

The Cambridge Companion to Verdi

This *Companion* provides an accessible biographical, theatrical, and social-cultural background for Verdi's music, examines in detail important general aspects of its style and method of composition, and discusses stylistic themes in reviews of representative works. Aspects of Verdi's milieu, style, creative process, and critical reception are explored in essays by highly reputed specialists. Individual chapters address themes in Verdi's life, his role in transforming the theatre business, and his relationship to Italian Romanticism and the Risorgimento. Chapters on four operas representative of the different stages of Verdi's career, *Ernani*, *Rigoletto*, *Don Carlos*, and *Otello*, synthesize analytical themes introduced in the more general chapters and illustrate the richness of Verdi's creativity. The *Companion* also includes chapters on Verdi's non-operatic songs and other music, his creative process, and writing about Verdi from the nineteenth century to the present day.

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EDITED BY

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Preface

One of the most beloved composers of the nineteenth century, Giuseppe Verdi has rightfully enjoyed a high standing among opera lovers that continues to grow as productions and recordings of his works – including those that are lesser known – multiply and as the sophisticated artistry of his mature style becomes increasingly apparent. This *Companion* examines Verdi's operas and other music in the context of his life, his social and cultural surroundings, and the tradition of nineteenth-century Italian opera. Since a number of exemplary life-and-works treatments of Verdi are already available, this volume proceeds differently. It centers on a series of essays, each investigating a different theme across Verdi's career, that reveal aspects of his style and lines of development that might be obscured if individual operas were discussed separately.

The *Companion to Verdi*, like other volumes in the series, is aimed primarily at students and opera lovers who already have a broad background in music history and theory but have not proceeded to a specialized level. Authors have provided the foundation for students and performers to begin reading more specialized literature and pursuing their own investigations or for other opera lovers to expand and enrich their experiences of Verdi's music. At the same time, many chapters offer the fruits of new research and explore a particular thesis, and consequently may interest scholars already working in the field. Although each chapter constitutes a free-standing article, the *Companion* has been designed to create a readably intensive, integrated overview of Verdi's oeuvre while avoiding unnecessary overlaps. So it might, for example, serve as a focus for all or parts of a course on Verdi, on nineteenth-century Italian opera, or on topics in nineteenth-century music.

The *Companion's* opening chapters treat Verdi's personal and cultural environment. Mary Jane Phillips-Matz's biographical sketch introduces the reader to the composer's boyhood and education, his difficult entry into the operatic world, his relationships with librettists and performers, his involvement in Italian politics, and his activities in semi-retirement. Verdi's success as a composer depended to a great extent on understanding the conventions of the Italian theatre and surmounting its many obstacles. Alessandro Roccatagliati's chapter on the theatre business explains the basic circumstances of opera production when Verdi came onto the scene, then discusses the effect of Verdi's rising status on his dealings with management, performers,

and censors, and on attitudes toward the integrity of the musical score. Mary Ann Smart reexamines Verdi's ambivalent engagement with Italian Romanticism and the Risorgimento, the "myth" of his artistic leadership of the revolutionary movement, and his handling of patriotic themes in political opera.

