

Cenani

18th October 1975

**MALTA INTERNATIONAL
ARTS FESTIVAL 1975**



555

MANOEL THEATRE

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INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL 1975

THE MANOEL THEATRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

in association with

THE KURSAAL COMPANY LIMITED

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present

HIGHLIGHTS FROM GIUSEPPE VERDI'S OPERA 'ERNANI'

The Manoel Theatre Orchestra

Leader: GEORGE SPITERI

Conductor: JOSEPH SAMMUT

and

The Chorus Melitensis

Chorus Instructress: BICE BISAZZA

SOLOISTS —

CATHERINE GAUCI AZZOPARDI (Soprano)

ANDREW SAPIANO (Tenor)

JOE FENECH (Baritone)

JOE VELLA BONDIN (Bass)

Manoel Theatre

Saturday 18 October 1975 at 7.30 pm





THE ERNANI STORY

JOHN of Aragon has become a bandit after his father, Duke of Segovia, had been slain by order of Don Carlos's father. John, proscribed and pursued by the emissaries of the King, has taken refuge in the mountains of Aragon where, under the name of Ernani, he has become leader of a large band of rebel mountaineers. He is in love with Donna Elvira who, though about to be united to her relative, the aged Ruy Gomez di Silva, a grandee of Spain, is deeply enamoured of the handsome, chivalrous bandit chief.

Don Carlos, afterwards Emperor Charles V, also has fallen violently in love with Elvira, and by watching her windows he has discovered that at dead of night a young cavalier (Ernani) gains admission to her apartments. He imitates her lover's signal, gains admission to her chamber and declares his passion. Repulsed, he is about to drag her off by force when a secret panel opens, and he is confronted by Ernani. During a violent scene, Silva enters. To allay his jealousy and anger at finding two men, apparently rival suitors, in the apartment of his affianced the King, whom Silva has not recognized, reveals himself and pretends to have come in disguise to consult him about his approaching election to the empire, and a conspiracy that is on foot against his life. Then the King, pointing to Ernani, says to Silva, 'It doth please us that this, our follower, depart,' thus ensuring Ernani's temporary safety — for a Spaniard does not hand an enemy over to the vengeance of another.

Believing a rumour that Ernani has been killed by the King's soldiers, Elvira at last consents to give her hand in marriage to Silva. But on the eve of the wedding Ernani, pursued by the King with a detachment of troops, seeks refuge in Silva's castle in the disguise of a pilgrim. Although not known to Silva he is, under Spanish tradition, his guest, and from that moment entitled to his protection.

Elvira enters in her bridal attire. Ernani is thus made aware that her nuptials with Don Silva are to be celebrated on the morrow. Tearing off his disguise, he reveals himself to Silva and demands to be delivered up to the King, preferring death to life without Elvira. But true to his honour as a Spanish host, Silva refuses. Even his enemy, Ernani, is safe in his castle. Indeed he goes so far as to order his guards to man the towers and prepare to defend the castle, should the King seek forcible entry. He leaves the apartment to make sure his orders are being carried out. The lovers find themselves alone. When Silva returns they are in each other's arms. But as the King is at the castle gates, he has no time to give vent to his wrath. He gives orders to admit the King and his men, bids Elvira retire, and hides Ernani in a secret cabinet. The King demands that Silva give up the bandit. The grandee proudly refuses; Ernani is his guest. The King's wrath then turns against Silva. He demands the surrender of his sword and threatens him with death, when Elvira interposes. The King pardons Silva, but bears away Elvira as hostage for the loyalty of her kinsman.

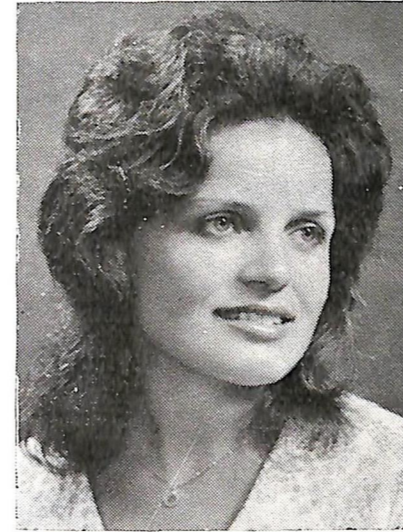
The King has gone. From the wall Silva takes down two swords, releases his guest from his hiding-place, and bids him cross swords with him to the death. Ernani refuses. His host has just protected his life at the danger of his own. But, if Silva insists upon vengeance, let grandee and bandit first unite against the King, with whom the honour of Elvira is unsafe. Elvira rescued, Ernani will give himself up to Silva, to whom, handing him his hunting-horn, he avows himself ready to die whenever a blast upon it shall be sounded from the lip of the implacable grandee. Silva, who has been in entire ignorance of the King's passion for Elvira, grants the reprieve, and summons his men to horse.

He sets on foot a conspiracy against the King. A meeting of the conspirators is held in the Cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle, in the vault, within which stands the tomb of Charlemagne. Here it is resolved to murder the King. A ballot decides who shall do the deed. Ernani's name is drawn.

