettists, impresarios and publishers. Chapter 2 zooms in on La Fenice, following the trajectory from *Ernani* to the commission and production of *Attila* and beyond. Chapter 3 (*Attila in scena a La Fenice*) concentrates on the opera at hand, surveying its genesis, production, and reception at La Fenice.

Minarini's text originates as a Master's thesis (2011). It would have been helpful to update the bibliography, as important items of recent publication are altogether omitted from it and ignored in the discussion. I have mentioned Greenwald's edition of *Attila*, whose thorough *Introduction* would have been useful to Minarini in filling in some details; even more surprising is the absence from the bibliography of the *Attila* forum edited by Greenwald and published in *Cambridge Opera Journal* (2009). In terms of engaging with current scholarship, Minarini's work falls somewhat short of expectations.

A closing appendix of about twenty pages presents "Nuove ricerche in merito al libretto per *Attila*" (349-366). Here, Minarini leads from a consideration of treatments of the theme of *Attila* in earlier opera librettos and more broadly in early nineteenth-century Italian culture. Despite some interesting insights, again, closer attention to extant scholarship would have been beneficial: the items mentioned previously, as well as Markus Engelhardt's *Verdi und andere* (which contains an extensive chapter devoted to *Attila*)<sup>1</sup> would have provided context and helped revise or finesse some of Minarini's line of argument. Despite these shortcomings, the documents contained in her study complement the wealth of materials concerning Verdi in the 1840s and the Teatro La Fenice, and deserve a closer look.

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