The next section explores aspects of musical and textual style in Verdi's compositions. The vast majority of Verdi's lyrical set pieces are based on conventional schemata that are the Italian equivalent of the Viennese Classical forms yet are much less familiar to students of opera. My own chapter explains the designs of arias, duets, concertato finales, *introduzioni*, and scenes that end operas, suggesting ways in which Verdi modified the practices of his predecessors to fit his increasingly plot-oriented approach, and also examines his principles for constructing choruses. Fabrizio Della Seta's introduction to Verdi's librettos provides a primer in the essentials of Italian versification and compares the ways in which Verdi and his librettists adapted literary sources, distributed singers' workloads, treated versification, and chose wording in four operas across his career. Verdi's music changed remarkably over the years as he personalized the style inherited from his predecessors and developed a remarkably flexible and acute language. Emanuele Senici looks at ways in which music amplifies text at an immediate expressive level, analyzing the interaction between melodic form and poetic syntax and meaning, dramatization of evocative words and visual gestures, and musical word painting. Verdi's introduction to French grand opera during his first sojourn in Paris (1847–49) left an indelible impression: from the 1850s on, virtually all of his operas synthesize French and Italian elements to varying degrees. Andreas Giger describes some of the broader textual and musical features of French grand opera and French influence on the forms of Verdi's arias and on his treatment of chorus and ballet, instrumentation, and melodic style. Verdi set himself apart from his predecessors and paved the way for such later composers as Puccini by viewing his mature operas as unified wholes rather than as sequences of independent scenes. Steven Huebner investigates scholarly theories of structural coherence involving sonority, musical motive, and tonality, and the problem of "historical" analysis, particularly in *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, and *Un ballo in maschera*. Verdi was a leader among Italian composers in redefining the operatic role of the orchestra. David Kimbell introduces the various types of orchestral music in the operas – overtures and preludes for the opera and for individual acts, scenic music, dances and full-fledged ballets, mimetic music that captures localized gestures – and discusses Verdi's cultivation of *parlante*, vocal music in which the orchestra plays the lead role. In addition to operas, Verdi created a substantial body of other works for chorus,

solo voices, and, to a much lesser extent, instruments. Roberta Montemorra Marvin surveys Verdi's non-operatic songs, chamber and keyboard music, and choral works, giving special attention to the Requiem.

The following chapters discuss in detail four operas that represent different stages of Verdi's career: *Ernani*, an early success from Verdi's "galley years"; *Rigoletto*, one of his most popular operas from his middle period; *Don Carlos*, perhaps the greatest of his French grand operas; and *Otello*, one of the two sublime masterpieces of Verdi's old age. Though the focus of each of these chapters was chosen by its author, three of them deal, in different ways, with the theme of "otherness," a coincidence indicative of recent scholarly directions. Rosa Solinas relates the evolution of the tenor role in the mid-nineteenth century to characterization of the hero in *Ernani* and his status as an outcast. Cormac Newark examines the alleged importance of the curse motive in the musical structure and genesis of *Rigoletto* and the detachment of the three leads – and even the most famous song in the opera, "La donna è mobile" – from their social, historical, and stylistic contexts. My chapter on *Otello* discusses ways in which Desdemona's defeat by Iago in their contest over control of her husband and her subsequent alienation are conveyed not only through words and actions but also through shifts in her musical style and through Verdi's organization of keys. In contrast to these three interpretive essays, Harold Powers introduces *Don Carlos* with a discussion of Verdi's adaptation of the source play, production history, and aspects of French style, and compares in close detail the several variants of this opera, guiding the reader through the extremely complicated textual problems created by the principal Italian revision (and others) of the French original. Powers also comments on recorded performances of various versions of this opera.

Two final chapters introduce the reader to some important tools of Verdi scholarship – the documentary sources used in studying the creative process and in editing scores – and to directions taken by Verdi scholars over the past century. Luke Jensen gives readers a behind-the-scenes look at Verdi's collaboration with librettists, theatre managers, performers, and publishers by tracing seven creative stages – from the scenario to revisions of the published score – and proposes subdividing Verdi's career into four periods based on shifts in his working methods. Gregory Harwood chronicles Verdi's rising fortunes in the critical literature, discussing the principal biographical and stylistic studies and identifying recent scholarly trends.

A word concerning citation of sources. Scenes from the play on which an opera was based are designated with the act and scene in upper- and lower-case roman numerals and the line(s) in arabic numerals (e.g. III, ii, 24); operatic scenes defined by locale are designated with upper- and lower-case roman numerals (e.g. III, ii); individual musical pieces follow

Martin Chusid's *A Catalog of Verdi's Operas* and are given with acts in roman numerals and pieces, numbered continuously across the opera, in arabic numerals (e.g. III, 12).

I wish to thank all the authors and my editors for their patience with the lengthy process of bringing the *Companion* to completion. Special thanks to my copyeditor Laura Davey for her superhuman attention to detail. Dean Timothy Blair of the West Chester University School of Music provided grants for translating two of the chapters. Roger Parker offered consistently helpful input concerning the selection of contributors. Judy Balthazar edited my own chapters and this preface. I am grateful to her and to our son David for their support during the minor trials involved in preparing this volume.

