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From the Director's Desk

Martin Chusid
New York University

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The past two years have been active ones for AIVS. In March 1996 the Institute and the Sarasota Opera Association sponsored a conference on "Verdi's Revisions." This was occasioned by performances of both versions of *La forza del destino* in the same season by the Sarasota company, performances ably conducted by Musical Director Victor DeRenzi, an Institute Advisory Board member, who is determined to bring all the operas of Verdi to Florida. Abstracts of papers delivered at the conference are included in this issue of the *Verdi Newsletter*, and a book on this important subject is being prepared for publication by Martin Chusid and David Rosen, the new editor of the *Newsletter*.

In addition, I am pleased to report that the autograph of an important and previously unpublished letter by Verdi has been donated to the Institute by Professor Thomas Neumiller of SUNY Stony Brook, a long-time member and friend of AIVS, and is reproduced on the cover of this issue. This letter, together with those previously donated by Mary Shamrock and John Russell, was included in an exhibition mounted by AIVS at New York University's Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò. The *mostra*, which was divided into two parts, "Verdi's Life and Times" and "Verdi and Censorship," was part of a month-long celebration of the Institute's twenty-first birthday in April of 1997. (AIVS was founded 1 April 1976 with a meeting of the Advisory Board at the University's Bobst Library Music Division.) The festivities, all centered at the Casa Italiana, began with a reception on April 1 to inaugurate the Exhibition and continued on April 3rd with a recital of nineteenth-century Italian songs, including several of Verdi's finest, sung by soprano Julia Grella. The interesting and varied program, which was attended by a large and enthusiastic audience, was assembled and excellently accompanied by Francesco Izzo, the Institute's current Archivist, who assisted in mounting the exhibit as well.

A high point of the celebration was the all-day Conference on April 19th on the subject of "Verdi and Censorship" sponsored by AIVS, the Greater New York Chapter of the American Musicological Society, and the Casa Italiana. In the morning, papers were delivered by Professor David Rosen and Ms. Alessandra Campana, both of Cornell University, and in the afternoon there was a lively panel discussion. The latter began with presentations by Professor Roberta Marvin (University of Iowa) and Linda Fairtile (New York Public Library for the Performing Arts) with the additional participation of Prof. Rosen, Dr. Kathleen Hansell, Music Editor of the University of Chicago Press and Managing Editor of *The Works of Giuseppe Verdi*, and Dr. Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi, Director of the Italian Cultural Institute of New York. Chaired by the Director of AIVS, both sessions were attended by large, deeply involved audiences, members of which contributed stimulating, at times provocative, questions and comments. Prof. Fairtile's presentation is printed in this *Newsletter*. In order to allow more members of the

public to view it, the Exhibition was held over through May and much of June. The Institute would like to thank the Baronessa Mariuccia Zerilli-Marimò, who had initiated the idea for a conference and exhibit at the Casa Italiana, and Mr. James Ziskin, Managing Director of the Casa, for their advice and energetic support. We also owe thanks to Dr. Marvin Taylor, Director of Fales Library, the Rare Book Division of Bobst Library, for his invaluable assistance with the Exhibition.

It is gratifying to report still another gift to the Verdi collection. Long-time member and friend, Nancy Ford of Washington, D. C., who had previously donated materials, has just given us her entire library of books, librettos, and programs devoted to Verdi and his operas. Gifts such as those most recently donated by Prof. Neumiller and Ms. Ford help both to fill in gaps and to enrich the already extensive Archive, one of the world's foremost collections of materials relating to Verdi and nineteenth-century opera.

There are, unfortunately, some sad notes among the joyous ones, the deaths of three AIVS Advisory Board Members. Prof. Walter Ducloux, whom some of you may recall for his wit and intelligence as a guest on the Metropolitan Opera Quiz, was for many years Director of the Opera Department at the University of Southern California, where he conducted a splendid cycle of all the late Verdi operas during the late 1950's and early 60's. More recently he was on the faculty of the University of Texas at Austin, where I heard him conduct a remarkable performance of *Don Carlos*. We shall also miss Prof. Hans Busch, eminent stage director at many of the world's most important opera houses. Son of the great conductor Fritz Busch, he taught at the University of Indiana, and compiled and edited important collections of letters and documents about *Aida*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*. He also participated in the first of the Congresses and Conferences sponsored by AIVS (Danville, Kentucky, 1977). Finally, and most recently, is the death of Sir Rudolf Bing, whose long tenure as General Director of the Metropolitan Opera House began in 1950 with a celebrated production of *Don Carlos* that brought that masterpiece to the world's attention after years of neglect, and whose reign closed with an impressive festival of middle and late Verdi operas after the end of his last regular season (1971-72). During this festival the young James Levine appeared successfully as a last-minute replacement conducting *Falstaff*, a performance my wife and I were privileged to attend in Sir Rudolf's box. We all mourn the passing of three dynamic and productive individuals who contributed so much towards maintaining and enriching the Verdi tradition in the second half of the twentieth century.

Martin Chusid