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(as of May 1979):

A Brief History and Description

by Martin Chusid, John Nádas and Luke Jensen

The American Institute for Verdi Studies is accumulating a major archive of Verdi resources, the largest portion of which is on microfilm. It is housed in the Music Division of the New York University Libraries, in the Bobst Library at Washington Square. This brochure reviews the principal stages in the archive's development to May 1979 and outlines the scope of the collection. It also provides an opportunity to acknowledge the persons and institutions contributing to its growth.

Before the formation of the Institute, in 1976, there were approximately 400 Verdi items in the Music Division of the New York University Libraries. The largest portion of these was amassed with the cooperation of Ruth Hilton, Music Librarian, while Martin Chusid was preparing his *Catalog of Verdi's Operas* (published in 1974). The Music Division of the Library of Congress, just then embarking on a project to preserve its holdings on microfilm, kindly gave priority to filming 30 MS or printed scores by Verdi as well as almost a hundred Verdi librettos included in its extensive Schatz collection. Copies of these films were then acquired by the university.

Early in 1976, the part of the late Professor Scott Stringham's library devoted to Verdi was donated to the Institute by his widow, Mary. Containing some 500 items (scores, books, recorded materials, and modern librettos), it filled many gaps in the NYU collection and permitted the combined holdings to qualify for support from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

With the cooperation of members of the Executive and Advisory Boards and others, copies of Verdi materials in private collections were identified and either filmed or deposited outright in the archive. Funds for the filming were provided by the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music. Individuals who contributed materials at this crucial early stage include David Lawton, George Martin, Andrew Porter, David Rosen, John Russell, Patrick Smith, and Martin Chusid. As a result, some 200 additional scores, librettos, books, and articles were filmed by 1977. Later, through the generosity of Professor Marcello Conati of Parma, 45 items in his private collection were also filmed.

Simultaneously, a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities was obtained to film Verdi letters and documents at the Istituto di Studi Verdiani in Parma, Italy. The Istituto also permitted the filming of their chronologically ordered catalogue of letters and contents, and other selected items. The American Institute is deeply indebted to this fellow organization and its former director, Mario Medici.

In the fall of 1977, Casa Ricordi of Milan donated films of about 1500 letters written by Verdi in the course of his long association with that firm. Included in this very valuable gift are additional letters from Giuseppina Strepponi Verdi and other persons important for the study of Verdi and his music (Emanuele Muzio, Angelo Mariani, etc.).

The first stage of a lengthy project to film materials in a large private collection in Italy was begun in the summer of 1978. This enterprise was facilitated by a second grant from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music. Access to the collection was gained through the good offices of Executive Board member Mary Jane Phillips Matz, and 25,000 frames of the most valuable material (letters, documents, librettos and libretto sketches) were filmed by John Nádas, archivist of the Institute. This collection is unparalleled in the wealth of its materials for Verdi researchers.¹

¹Support for future filming in this collection has been provided by the Ford Foundation and, once again, the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music.

Additional items have been acquired from private and public collections. Included are original librettos and scores donated by Marc T. Faw and copies of other materials provided by Sidney Cox, Dario Soria, Daniel Sabbath, C.J. Luten, Martin Sokol, Harvey Bordowitz, Tom Kaufman, David Stivender, and others.

Another major filming effort supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities was begun in February 1979. The funding enables the Institute to film the scores, parts, and librettos needed by the volume editors of the critical edition, *The Works of Giuseppe Verdi*, a joint project of the University of Chicago Press and G. Ricordi & C. of Milan.²

Catalogued Materials in the Collection³

Among the 280 SCORES in the Verdi collection are copies of the autographs of *Falstaff* (facsimile edition) and *Attila*, and three partially-autograph scores: *Jérusalem*, the revised *Macbeth* (1865), and the first version of *La forza del destino*,⁴ as well as the facsimile of the *Rigoletto* sketches. There are also MS copies of many orchestral scores never printed and, consequently, difficult of access. These include the first versions of *La traviata* (1853) and *Simon Boccanegra* (1857), filmed at La Fenice Opera House in Venice, where they were first performed. There is also a second and slightly varied copy of the original *Simon Boccanegra*, a copy of the first *Macbeth* (1847), another copy of the original version of *La forza del destino* (1862) (filmed in St. Petersburg where the work was first performed), and two copies of *Stiffelio*, both from the library of the Naples Conservatory. One of the copies of *Stiffelio* has a censored text with the title of *Guglielmo Wellingrode*.