Scott L. Balthazar

Chronology

<i>Year</i>	<i>Biography</i>	<i>Music and musicians</i>
1813	Verdi born, October 9 or 10, in Roncole near Busseto, son of Carlo Verdi and Luigia (née Uttini)	Rossini, <i>Tancredi</i> , Venice, La Fenice, February 6 Wagner born, Leipzig, May 22 Grétry dies, Paris, September 24 Teresa Brambilla, soprano, born, Cassano d'Adda, October 23 Felice Varesi, baritone, born, Calais
1814		Napoleon exiled to Elba, April
1815		Napoleon defeated at Waterloo, June 18, and exiled to St. Helena, ending the "Hundred Days" Giuseppina Strepponi, soprano, born, Lodi, September 8 Léon Escudier born, Castelnaudary, September 15 Temistocle Solera, librettist, born, Ferrara, December 25
1816		Gaetano Fraschini, tenor, born, Pavia, February 16 Rossini, <i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i> , Rome, Argentina, February 20 Paisiello dies, Naples, June 5 Rossini, <i>Otello</i> , Naples, Fondo, December 4
1817	Prior to age four, begins instruction in music and other subjects with local priests	Rossini, <i>La Cenerentola</i> , Rome, Valle, January 25 Madame de Staël dies, Paris, July 14 Méhul dies, Paris, October 18
1818		Marianna Barbieri-Nini, soprano, born, Florence, February 18 Erminia Frezzolini, soprano, born, Orvieto, March 27 Gounod born, Paris, June 17 Rossini, <i>La donna del lago</i> , Naples, San Carlo, October 24
1819		Offenbach born, Cologne, June 20

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| 1820 | Age seven, father buys him a spinet | Vittorio Emanuele II born, Turin, March 14
Jenny Lind, soprano, born, Stockholm, October 6
Carbonari-led Neapolitan revolution forces King Ferdinand I to promise a constitution |
| 1821 | | Weber, <i>Der Freischütz</i> , Berlin, Schauspielhaus, June 18 |
| 1822 | Age nine, becomes permanent organist at local church, San Michele | E. T. A. Hoffmann dies, Berlin, June 25 |
| 1823 | Moves with family to Busseto | Rossini, <i>Semiramide</i> , Venice, La Fenice, February 3 |
| 1824 | Age eleven, enters <i>ginnasio</i> in Busseto, is trained in Italian, Latin, humanities, and rhetoric | Bruckner born, Ansfelden, September 4
Antonio Ghizlanzoni born, Lecco, November 25
Cornelius born, Mainz, December 24
Leone Giraldoni, baritone, born, Paris |
| 1825 | Begins lessons with Ferdinando Provesi, <i>maestro di cappella</i> at San Bartolomeo in Busseto, director of municipal music school and local Philharmonic Society | Winter dies, Munich, October 17
Alessandro Manzoni, <i>I promessi sposi</i> (1825–27) |
| 1826 | Begins composing instrumental and vocal music | Sophie Cruvelli, soprano, born, Bielefeld, March 12
Weber dies, London, June 5 |
| 1827 | | Beethoven dies, Vienna, March 26
Bellini, <i>Il pirata</i> , Milan, La Scala, October 27 |
| 1828 | | Victor Hugo, preface to <i>Cromwell</i>
Auber, <i>La muette de Portici</i> , Paris, Opéra, February 29
Schubert dies, Vienna, November 19 |
| 1829 | Applies unsuccessfully for position as organist in Soragna | Rossini, <i>Guillaume Tell</i> , Paris, Opéra, August 3 |
| 1830 | | Goldmark born, Keszthely, May 18
Donizetti, <i>Anna Bolena</i> , Milan, Carcano, December 26 |
| 1831 | In May, moves into the house of Antonio Barezzi, his first patron | Hugo, <i>Hernani</i>
Bellini, <i>La sonnambula</i> , Milan, Carcano, March 6 |

