

**IL
TROVATORE**
BY GIUSEPPE VERDI
OCTOBER 8 & 10, 2021



Audience Preview Guide

Wednesday, October 6, 2021 -

Student Night at the Opera

Friday, October 8 , 2021

Sunday, October 10, 2021

Valentine Theatre

Toledo Opera

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The Setting

The opera takes place in Spain, mid 15th Century.

Act I

Scene 1: The guard room in the castle of Luna

Scene 2: Garden in the palace of the princess

Act II

Scene 1: The Bohemian camp

Scene 2: In front of the convent

Act III

Scene 1: Di Luna's camp

Scene 2: A chamber in the castle

Act IV

Scene 1: Before the dungeon keep

Scene 2: In the dungeon

Characters

Il Trovatore

by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Salvatore Cammarano

Leonora - a noblewoman

Manrico - a troubador and officer in the army of the Prince of Urgel

Azucena - a Bohemian woman

Count di Luna - a nobleman in the service of the Prince of Aragon

Ferrando - Luna's officer

Ines- Leonora's confidante

Ruiz - Manrico's henchman

A Bohemian

Messenger

Synopsis

Act I

Spain, early 19th century, during the Peninsular War. The commander of the Royalist Aragon troops, Count di Luna, is obsessed with Leonora, a young noblewoman in the queen's service, who does not return his love. Outside the royal residence, his soldiers keep watch at night. They have heard an unknown troubadour serenading Leonora, and the jealous count is determined to capture and punish him. To keep his troops awake, the captain, Ferrando, recounts the terrible story of a bohemian woman who was burned at the stake years ago for bewitching the count's infant brother. The bohemian's daughter then took revenge by kidnapping the boy and throwing him into the flames where her mother had died. The charred skeleton of a baby was discovered there, and di Luna's father died of grief soon after. The bohemian's daughter disappeared without a trace, but di Luna has sworn to find her. In the palace gardens, Leonora confides in her companion Ines that she is in love with a mysterious man she met before the outbreak of the war, and that he is the troubadour who serenades her each night. After they have left, Count di Luna appears, looking for Leonora. When she hears the troubadour's song in the darkness, Leonora rushes out to greet her beloved but mistakenly embraces di Luna. The troubadour reveals his true identity: He is Manrico, leader of the partisan rebel forces. Furious, the count challenges him to fight to the death.

Act II

During the duel, Manrico overpowered the count, but some instinct stopped him from killing his rival. The war has raged on, with the Royalist forces victorious in the most recent battle. Manrico was badly wounded, but his mother, the bohemian Azucena, has nursed him back to health in a camp in the mountains. A band of bohemians gathers at their mountain hideout. Azucena is the woman for whom di Luna has been searching. Her life is scarred by the memory of her mother's death and the terrible revenge she exacted. Manrico, who has never heard the full story, is determined to finally know the truth. Azucena tells him how she stole the older count's infant son but, in her manic rage, accidentally murdered her own child instead. When Manrico demands to know who he truly is, Azucena is evasive: All that matters is the mother's love she has shown him all his life and that he does not fail to take revenge on the house of di Luna. A messenger arrives with news that Leonora, believing that Manrico has fallen in battle and hoping to escape di Luna's grasp, is entering a convent. Azucena pleads with Manrico to stay, but he resolves to go to her immediately. Di Luna arrives at the convent with his troops to take Leonora by force, but his attempt to seize her is foiled when Manrico and his men attack. In the ensuing chaos, the lovers escape.

Act III

Di Luna has laid siege to the fortress where Manrico has taken refuge with Leonora. Soon, soldiers bring in Azucena, whom Ferrando and his men have captured wandering nearby. When she hears di Luna's name, her reaction arouses suspicion, and Ferrando recognizes her as the murderer of the count's brother. Azucena cries out to Manrico to rescue her, and di Luna realizes that he now has his enemy in his hands. He orders a pyre built for Azucena before the walls of the fortress. Inside the castle, Manrico and Leonora are preparing to be married. She is frightened, but he assures her of his love even in the face of death. When news of Azucena's capture arrives, Manrico summons his forces and prepares to attack.

