

L'occhiuta polizia sabauda, per fare un esempio, che regola minuziosamente la vita teatrale genovese e si mostra burocraticamente ottusa e repressiva, affligge Genova tanto quanto le istituzioni preposte alla censura opprimono altre città italiane; anzi, nella Milano asburgica o nella Napoli borbonica le cose vanno anche peggio. O ancora: l'edificazione di un teatro per iniziativa di un consorzio civico di cittadini, che poi restano proprietari dei palchi, segue il modello più comune nell'Italia di fine Settecento e primo Ottocento; è dunque difficile sostenere che il Carlo Felice, «costruito e voluto dai Genovesi, fu un caso a sé nel panorama ottocentesco» (25). Possono lasciare perplesso il lettore anche alcune interpretazioni che sembrano un po' forzate, come avviene per le già ricordate scene di Canzio per *Norma* al Carlo Felice (1848), nelle quali Ivaldi si sforza di rintracciare significati metaforici politicamente significativi e di ricondurre il lavoro dello scenografo genovese al 'canone' risorgimentale («La precisa focalizzazione del letto della sacerdotessa poteva inoltre essere funzionale ad alcune direttive della politica estera di Carlo Alberto di Savoia-Carignano e della dinastia da lui iniziata, non certo priva di ambizioni», 206). Ma forse sono, questi, peccati veniali giustificati dall'amor di patria: l'attaccamento dell'autore alla sua città e alla sua storia lo porta talvolta a formulare giudizi storico-politici un poco tendenziosi. Anche laddove la trattazione si limita al contesto locale, in ogni caso, le aperture prospettiche sul resto della nazione si rivelano spesso illuminanti. Per la ricchezza dei dati e l'acribia della ricerca questo volume si rivela uno strumento prezioso: non solo perché corrobora tesi già note agli storici, aggiungendo un tassello al quadro generale, ma anche perché mostra alcune linee di ricerca poco frequentate, benché promettenti, agli studi futuri.

Claudio Toscani

Olga JESURUM, *Il personaggio muto. Due secoli di scenografia verdiana*, Parma, Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani (Premio internazionale Rotary Club di Parma «Giuseppe Verdi», 7), 2014 [giugno 2015], 226 pp.

Verdi on screen [Actes du colloque «Dentro il cristallo arcano»: Verdi à l'écran, Fribourg-Lausanne, 6-8 novembre 2013], sous la direction de Delphine VINCENT, Lausanne, Editions L'Age d'Homme, 2015, 267 pp.

Delphine VINCENT, *Un colloque pour un bicentenaire: Verdi, sa musique et les moving images* (9) – Paul FRYER, *Verdi, the «bio-pic» and the birth of silent screen opera* (27) – Luca ZOPPELLI, *Les intellectuels et l'apocalypse: pédagogie et dépolitisation dans le feuille-*

ton de Renato Castellani (1982) (38) – Matteo GIUGGIOLI, *La rabbia et la memoria: Bellocchio e Verdi, dal cinema politico alla regia d'opera* (49) – Peter NIEDERMÜLLER, *Verdi und seine politische Dimension in den Filmen Bernardo Bertoluccis* (67) – Marco ANDRETTI, *Violetta violata: Visconti, Pasolini, Bellocchio* (83) – Roberto CALABRETTO, *Presenze verdiane nel cinema italiano del secondo dopoguerra* (100) – Pierre JAILLOUX, *Verdi par Argento: «l'opera traviata»* (126) – Delphine VINCENT, *To Verdi With Love? Citations verdiennes dans le cinéma américain contemporain* (137) – Marco TARGA, *La musica per il film «Il trovatore» (Film d'Arte italiana, 1910)* (162) – Jaume RADIGALES, *Le Verdi shakespearien à l'écran* (177) – Giorgio BIANCOROSSO, *The big screen and Verdi's stage* (190) – Bernhard KUHN, *Live at the cinema: the Metropolitan Opera's cinecast of «La traviata»* (210) – Héctor J. PÉREZ, *«Don Carlo»: narrativa politica ed estetica audiovisiva* (226) – Charlotte REY, *Attractions et dispositif spectatorial dans «Traviata et nous»* (Philippe Béziat, 2012) (233) – Carlo CENCIARELLI, *Warped singing: opera from cinema to YouTube* (251)