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| | Begins relationship with Barezzi's daughter Margherita | Meyerbeer, <i>Robert le diable</i> , Paris, Opéra, November 21 |
| | Is granted a scholarship by the local Monte di Pietà e d'Abbondanza for 1833; Barezzi supplies funds for 1832 | Bellini, <i>Norma</i> , Milan, La Scala, December 26 |
| | | Unsuccessful Carbonari-led revolutions occur in Bologna, Parma, and Modena |
| | | Mazzini founds nationalist society, Young Italy |
| 1832 | In May, Verdi moves to Milan, is rejected for admission to the Conservatory | Camille Du Locle, librettist, born, Orange, July 16 |
| | Begins private study of counterpoint and free composition with Vincenzo Lavigna, previously <i>maestro concertatore</i> at La Scala | Hugo, <i>Le roi s'amuse</i> |
| 1833 | | Brahms born, Hamburg, May 7 |
| | | Provesi dies, Busseto, July 26 |
| | | Donizetti, <i>Lucrezia Borgia</i> , Milan, La Scala, December 26 |
| 1834 | Assists at the keyboard in performances of Haydn's <i>Creation</i> by a Milanese Philharmonic Society directed by Pietro Massini | Ludovic Halévy, librettist, born, Paris, January 1 |
| | | Teresa Stolz, soprano, born, Elbekosteletz (now Kostelec nad Labem), June 2 or 5 |
| | | Ponchielli born, Paderno Fasolaro (now Paderno Ponchielli), August 31 |
| 1835 | Completes studies with Lavigna | Bellini, <i>I puritani</i> , Paris, Italien, January 24 |
| | Co-directs Rossini's <i>La Cenerentola</i> with Massini | Bellini dies, Puteaux, September 23 |
| | | Donizetti, <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> , Naples, San Carlo, September 26 |
| 1836 | Appointed <i>maestro di musica</i> in Busseto | Meyerbeer, <i>Les huguenots</i> , Paris, Opéra, February 29 |
| | Marries Margherita Barezzi | |
| | Moves back to Busseto; directs and composes for the Philharmonic Society and gives private music lessons | Lavigna dies, Milan, September 14 |
| | Composes cantata for Massini's Philharmonic Society to honor Austrian Emperor Ferdinand I | Maria Malibran, mezzo-soprano, dies, Manchester, September 23 |
| | Composes first opera, <i>Rocester</i> | Giuseppe Mazzini, <i>Filosofia della musica</i> |

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| 1837 | March 26, daughter Virginia is born | Mercadante, <i>Il giuramento</i> , Milan, La Scala, March 11
Zingarelli dies, Torre del Greco, May 5 |
| 1838 | July 11, son Icilio Romano is born
August 12, Virginia dies
October, resigns position in Busseto
First publication, <i>Sei romanze</i> , appears in Milan | Bizet born, Paris, October 25 |
| 1839 | February, moves back to Milan
October 22, Icilio Romano dies
November 17, <i>Oberto</i> (revision of <i>Rocester</i>) performed, Milan, La Scala | Paer dies, Paris, May 3 |
| 1840 | June, Margherita dies
September 5, <i>Un giorno di regno</i> fails, Milan, La Scala
Verdi temporarily gives up composing | Paganini dies, Nice, May 27
Pacini, <i>Saffo</i> , Naples, San Carlo, November 29
Giulio Ricordi born, Milan, December 19 |
| 1841 | | |
| 1842 | March 9, <i>Nabucco</i> succeeds famously, Milan, La Scala | Boito born, Padua, February 24
Cherubini dies, Paris, March 15
Massenet born, Montand, Saint-Étienne, May 12
Wagner, <i>Rienzi</i> , Dresden, Kgl. Sächsisches Hoftheater, October 20
Maria Waldmann, mezzo-soprano, born, Vienna
<i>Gazzetta musicale di Milano</i> founded by Ricordi |
| 1843 | February 11, <i>I lombardi</i> performed, Milan, La Scala
Visits Vienna | Wagner, <i>Der fliegende Holländer</i> , Dresden, Kgl. Sächsisches Hoftheater, January 2
Donizetti, <i>Don Pasquale</i> , Paris, Italien, January 3
Adelina Patti, soprano, born, Madrid, February 19
Pacini, <i>Medea</i> , Palermo, Carolino, November 28 |
| 1844 | March 9, <i>Ernani</i> performed, Venice, La Fenice
November 3, <i>I due Foscari</i> performed, Rome, Argentina | |

