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978-0-521-87843-2 - Verdi and the French Aesthetic: Verse, Stanza, and Melody in Nineteenth-Century Opera

Andreas Giger

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Verdi and the French Aesthetic

Verse, stanza, and melody in nineteenth-century opera

Focusing on Verdi's French operas, Andreas Giger shows how the composer acquired an ever better understanding of the various approaches to French versification while gradually bringing his works in line with French melodic aesthetic. In his first French opera, *Jérusalem*, Verdi treated the text in an overly cautious manner, trying to avoid prosodic mistakes; in *Les Vêpres siciliennes*, he began to apply more freedom, scanning the verses against some prosodic accents to convey the light-heartedness of a melody; and in *Don Carlos*, he finally drew on the entire palette of prosodic interpretations. Most of Verdi's melodic accomplishments in the French operas carried over into the subsequent Italian ones and set the stage for what later would be called operatic verismo. Drawing attention to the significance of the operatic libretto for the stylistic and dramatic development of nineteenth-century French and Italian opera, this book illustrates Verdi's gradual mastery of the challenges he faced and their historical significance.

ANDREAS GIGER is Associate Professor of Music at Louisiana State University. His research interests have concentrated on nineteenth-century Italian opera and the work of Leonard Bernstein. He is the author of *Verismo* (2004) in the *Handwörterbuch der musikalischen Terminologie* and articles in many books and journals, including *The Cambridge Companion to Verdi*, the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, and the second edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. He is also coeditor of *Music in the Mirror* (2002) and founder of the Internet database *saggi musicali italiani*.

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In memory of Harold S. Powers

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A note on the musical examples

Whenever possible, the musical examples are taken from the critical vocal scores of *The Works of Giuseppe Verdi* or Ursula Günther's earlier critical edition of *Don Carlos* (all listed in the bibliography). The examples taken from these editions include Exx. 2.1; E.4; E.6; 3.3; 3.4; 3.11; 4.3; 4.9a; 4.14a–b (Italian version); and Exx. 5.1–5.10. If the full score but not the vocal score of the critical edition is published, the example is taken from a published vocal score with emendations according to the critical edition.