In 2001, in the landmark edited volume *Verdi in Performance*, Mike Ashman lamented the persistent neglect of Verdi in histories of operatic production and stage design, noting that even discussions of “Verdian performance history will focus first on singers and impresarios, then conductors, but rarely on the directors’ work.”¹ Although this situation has since begun to change, recently burgeoning investigations into the relationships between opera and cinema have once more tended to sideline Verdi in favor of Wagner— reason enough to welcome the two publications under review, each of which addresses over a century of (audio)visual practices related to Verdi. To be sure, their titles are somewhat misleading. Olga Jesurum’s monograph focuses on Italy, giving consideration even to Parisian developments only inasmuch as they influenced Verdi or Italian theaters; and it ends in 1955 with Luchino Visconti’s famous Milanese *Traviata* featuring Maria Callas, a production which—Jesurum argues—sealed the importance and acceptance of modern stage direction in opera (143). Her detailed case studies, meanwhile, are restricted to four operas of Verdi’s so-called middle period: *La traviata*, *Les vêpres siciliennes*, *Un ballo in maschera*, and *La forza del destino*. These internationally influenced works reveal the growing significance of visual considerations in Verdi’s creative process (2; more practically, these operas were largely absent from the seminal 1994 exhibition of Verdian scenography in which Jesurum herself was

¹ Mike ASHMAN, “Misinterpreting Verdian Dramaturgy: History and Grand Opera”, in *Verdi in Performance*, ed. Alison LATHAM and Roger PARKER (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 42-46, here 43.

involved; *ibid.*).² By contrast, the essays gathered in *Verdi on Screen* address more than this title suggests: they deal not only with the uses and representations of Verdi and his operas in films and other new media, but also with their wider cultural resonances—although a penchant for Italian and French developments is evident also here.

Jesurum's project (which won the International Verdi Prize of the Parma Rotary Club in 1995) takes its cue and title from Victor Hugo's notion, expounded in the preface to his 1827 *Cromwell*, of the stage set as a "silent character"—a presence as essential to a play's effect as any human character (8). The two parts of the monograph deal with the nineteenth and twentieth century respectively, and their introductory chapters outline the key players and cultural factors contributing to the increasing value attributed to the visual dimension in Italian opera. These fascinating chapters—along with the connecting *Intermezzo* on Toscanini's historically mediating role between the composer and the modern director as ultimate stage authority—offer a concise introduction to Italian operatic production. Jesurum traces Verdi's growing attention to the scenic dimension through the influences of German and French romanticism (which he partly absorbed in Milanese salons) and his eventual encounter with French production books, which allowed him to realize his desired "aderenza fra azione e musica" (45). In addition, Verdi's career began during a time of renewed artistic attention to stage design at La Scala, which facilitated his collaboration with some of the most important scene painters of the era: Filippo Peroni and Carlo Ferrario in Milan as well as Giuseppe and Pietro Bertoja in Venice. For the nineteenth century, the four operatic case studies are oriented around surviving iconographic materials by these artists as well as by Ferdinando Manzini in Modena, Giuseppe Rossi in Perugia, and others; the inclusion of seventy sketches reproduced as color plates is one of the book's great boons. Among Jesurum's interesting findings are the frequent intertextual connections between the source plays and the *mises en scène* of the operas based on them. Regarding *La traviata*, for instance, a visual kinship with Dumas's play (more than with its Italian translation) partially counteracted the backdated eighteenth-century décor that censorship had enforced on the Venetian premiere; for *Les vêpres siciliennes*, painted concretizations of the Sicilian settings derived from popular Risor-

² See «*Sorgete! Ombre serene!*» *L'aspetto visivo dello spettacolo verdiano*, ed. Pierluigi PETROBELLI, Marisa DI GREGORIO CASATI, and Olga JESURUM (Parma: Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani, 1996).

gimento iconography. What becomes evident is that even premiere productions of Verdi's works often strayed from details in the libretto, and that these initial stagings were in turn frequently treated as models for productions elsewhere. It is unsurprising, then, that the first *disposizioni sceniche* as well as Francesco Maria Piave's published instructions for the staging of *La forza del destino* became widely influential, as Jesurum reveals with a keen eye for pictorial detail.