Numerous printed orchestral scores and a large number of editions of piano-vocal scores make up the bulk of the music in the Archive. The latter include many early and valuable editions from Milan, Naples and Paris. For some details, see below under individual works.

The archive contains approximately 500 printed opera LIBRETTOS of Verdi, mostly on film; included are those distributed at each of his world premieres. The largest group is of 19th-century librettos and many date from performances in censored versions, often with altered titles. *Rigoletto*, for example, was performed for years in Italy as *Viscardello*, and in the southern part of the peninsula also as *Lionello* and *Clara di Perth*. *Les Vêpres siciliennes* was first heard in Italy as *Giovanna de Guzman*, in southern Italy also as *Batilde di Turenna*, *Giovanna di Sicilia* and *Il vespro siciliano*. And in Rome, Naples, and Palermo the censors converted *Giovanna d'Arco* into *Orietta di Lesbo*.⁵

There are also, as yet uncatalogued, films of much of the sketch materials for the librettos, by Verdi, Giuseppina Strepponi and others, as well as a number of librettos with handwritten corrections by censors. These latter are of considerable historical value for scholars and students of the Risorgimento, especially those persons interested in the turbulent years between 1840 and 1860.

Some 270 BOOKS, originals, photo copies, or films, include such valuable contemporary volumes as Abramo Basevi's *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi* (1859) and Francesco Regli's

²Members of the Institute's Executive and Advisory Boards involved in this effort are Julian Budden, Martin Chusid, Francesco Degrada, Philip Gossett, Ursula Günther, William Holmes, David Lawton, and David Rosen.

³Access to materials described in this section may be had through the card catalog in the Music section of the New York University Library. The Music section, on the second floor of Bobst Library, also has special analytical files (e.g. librettos on film).

⁴This MS is believed to have been used in Madrid early in 1863 in a series of performances directed by Verdi himself. Shortly thereafter he contemplated a performance of the work in Paris, where the original of the score is now lodged. The projected Parisian performance did not take place.

⁵For details of these and many others, see the appendix "Alternate Titles for the Operas" in Chusid, *A Catalog of Verdi's Operas* (1974).

Dizionario dei musicisti (1860), as well as a number of valuable bibliographical tools. For example, the archive has films of the three-volume *Ricordi Catalogo in ordine numerico delle opere pubblicate* . . . (vol. 1, 1857: vols. 2 and 3, n.d.), a list of more than 100,000 works printed or scheduled to be printed by the leading publisher of music in Italy during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

PERIODICALS held include films of the complete run of the extremely rare *Teatri, Arti e Letterature* (Bologna, 1824-63) and numerous individual issues of magazines devoted to Verdi. There are also approximately 100 periodical articles on Verdi catalogued separately; hundreds more are, of course, contained in the Music Library's periodical holdings.

Of particular interest are films of eight PRODUCTION BOOKS, or DISPOSIZIONI SCENICHE, printed by Ricordi during Verdi's lifetime and reflecting many of the composer's thoughts on staging. The operas represented span the last decades of Verdi's career and include *Les Vêpres siciliennes* (as *Giovanna de Guzman*), *Un ballo in maschera*, the first version of *La forza del destino*, *Aida*, the revised *Simon Boccanegra*, *Otello*, and two versions of *Don Carlos*.

As Yet Uncatalogued Materials

For many researchers, the most exciting holdings of the archive are to be found in this category. To date we have accumulated approximately 12,000 LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS to and from Verdi, his wife Giuseppina Strepponi Verdi, and other persons associated with him. They include the copy-books (*Copialettere*) of Verdi and his wife containing drafts or diary entries for approximately 2,000 letters they sent to librettists, publishers, conductors, singers, impresarios, and others in the operatic world, as well as to relatives, friends and acquaintances. They also include hundreds of letters to and from important contemporary figures outside of music, for example Mazzini, Cavour, and Manzoni.

In addition, there are many documents relating to Verdi's personal life and business affairs. They include contracts and drafts of contracts, letters of agreement and financial statements, and bills listing among other items books he and his wife bought for their personal library.

Of particular value are a number of drafts and revisions of librettos in the handwriting of Verdi, his wife, his librettists and others. They range from plot summaries to fully worked out librettos and include a number of works that Verdi either never set to music or did not complete. The best known of the latter is Shakespeare's *King Lear*, for which there are libretto materials written by Salvatore Cammarano, Antonio Somma, and Verdi himself. Other subjects considered but never set are listed below in Section III.