Act IV

Manrico's army has been defeated, and he and Azucena are being held captive in di Luna's castle. Leonora has escaped and now comes to the prison to pray for Manrico's salvation. When di Luna orders the execution of Manrico and Azucena at sunrise, Leonora offers herself to the count in return for her lover's life; however, she secretly takes a slow-acting poison, sealing her fate. In their cell, Manrico tries to comfort Azucena, who is terrified of the stake and the fire that awaits her. Leonora appears to tell Manrico that he is saved and urges him to escape. Understanding that she has promised herself to di Luna, he denounces her and refuses to flee. But the poison is already taking effect, and Leonora dies in his arms, just as di Luna arrives. He sends Manrico to his execution. Azucena cries out that her mother is avenged: di Luna has killed his own brother.

Synopsis courtesy of the Metropolitan Opera. All rights reserved. metopera.org

Giuseppe Verdi 1813-1901

Born October 9 or 10, 1813, in northern Italy during its Napoleonic occupation, Giuseppe Verdi displayed an early interest in music. At age nine, he was playing the church organ in the small town of Busseto. Over the next nine years, the townspeople became sufficiently impressed with Verdi's musical abilities to raise the money to send him to the Conservatory in Milan. At age 18, however, Verdi was considered too old (14 was the average age of the students) and not talented enough for the Conservatory.



Giuseppe Verdi
1813 - 1901

Fortunately for Verdi, a merchant and music lover in Busseto, Antonio Barezzi, paid for Verdi to study privately in Milan. After completing his studies, Verdi returned to Busseto to work as a conductor and music instructor. In 1836, he married Barezzi's daughter, Margherita. They moved to Milan and had two children. Sadly, their children died very young and Margherita died in 1839 from encephalitis.

Verdi's first opera, *Oberto*, was performed at La Scala (in Milan) in 1839. *Oberto* was well received but Verdi's second opera, a comedy, was a failure. Coinciding with the loss of his family, Verdi contemplated giving up opera composition. The impresario (manager producer) of La Scala virtually 'forced' a libretto upon him, inspiring him to continue composing. The result was Verdi's third and highly successful opera, *Nabucco*, first performed in 1842. It also was an opportunity to Verdi to reconnect with the soprano, Giuseppina Strepponi, whom he ultimately married in 1859.

Nabucco was the start of Verdi's ever-growing popularity. Its theme of freedom for enslaved people caught the imaginations of the Italian people who, at that time, wanted a united, free Italy. Verdi became the symbol of that freedom

movement. "Viva Verdi" was the independence cry heard during the fight for Italian independence. It was an anagram of his name to mean Vittorio Emmanuel King of Italy - Vittoria Emanuele Re d'Italia. In 1871, when Italy became united, Verdi's most famous opera, *Aida*, was produced.

Despite his great success as an opera composer, Verdi had many other interests. In 1849, Verdi and his partner (and ultimately wife), Giuseppina Strepponi, moved to a rural estate near his home town. There, he planted a tree for every opera he wrote. His employees were paid well and he extended his humanitarianism to others in society, including founding a hospital near his estate and establishing a home for aging musicians in Milan. He referred to this latter, the Casa di Riposo, as "my last and best work."

In 1852, Verdi composed *La Traviata*, based on the novel and play by Alexandre Dumas (the younger). Verdi wrote the music very quickly; he was under contract to write an opera and had started a different opera then changed his mind and decided to write an opera based on Dumas' work. He had signed a contract for a new opera, *Il Trovatore* and started work on *La Dame aux Camelias*. His librettist, Francesco Maria Piave had almost completed the libretto for the first opera when he had to stop and write the libretto for *La Traviata* instead.