Not until the early twentieth century did Italian stage designers begin actively to pursue new directions. In her introduction to Part 2, Jesurum outlines key stimuli for this longer-term development, among them Adolphe Appia's theories on Wagnerian staging, the Ballets Russes and its influence on theatrical futurism, and—perhaps most specific to Italy—Vittorio Podrecca's Rome-based Teatro dei Piccoli, a marionette theater featuring nineteenth-century operas with young singers and avant-garde designers, including Giorgio de Chirico, that demonstrated opera's topicality and motivated visual artists to work for the theater (109). As another link to the modern era, Jesurum presents the experimental Turin Theater under Riccardo Gualino during the late 1920s. Several of its musical and intellectual figureheads went on to help establish the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in 1933, which put innovative Italian staging on the international map. Featuring one Verdi opera every year for two decades, this festival ensured both the ongoing visual rejuvenation and the expansion of the Verdian canon (116-117). By 1960, Alexandre Benois (co-founder of *Mir iskusstva* and eminent stage designer for the Ballets Russes) and his son Nicola offered the first Italian discussion of Verdian staging in a musicological context (118-122).

Jesurum subsumes all these developments under the rise of independent stage direction, or *regia*—a neologism whose applicability to direction beyond design was established in Italy by the linguist Bruno Migliorini in 1932 (113-114). Migliorini explicitly referred to German stagings by Max Reinhardt and others for productions that warranted the new (French) term. It seems ironic, then, that *Il personaggio muto* all but ignores this Germanic context. Even the so-called German "Verdi Renaissance" is mentioned in merely two sentences (135), although it pioneered expressionist Verdi stagings, motivated Verdi revivals internationally, and influenced some of the directors who were later active at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino. The new standing of direction also renders Jesurum's iconography-based approach to twentieth-century stagings increasingly problematic. If stage design amounts to a mute character, direction might be likened to

the spirit that animates it through a range of modalities including acting, gestures, costumes, blocking, and lighting. With many more sources surviving for the twentieth century, a comparative look not just at the occasional program note but also at production scores, directors' notes, and reviews could thus have helped to reconstruct a more dynamic sense of individual productions' designs. Perhaps this is why the book had to end in the mid-twentieth century: with directors as independently famous as Visconti entering the domain of opera, and with the first video recordings just around the corner, later productions would certainly have called for a different methodological approach.

Implicitly, Jesurum's agenda thus neatly leads to that of *Verdi on screen*, which collectively shows just how prominently Verdi's operas have featured in the history of cinema. What is more, several authors note how new media have also been filtering back into stage aesthetics, thus rendering film a further innovation Jesurum might have listed among the early twentieth-century stimuli for updated stage design. Another link between both volumes is the prominence of *La traviata*, which emerges in *Verdi on Screen* as the work by far the most frequently filmed, cinematically represented, or sonically exploited across a variety of multimedia. As is common for proceedings (here of a bicentennial conference held jointly at the universities of Fribourg and Lausanne), the volume does not reflect on such resonances between its individual contributions. Delphine Vincent's introduction instead contextualizes each essay within a rich survey of scholarship on opera's links with cinema and other media—a solid bibliographic foundation unfortunately missing in some of the essays. Vincent also points to areas of research not covered in the volume, such as the use of Verdi's music in commercials, TV dramas, or television series (26). Yet television is not entirely absent: Luca Zoppelli astutely examines the depoliticizing aspects and complex reception of Renato Castellani's nine-episode *Verdi* biopic that was aired by RAI and other European networks in 1982. With individual operas shorn of Risorgimento sentiment or anti-clerical gist and only the "trilogia popolare" rendered through more modern filmic means, Verdi and his oeuvre emerge in Zoppelli's analysis as prisms of socio-political conflicts and objects of a cultural nostalgia for (certain aspects of) the nineteenth century. Similar topics are broached in Paul Fryer's discussion of Giuseppe De Liguoro's *Giuseppe Verdi nella vita e nella gloria*, an important educational tool of 1913 that also documents early twentieth-century staging practices (unfortunately, this essay is hampered by a lack of substantiating references and editorial rigor).

