

Marco CAPRA, *Verdi in prima pagina: nascita, sviluppo e affermazione della figura di Verdi nella stampa italiana dal XIX al XXI secolo*, Lucca, Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2014, XXI + 485 pp.

One assumes that this book just missed the 2013 celebrations, and its cover – a Fascist portrait of Verdi, proud blue eyes, with VIVA V.E.R.D.I. as the upper crown – certainly gives the air of an opportunist publication. But in fact this is a serious volume, collecting together, as its compendious title affirms, a series of extracts that describe the progress of Verdi through the Italian press over the last two centuries. The editor, Marco Capra, is uniquely qualified to undertake such a project, at least so far as its first hundred years is concerned, in that he is Director of Parma's CIRPeM archive of Italian musical periodicals. His introductory essay, entitled *Da gloria musicale a padre della patria: Tappe di un percorso mediatico (XIII-XXVII)*, might seem to be paying lip-service to two starkly opposing attitudes to Verdi (to be brief, those occupying either side of the colon). In the end, though, Capra is what we might call "cautiously unequivocal" about that "percorso mediatico" during the lifetime of the composer. As he says (and I italicise the caution): "Sono *propenso a ritenere che ancora non esistano prove davvero convincenti del fatto che Verdi e le sue opere svolgessero quel ruolo attivo, determinante ed esclusivo in funzione risorgimentale e patriottica*" (XX). In the circumstances this qualifies as progress.

His chosen extracts from the first century offer a selection that might seem *vieux jeux* to an experienced Verdian, but is nonetheless defensible: Mazzucato on *Nabucodonosor*, Bermani's *Schizzi*, Basevi's *Studio*, Filippi on *Un ballo in maschera*, then Soffredini, Torchi and Monaldi for the *fine secolo* and beyond. What is more, interspersed between these well-known items are some interesting anti-Verdian selections, and also a fascinating essay by Giuseppe Rovani from 1857. The second century is less predictable, obviously, and one might question some of the later selections; but the sad crescendo of "patriotic" interpretations that comes to climax in

1941 is well represented, not least with Ildebrando Pizzetti's fervid outpourings in *Musica d'oggi*: "Se lo spirito di Verdi è qui presente, egli certo deve oggi più che mai consentire che noi ricantiamo quel suo coro di amore della Patria. Perché anche oggi vi sono, oltremare, soldati d'Italia che in durezza di climi [...] combattono per la dignità per la grandezza per la gloria della Patria" (367).

All in all, then, this is a valuable and carefully presented book, well worth its space on the shelves of the Verdian faithful.

Roger Parker