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| | Begins to buy property in and near Busseto | |
| 1845 | February 15, <i>Giovanna d'Arco</i> performed, Milan, La Scala
August 12, <i>Alzira</i> performed, Naples, San Carlo | Wagner, <i>Tannhäuser</i> , Dresden, Kgl. Sächsisches Hoftheater, October 19
Mayr dies, Bergamo, December 2 |
| 1846 | March 17, <i>Attila</i> performed, Venice, La Fenice | |
| 1847 | March 14, <i>Macbeth</i> performed, Florence, Pergola
March until mid-1849, takes long trip beginning in London; lives in Paris with Strepponi for approximately two years
July 22, <i>I masnadieri</i> performed, London, Her Majesty's
November 26, <i>Jérusalem</i> (revision of <i>I lombardi</i>) performed, Paris, Opéra | Mendelssohn dies, Leipzig, November 4
Romilda Pantaleoni, soprano, born, Udine |
| 1848 | Visits Milan
October 25, <i>Il corsaro</i> performed, Trieste, Grande | Victor Maurel, baritone, born, Marseilles, June 17
Donizetti dies, Bergamo, November 29
First Italian War of Independence (1848–49) |
| 1849 | January 27, <i>La battaglia di Legnano</i> performed, Rome, Argentina
Returns to Busseto with Strepponi
December 8, <i>Luisa Miller</i> performed, Naples, San Carlo | Meyerbeer, <i>Le prophète</i> , Paris, Opéra, April 16
Nicolai dies, Berlin, May 11
Chopin dies, Paris, October 17 |
| 1850 | November 16, <i>Stiffelio</i> performed, Trieste, Grande | Wagner, <i>Lohengrin</i> , Weimar, Grossherzogliches Hoftheater, August 28
Francesco Tamagno, tenor, born, Turin, December 28 |
| 1851 | March 11, <i>Rigoletto</i> performed, Venice, La Fenice
With Strepponi, moves to farm of Sant'Agata, near Busseto | Spontini dies, Maiolati, January 24 |
| 1852 | | Salvatore Cammarano, librettist, dies, Naples, July 17 |

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| 1853 | January 19, <i>Il trovatore</i> performed, Rome, Apollo | Giovanni Ricordi dies, Milan, March 15 |
| | March 6, <i>La traviata</i> performed, Venice, La Fenice | Tito Ricordi becomes director of the Casa Ricordi (through 1888) |
| 1854 | Through 1855, spends two years in Paris, in which he completes and supervises production of <i>Les vèpres siciliennes</i> | Catalani born, Lucca, June 19
Humperdinck born, Siegburg, September 1
Wagner, <i>Das Rheingold</i> (first performed Munich, Kgl. Hof- und National, September 22, 1869) |
| 1855 | June 13, <i>Les vèpres siciliennes</i> performed, Paris, Opéra | |
| 1856 | | Wagner, <i>Die Walküre</i> (first performed Munich, Kgl. Hof- und National, June 26, 1870)
Schumann dies, Endenich, July 29 |
| 1857 | March 12, <i>Simon Boccanegra</i> performed, Venice, La Fenice
Substantially expands his estate at Sant'Agata
August 16, <i>Aroldo</i> (revision of <i>Stiffelio</i>) performed, Rimini, Nuovo | Leoncavallo born, Naples, April 23 |
| 1858 | | Offenbach, <i>Orphée aux enfers</i> , Paris, Bouffes-Parisiens, October 21
Puccini born, Lucca, December 22 or 23 |
| 1859 | February 17, <i>Un ballo in maschera</i> performed, Rome, Apollo
Marries Strepponi
“Viva VERDI” appears as an acrostic message (standing for Viva Vittorio Emanuele Re D'Italia) of Italian nationalism | Gounod, <i>Faust</i> , Paris, Lyrique, March 19
Wagner, <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> (first performed Munich, Kgl. Hof- und National, June 10, 1865)
Spohr dies, Kassel, October 22
Second Italian War of Independence (1859–60) |
| 1860 | Renovates estate at Sant'Agata | Mahler born, Kaliste, July 7
Garibaldi conquers Sicily and Naples 1860–80, period of the <i>scapigliati</i> led by Boito |
| 1861 | Through 1865, serves as deputy for Borgo San Donnino (now Fidenza) in the first Italian parliament | Eugène Scribe, librettist, dies, Paris, February 20
Cavour becomes first prime minister of Italy
Cavour dies, Turin, June 6
Marschner dies, Hanover, December 14 |