Among the five authors dealing with postwar Italian cinema, Peter Niedermüller similarly addresses the (left-wing) political appropriation of Verdi in Bertolucci's *Prima della rivoluzione*, *Strategia del ragno*, and *Novecento*, while Pierre Jailloux reads the irreverent treatment of Verdi's works in two of Dario Argento's horror films as a testament to a shared emphasis on emotional effects, hyperbole, and spectacle. Two essays discuss Marco Bellocchio's 1965 feature *I pugni in tasca*. Matteo Giuggioli convincingly develops a detailed reading of the film's final (and fatal) playing of a recording of *La traviata* to reflect not only on the semiotic significance of Verdian quotations in this and other Bellocchio pictures but also on opera's various passages into and survival within the filmic medium more generally. Marco Andreotti examines *I pugni in tasca* side-by-side with Visconti's *Ossessione* and Pasolini's *La ricotta*, three films linked through their—however different and fragmentary—quotations from *La traviata*. The film also features in Roberto Calabretto's more widely cast survey of Verdian and other operatic traces in Italian film scores between 1950 and 1980. Delphine Vincent's spirited examination of Verdi citations in a cross-section of American films since 1990 reveals rather clichéd associations: his music is summoned most frequently to emphasize *italianità* (particularly in connection with food); love comes in second, followed by situations or characters marked as elitist. Only occasionally does Verdi's music offer ironic or intertextual commentary, while mafia scenes are more typically underscored with extracts from *verismo* works and Verdi's political cachet has not made it across the Atlantic (139). Vincent also ranks the types and contexts of citations as well as the operatic extracts used, with those from *La traviata* once again topping the charts.

Several essays address Verdi's operas more directly. According to Marco Targa, the first decade of Italian cinema produced a number of silent film adaptations of plays and operas to elevate the new medium's artistic status. These films included not only Verdi's most popular works but also *Ernani*, *Luisa Miller*, and *La forza del destino*. Focusing on Charles Müller's accompaniment for Film d'Arte italiana's 1910 rendition of *Il trovatore* (one of the rare surviving scores for so-called *opere in prosa*), Targa argues that such scores were produced specifically for American distribution and marketed as "incidental music" (170). Their selection of music from the relevant opera was to be synchronized with the picture by jumping to the next number with each intertitle, resulting in a rapid musical collage befitting the cinematic medium. Rehearsing well-known facts about Verdi's Shakespeare-based operas, Jaume Radigales focuses on the effects of