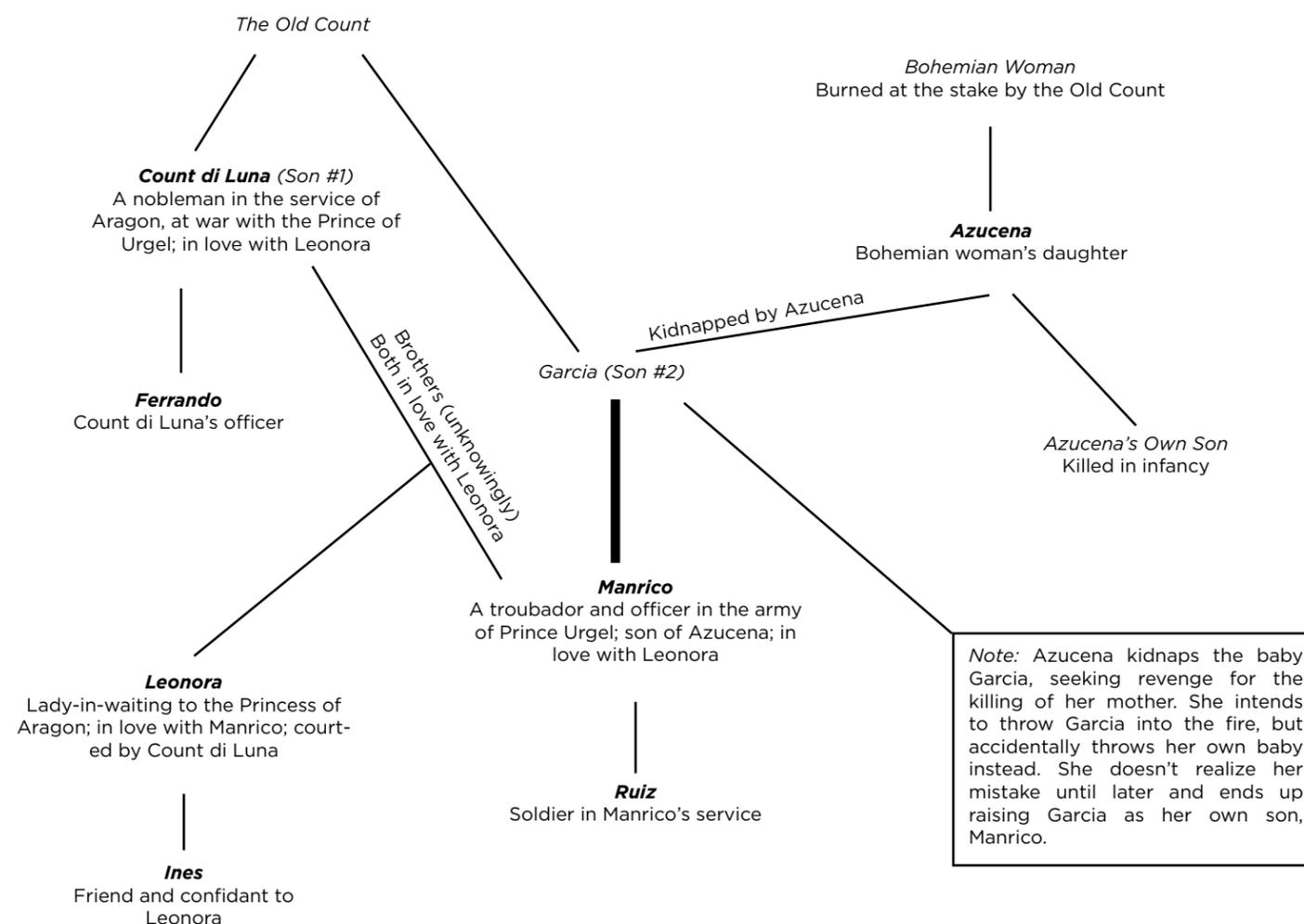
Two decades of tremendous creativity, from 1851 to 1871, culminated with *Aida*. Commissioned by the Khedive of Egypt as part of the celebration of the opening of the Suez Canal, *Aida* was produced with no expense spared. Props included a shield and helmet made of solid silver, a crown of pure gold, and a cast of 300 in the second act triumphal march.