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| | | Vittorio Emanuele II becomes King of united Italy |
| 1862 | Through 1863, travels twice to Russia for <i>La forza del destino</i> , and to Paris, London, and Madrid | Gustave Vaëz, librettist, dies, Paris, March 12 |
| | Collaborates with Arrigo Boito on the <i>Inno delle nazioni</i> , performed London, Her Majesty's, May 24 | Debussy born, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, August 22 |
| | November 10, <i>La forza del destino</i> performed, St. Petersburg, Imperial | Alessandro Lanari, impresario, dies, Florence, October 3 |
| 1863 | | Mascagni born, Livorno, December 7 |
| | | Bizet, <i>Les pêcheurs de perles</i> , Paris, Lyrique, September 30 |
| 1864 | | Meyerbeer dies, Paris, May 2 |
| | | Richard Strauss born, Munich, June 11 |
| | | Antonio Somma, librettist, dies, Venice, August 8 |
| 1865 | April 21, revised <i>Macbeth</i> performed, Paris, Lyrique | Meyerbeer, <i>L'africaine</i> , Paris, Opéra, April 28 |
| | | Felice Romani, librettist, dies, Moneglia, January 28 |
| | | Joseph Méry, librettist, dies, Paris, June 17 |
| 1866 | Through 1867, travels to Paris for <i>Don Carlos</i> | Cilea born, Palmi, July 26 |
| | With Strepponi, sets up winter retreat in Genoa | Sophie Loewe, soprano, dies, Budapest, November 29 |
| 1867 | March 11, <i>Don Carlos</i> performed, Paris, Opéra | Annexation of Venetia |
| | | Arturo Toscanini born, Parma, March 25 |
| | | Giordano born, Foggia, August 28 |
| | | Pacini dies, Pescia, December 6 |
| | | Rome won from France, becomes capital of Italy |
| 1868 | Takes first substantial trip to Milan in twenty years; meets Alessandro Manzoni | Boito, <i>Mefistofele</i> , Milan, La Scala, March 5 |
| | Proposes the collaborative <i>Messa per Rossini</i> , to be created under the auspices of the Ricordi publishing house in Milan | Wagner, <i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i> , Munich, Kgl. Hof- und National, June 21 |
| | | Rossini dies, Passy, November 13 |