cinematic flashbacks in some of their famous filmic adaptations and calls for greater attention to Verdi's *parola scenica*, whose impact tends to get lost with the use of playback. By contrast, Giorgio Biancorosso maintains that cinematic techniques can reveal new staging practices for opera, for instance through sound editing. His chief example is *La traviata*'s Act I *duettino*, in which the temporary fading of the *banda*'s diegetic dance music signals the increasingly selective awareness of the would-be lovers. On stage, Biancorosso proposes, this change of consciousness can best be manifested not by having the party guests move into an adjacent room but by a visual fade-out of their dancing through scrims and lights—a solution equivalent to a cinematic close-up with sound editing that was not yet available to Verdi. Charlotte Rey argues that Philippe Béziat's 2012 documentary *Traviata et nous* similarly opens “new horizons” (250) for this opera, here by interweaving the latter's narrative with that of the genesis of Jean-François Sivadier's production for the 2011 Festival d'Aix-en-Provence. Following a neat typology of operatic renditions on screen (a classification that merits wider circulation), Bernhard Kuhn compares the Metropolitan Opera's 2012 HD “performance mediatization” of its 2010 production of *La traviata* with other “medial concretizations” of this opera as well as with the video recording of the same production's original Salzburg rendition of 2005, filmed by veteran opera videographer Brian Large. In comparison to the latter, Gary Halvorson (Large's successor as the Met's leading video director) uses about twice as many cuts during the prelude alone, along with more dynamic shots that create “a highly fluid visual narrative” (221). In addition to enhancing some of the production's interpretive features, Halvorson's camera direction also occasionally adds a new hermeneutic dimension, thus rendering the cinecast a spectacle *sui generis* (224).

Héctor J. Pérez alone does not specifically address the impact of cinematic media, although he discusses Peter Konwitschny's notorious *Don Carlos* (premiered in Hamburg in 2001) by means of its Viennese video recording of 2004. Exactly why Pérez complains of a lack of scholarship on the recently expanded domain of operatic staging is unclear; his suggestion, building on James Hamilton,³ is to consider operatic staging as an independent performative narrative. Rounding off the ultimately uneven collection of essays is Carlo Cenciarelli's fascinating plea for the study of Verdian appearances in homemade, low-profile YouTube videos. The value of such seeming ephemera, he argues, lies in the fact that they reveal

³ James R. HAMILTON, *The Art of Theater* (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

how cinematic franchises mediate operatic extracts to otherwise “unlikely consumers” (265), and ones for whom opera primarily signifies sound. The operatic sound bites disseminated via cinematic media invite a number of participatory and recombinatory practices of automediacy (“new media practices of self-representation”, 261), which, in turn, map out new terrain in Verdi’s medial afterlife. That Cenciarelli’s study is part of a wider research project on Verdi and digital media that was awarded the 2009 edition of the Parma Rotary Club’s International Verdi Prize is a good signal for the growing understanding of Verdi’s influence on, and absorption into, all manner of new media.

Gundula Kreuzer

Giuseppe MARTINI, *Verdi benefattore e politico*, Fidenza, Mattioli 1885, 2014, 77 pp.

L’editore Mattioli pubblica un volumetto di lettere di Verdi, che ritrae due complementari aspetti della sua personalità: la solidarietà sociale e le opinioni sulla politica dei governi italiani, sempre più deludenti rispetto alle speranze del 1861. Sono 49 lettere tratte da celebri carteggi verdiani: Arrivabene, Piroli, Clara Maffei, Giulio Ricordi, e pochi altri dal 1859 al 1892. La selezione si chiude col testamento olografo, «un monumento alla responsabilità sociale» di Verdi, come scrive la prefatrice. E precisamente la *responsabilità* è il principio fondamentale, testimoniato dalle missive antologizzate; un principio “pre-politico”, che non riguarda le strutture oggettive dello stato o le leggi, ma l’etica soggettiva e i rapporti interpersonali. In questo, nella convinzione che lo stato sia proiezione-protezione delle libertà soggettive, e non che gli individui siano gli oggetti dello Stato sovrano, Verdi ha conservato l’impronta umanitaria della formazione giovanile. E questi principi orientano tanto le sue opinioni e l’azione filantropica, quanto il messaggio che egli affida alle opere.

La nota introduttiva del curatore e la *Prefazione* indicano alcuni temi sostanziali. Vera Zamagni evidenzia l’incomprensione di Verdi per il processo di industrializzazione impostato dai governi della Sinistra storica (e, aggiungo, la diffidenza per la “nuova scuola” politica). Il compositore è un uomo della generazione di Cavour e Ricasoli, convinto che la base dello sviluppo debba rimanere il settore agrario. Assistendo allo sviluppo industriale in tarda età, Verdi constata l’impoverimento progressivo delle