From 1872 to 1883, Verdi temporarily 'retired' from opera writing. He continued to compose music, including the *Manzoni Requiem*, considered his most important non-operatic work. Much of this time period, however, was devoted to his farm. Then, in 1884, he began work on his second-last opera, *Otello*. It premiered in 1887 to great anticipation and then to great acclaim. At age 80, Verdi wrote one last opera, *Falstaff*, based on another Shakespearean character.

Verdi died January 27, 1901. Italy mourned his death, closing schools and holding a special session of the Senate where eulogies were read. Thousands jammed the streets to see his funeral procession.

Il Trovatore Plot Map

CAUTION: *Il Trovatore* has a somewhat confusing plot! Below is a plot map but the short version is this: Two brothers are separated in their youth - one becomes a Count and the other, a rebel named Manrico. The plot thickens when they get older because they are political adventure and in love with the same woman, Leonora. In the end, they are all doomed: Leonora poisons herself, the Count kills Manrico and discovers (too late) that Manrico is his long-lost brother.



The Romani People

Il Trovatore, like many other musical and literary works of the 19th century, describes a fantastic, even dangerous band of wanderers known as “gypsies.” In the Act I aria “Abbieta zingara” for instance, a gypsy woman is accused of witchcraft and blamed for causing a child’s illness. These fictional gypsies perpetuate an unfortunate stereotype of the real-life gypsies, also known as the Romani people, or Roma—a nomadic ethnic minority living primarily in the nations of Europe.

In part, some people have been suspicious of the Roma because they maintain their own



The Romani influenced music throughout Europe.

distinct language and culture. Because Romani culture includes fortune telling, Tarot-card reading, and small-scale commerce, and because Romani communities move from place to place, prejudice against the Roma has persisted for many centuries. They were targeted for extermination by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party during the Second World War. Yet over the years, Roma culture has also had a strong influence on European fashion, art, and especially music, inspiring both classical composers like Johannes Brahms and jazz greats like Django Reinhardt.

More information about the Roma and their lives in contemporary European society can be found at the Web site of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)’s Office for Democratic Institutions and HumanRights.

The Dress Rehearsal

Please Note: Dress Rehearsal is the last opportunity the singers will have on stage to work with the orchestra before Opening Night. Since vocal demands are so great on opera singers, some singers choose not to sing in full voice during the Dress Rehearsal in order to avoid unnecessary strain.

What to Listen For

Il Trovatore is the second opera of the so-called “trilogia popolare” of *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata*. Its composition overlapped that of *La Traviata*. The structure of *Il Trovatore* is reminiscent of the schemes that typified Verdi’s early works. During the 1854/55 season while in Paris, Verdi revised the opera for the Théâtre des Italiens as *Le trouvère* and its many performances in January 1855 were well received. On many different occasions, this opera and its music has been featured in various forms of popular culture and entertainment. Scenes of hilarious comic chaos play out over a performance of the opera in the Marx Brothers’s film, *A Night at the Opera*. As a staple of the standard operatic repertoire, it appears on Opera America’s list of the 20 most-performed operas in North America, at number 17.

Act II: *Vedi! Le Fosche* (Anvil Chorus)

Even for those who have never set foot in an opera house, Verdi’s ‘Anvil Chorus’ is likely to be a familiar tune. Its rousing tune and rhythmic percussion - including, frequently, anvils played on stage on and off the beat - makes it something of an archetype for a bold, cheery Italian chorus. The Metropolitan Opera Chorus in the production from 2013.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdX3T_Kjcos

Act II: *Stride la vampa!* (Azucena)

The melodious note arrangement of *Stride la vampa* ranges from pianissimo (very soft) mellow notes to forte (loud) notes carrying the player and the audience through an array of vivid emotions. The sweet soft beginning of the music piece gradually increases and decreases the loudness in smooth transitions. This music piece is decorated with phrases, slurs and an arpeggio. Anita Rachvelishvili (Azucena) in this production from the Metropolitan Opera, Marco Armiliato conducting.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eGIFme5SvU>