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| 1869 | Supervises production of revised <i>Forza del destino</i> in Milan, his first work with La Scala since 1845; performed February 27 | Berlioz dies, Paris, March 8
Suez Canal completed |
| 1870 | | Mercadante dies, Naples, December 17 |
| 1871 | December 24, <i>Aida</i> performed, Cairo, Opera | Auber dies, Paris, May 12 or 13
Wagner, <i>Siegfried</i> (first performed Bayreuth, Festspielhaus, August 16, 1876) |
| 1872 | Enters semi-retirement at Sant'Agata | Mazzini dies, Pisa, March 10 |
| 1873 | | Manzoni dies, Milan, May 22 |
| 1874 | May 22, <i>Messa da Requiem</i> in honor of Manzoni performed, Milan, San Marco | Cornelius dies, Copenhagen, October 26
Wagner, <i>Götterdämmerung</i> (first performed Bayreuth, Festspielhaus, August 17, 1876) |
| 1875 | Tours Europe directing the <i>Requiem</i> | Benjamin Lumley, impresario, dies, London, March 17
Alphonse Royer, theatre manager and librettist, dies, Paris, April 11
Montemezzi born, Vigasio, May 31
Bizet dies, Bougival, June 3
Bizet, <i>Carmen</i> , Paris, Comique, March 3 |
| 1876 | Conflict with Strepconi over his relationship with Teresa Stolz reaches a crisis | Wolf-Ferrari born, Venice, January 12
Francesco Maria Piave, librettist, dies, Milan, March 5
Wagner, first complete performance of <i>Der Ring des Nibelungen</i> , Bayreuth, Festspielhaus, August 13, 14, 16, 17
Ponchielli, <i>La gioconda</i> , Milan, La Scala, April 8 |
| 1877 | | |
| 1878 | | Vittorio Emanuele II dies, Rome, January 9
Solera dies, Milan, April 21 |
| 1879 | Giulio Ricordi and Boito propose an operatic <i>Othello</i> | Merelli dies, Milan, April 10 |
| 1880 | | Pizzetti born, Parma, September 20
Offenbach dies, Paris, October 5 |

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| 1881 | March 24, revised <i>Simon Boccanegra</i> performed, Milan, La Scala | Vincenzo Jacovacci, impresario, dies, Rome, March 30 |
| 1882 | | Escudier dies, Paris, June 22
Malipiero born, Venice, March 18
Wagner, <i>Parsifal</i> , Bayreuth, Festspielhaus, July 26
Garibaldi dies, Caprera, June 2 |
| 1883 | | Wagner dies, Venice, February 13
Giovanni Mario, tenor, dies, Rome, December 11 |
| 1884 | January 10, <i>Don Carlo</i> (revision of <i>Don Carlos</i>) performed, Milan, La Scala | Massenet, <i>Manon</i> , Paris, Comique, January 19
Puccini, <i>Le villi</i> , Milan, Dal Verme, May 31
Frezzolini dies, Paris, November 5 |
| 1885 | | Hugo dies, Paris, May 22 |
| 1886 | | Ponchielli dies, Milan, January 16
Liszt dies, Bayreuth, July 31 |
| 1887 | February 5, <i>Otello</i> performed, Milan, La Scala | Fraschini dies, Naples, May 23
Lind dies, Wynds Point, Herefordshire, November 2
Barbieri-Nini dies, Florence, November 27 |
| 1888 | Verdi's hospital, Villanova sull'Arda, Piacenza, opens | Tito Ricordi dies, Milan, September 7
Giulio Ricordi becomes director of the Casa Ricordi (through 1912) |
| 1889 | Boito proposes an opera based primarily on Shakespeare's <i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i> | Varesi dies, Milan, March 13 |
| 1890 | | Giorgio Ronconi, baritone, dies, Madrid, January 8
Mascagni, <i>Cavalleria rusticana</i> , Rome, Costanzi, May 17 |
| 1891 | | |
| 1892 | | Leoncavallo, <i>I pagliacci</i> , Milan, Dal Verme, May 21
Massenet, <i>Werther</i> , Vienna, Hofoper, February 16 |
| 1893 | February 9, <i>Falstaff</i> performed, Milan, La Scala | Puccini, <i>Manon Lescaut</i> , Turin, Regio, February 1
Ghizlanzoni dies, Caprino Bergamasco, July 16
Catalani dies, Milan, August 7 |

		Gounod dies, Saint-Cloud, October 18
1894		
1895		Brambilla dies, Milan, July 15
1896	Begins building the Casa di Riposo	Puccini, <i>La bohème</i> , Turin, Regio, February 1
		Bruckner dies, Vienna, October 11
1897	November 14, Strepponi dies, Sant'Agata	Brahms dies, Vienna, April 3 Giraldoni dies, Moscow, September 19 or October 1
1898		
1899	Casa di Riposo opens	
1900	December, arranges for his youthful compositions to be burned after his death	Puccini, <i>Tosca</i> , Rome, Costanzi, January 14
1901	January 21, suffers a stroke January 27, Verdi dies	