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Guest Editors' Notes

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Martin Chusid's contributions to the field of Verdi studies – not to mention his work on Mozart, Schubert, Dvořák, and other composers – are well documented. Less conspicuous, but no less significant, is the impact that he has had on the students who have served as Archivists of the American Institute for Verdi Studies at New York University. For this reason, two former Archivists – myself and Francesco Izzo – conceived the idea of dedicating an issue of the *Verdi Forum* to Martin, as both a gesture of gratitude and an acknowledgement of his influence.

I first met Martin when I interviewed for admission to NYU's graduate program in musicology. Naturally, I was excited about the prospect of studying with him and the rest of the music faculty, but it was the possibility of serving as AIVS Archivist that really guided my plans. Fortunately, he was willing to take a chance on a newcomer, and so I was introduced to the Institute's incredible riches in my first semester of graduate study. For the next four years, I probably spent more time working in the Archive than I did on my classwork. While Martin tended to organizational matters, edited the *Verdi Newsletter*, assisted visiting scholars, planned events and conferences, kept an eye out for new acquisitions, investigated funding sources, and wore numerous other hats for the sake of promoting Verdi and his music, he entrusted me with the ongoing cataloging of the Institute's microfilm collection. I will always be grateful for this responsibility and opportunity, since it was through his guidance that I discovered my vocation as a librarian.

At the same time that I benefited from constant contact with the AIVS's holdings, I also learned from Martin himself. His visits to the Archive nearly always included an enthusiastic conversation about some aspect of Verdi's life or work. As a scholar, the most important lesson that I learned from Martin concerns Verdi's pragmatism: no matter how convincing the argument that I devised in the course of my research, if it was not supported by the realities of theatrical performance, he let me know that I still had work to do. But I think the lesson that Martin most enjoys teaching concerns Verdi's humanity. In his writing, in his classes, and in informal conversation, his admiration for this composer's compassionate understanding of the human condition is always evident.

Although this Festschrift issue of the *Verdi Forum* is relatively small in scale, I hope that Martin will see in the quality and variety of its contents a reflection of the esteem in which both he and the American Institute for Verdi Studies – now twenty-five years old! – are held.

–Linda B. Fairtile
AIVS Archivist, 1988-92

Long before I came to the United States as a graduate student, I was well acquainted with Martin Chusid's name. I knew his pathbreaking editorial work, and his engaging writings on compositional process, performance practice, and analysis. Most important, I was familiar with his tireless devotion, dating back to the late 1960s, to Giuseppe Verdi.

As a graduate student at New York University, I learned much more about him. While I attended his seminar on Schubert during my first semester, his musicianship and his rigorous approach to the study of primary materials became sources of inspiration for my own work. And it was a pleasure to realize that behind his scholarly mind stood an intensely emotional musical personality. Once, in the middle of a discussion of Schubert's *Schwanengesang*, I remember him interrupting himself with this exclamation: "Those who don't feel the love in this music... I worry about them!" This was said, of course, with his famous *basso profondo* voice, and with the welcome addition of a deeply moved tone.

It was only when I became Archivist of the American Institute for Verdi Studies, however, that I really got to know Martin Chusid, and to realize fully what he and his work mean for Giuseppe Verdi. While I obviously admired him as I came to realize with how much method, perseverance, and passion he had built the extraordinary collection of materials that constitute the Verdi Archive, that is not what impressed me the most. Rather, I was astonished, and still am today, by his enthusiasm and vitality, which result in a constant effort to promote publications, and to organize lectures, concerts, exhibits, and conferences. The recent monumental project of the Verdi 2001 Congress is only an example of his commitment to Verdi, and of his eagerness to make the great composer and his music known and loved.

There are times when I wish he would be a bit less enthusiastic—for example, when he calls me early in the morning (sometimes, I confess, catching me still asleep!) to discuss a new idea, or to make certain that everything that concerns the life of the Institute is in good order. But aside from the occasional disruption of my sleeping habits, I can only admire his energy and his dedication, and be grateful for having been a part of the life of the AIVS.

This special issue of the *Verdi Forum* might well be the first time that something happens at the AIVS without Martin Chusid knowing (assuming that, as I write this, he isn't just graciously pretending not to know), and it has been very difficult to keep him outside of this project, which is only a small token of gratitude to a man who has done, and continues to do, so much for Verdi.

–Francesco Izzo
AIVS Archivist, 1996-99