Act III: *Di Quella Pira* (Manrico)

Ruiz, Manrico’s comrade, suddenly returns to report that Manrico’s mother Azucena is to be burned at the stake. Manrico calls together his soldiers and sings of how they will save Azucena from death. Russell Thomas and chorus in this Lyric Opera of Chicago production.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FOwKILlyb8>

Act IV: *D’amor sull’ ali rosee* (Leonora)

Leonora has escaped and now comes to the prison to pray for Manrico’s salvation. Barbara Fretelli in this production from Arena di Verona, 2019.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCXKiIMf9OA>

Act IV: *Miserere* (Leonora and Chorus)

Maria Callas as Leonora in this 1958 production from Paris.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TegWugrrCgU>

In Verdi's Time

1813 Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi born

1814 Napoleon abdicates and is exiled

1816 Rossini's *Barber of Seville* premieres in Rome



Leah Crocetto
as Leonora

1818 Handel's *Messiah* premieres in the U.S. in Boston, MA

1820 Charles Macintosh of Scotland begins selling raincoats (Macs)

1822 Frederick Law Olmsted (Central park landscape architect) is born

1824 Beethoven's 9th Symphony premieres in Vienna

1826 3rd U.S. President Thomas Jefferson dies

1828 American dictionary patented by Webster

1829 1st typewriter is patented by William Austin Burt

1830 Donizetti's opera, *Anna Bolena*, premieres in Milan

1832 Louisa May Alcott (American author) is born

1833 Oberlin College, the first truly coeducational college opens

1835 Vincenzo Bellini, Italian composer of *Norma*, dies at age 33

1836 Battle of the Alamo ends after 13 days of fighting killing 257 including Davy Crockett

1837 Queen Victoria ascends the British throne at the age of 18. She rules for 63 years

1839 Georges Bizet, French composer of *Carmen*, is born in Paris

1842 Felix Mendelssohn's 3rd *Scottish* Symphony premieres

1843 *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens is published

1844 Verdi's opera, *Hernani*, premieres in Venice

1847 Giuseppe Verdi's *Macbeth* premieres in Florence

1849 Harriet Tubman first escapes slavery in Maryland

1851 *Rigoletto* premieres in Venice

1853 *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata* premiere in Venice

1855 Charlotte Brontë, (*Jane Eyre*), dies at 38

1857 Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* premieres in Venice

1860 Russian playwright Anton Chekhov is born

1864 President Lincoln establishes Thanksgiving as a national holiday

1867 Johann Strauss' *Blue Danube* waltz premieres in Vienna

1869 Mahatma Gandhi born in Porbandar, Kathiawar Agency of British India

1871 Verdi's *Aida* premieres at Teatro alla Scala

1876 Alexander Graham Bell patents the telephone

1879 Gilbert & Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance* premieres

1881 American Red Cross founded by Clara Barton

1884 Statue of Liberty is presented to the U.S in Paris

1886 Chief Geronimo surrenders ending last major U.S. - Indian war

1888 Vincent van Gogh cuts off his left ear in argument with Paul Gauguin

1891 Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* premieres in Oslo

1895 Tchaikovsky's ballet *Swan Lake* premieres in St. Petersburg

1899 Scott Joplin granted copyright for *Maple Leaf Rag*

1901 Verdi dies on July 25



The Count, Leonora, & Manrico
in love triangle

Post-Opera Activities

Personal Response

1. What surprised you the most about Verdi's opera, *Il Trovatore*?

2. What struck you as the most important theme in the opera?

Post-Opera Activities

Critical Response

Create Your Own Review of *Il Trovatore*

Write a review of *Il Trovatore*. Use the following chart to organize your thoughts. You can be critical, describing what you liked and what you thought needed improvement. In your review mention the plot, the music, the singing and acting, and visual elements such as the scenery and costumes.

Notes for review of <i>Il Trovatore</i>	
Music	
Plot	
Vocal Artists (quality of voice and acting)	
Scenery and Costumes	
Overall Rating from 1 (low) to 5 (high)	