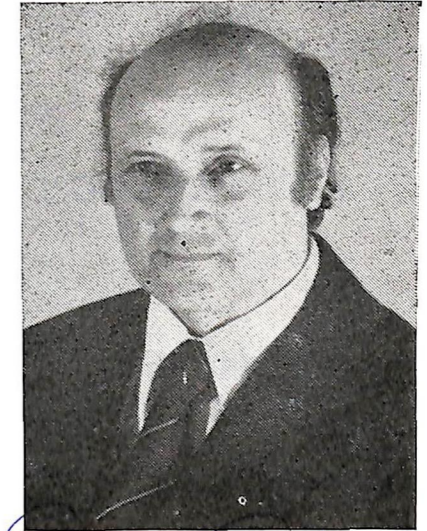
The King, however, has received information of the time and place of this meeting. From the tomb he has been an unobserved witness of the meeting and purpose of the conspirators. Booming of cannon outside tells him of his choice as head of the Holy Roman Empire. Emerging from the tomb, he shows himself to the awed conspirators, who imagine they see Charlemagne issuing forth to combat them. At the same moment the doors open. The electors of the Empire enter to pay homage to Charles V. 'The herd to the dungeon, the nobles to the headsman,' he commands.

Ernani advances, reveals himself as John of Aragon, and claims the right to die with the nobles, 'to fall, covered, before the King'. But upon Elvira's fervent plea, the King, now also Emperor, commences his reign with an act of grace. He pardons the conspirators, restores to Ernani his titles and estates, and unites him with Elvira.

Silva, thwarted in his desire to marry Elvira, waits until Ernani and Elvira, after their nuptials, are upon the terrace of Ernani's castle in Aragon. At their most blissful moment he sounds the fatal horn. Ernani, too chivalrous to evade his promise, stabs himself in the presence of the grim avenger and of Elvira, who falls prostrate upon his lifeless body.



**Catherine
Gauci
Azzopardi**
*
Soprano



**Andrew
Sappiano**
*
Tenor

Catherine Gauci Azzopardi

Andrew Sappiano

THE SOLOISTS

Joe Fenech



**Joe
Fenech**
*
Baritone

Joe Vella Bondin



**Joe
Vella
Bondin**
*
Bass

THE CONCERT VERSION OF 'ERNANI'

I

1. *PRELUDE* ORCHESTRA

2. *Allegri! beviano* CHOIR

3. *Come rugiada al cespite* TENOR

4. *Ernani! Ernani involami* SOPRANO

5. *Qui mi trasse amor possenti* SOPRANO
BARITONE

6. *Infelice! e tuo credevi* BASS

7. *Esultiamo!* CHOIR

INTERVAL

II

1. *Ah! morir portessi adisso* SOPRANO
TENOR

2. *Lo vedremo, veglio audece* SOPRANO
BARITONE
BASS
CHOIR

3. *Esci... a te... scegli* TENOR
BASS

4. *Oh de' verd armi mucì* BARITONE

5. *Si ridesti il Leon di Castiglia* CHOIR

6. *O Sonuno Carlo* SOPRANO
TENOR
BARITONE
BASS
CHOIR

7. *Solingo, errante, misero* SOPRANO
TENOR
BASS

ELVIRA, KINSWOMAN TO SILVA
Soprano

ERNANI, OR JOHN OF ARAGON,
A BANDIT CHIEF
Tenor

DON CARLOS, KING OF CASTILLE
Baritone

DON RUY DI SILVA, GRANDEE OF
SPAIN
Bass

'Ernani' was first produced in Venice in 1844. It was Verdi's fifth opera and perhaps the most representative of his early operas.

It is based on Victor Hugo's novel 'Hernani' or 'The Proscribed' In it are many popular and immortal melodies, amongst which is the third of Verdi's great patriotic choruses, 'Si ridesti il Leon di Castiglia'.

The Friendly Way to Fly

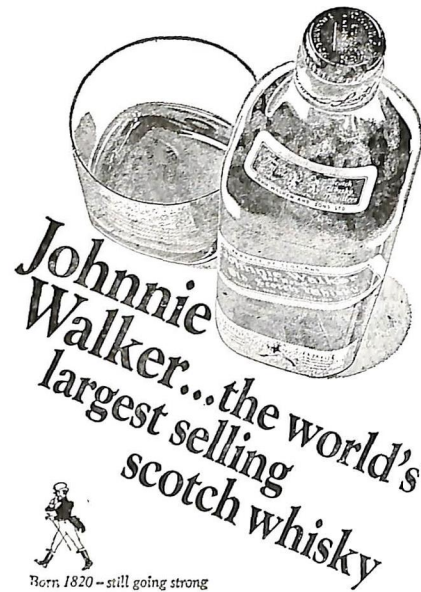


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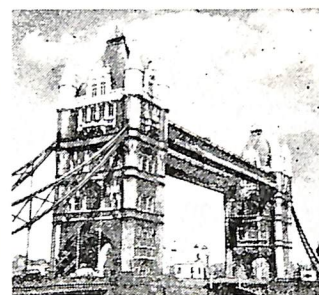
Verdi

GIUSEPPE FORTUNINO VERDI was born near Busseto, Italy, on 10 October 1813. He had from his boyhood great inclination for music and at the age of sixteen he conducted the Orchestra of Provesi, his music master.

A rich merchant in the village of Busseto, who took interest in the talent of young Verdi, offered him a scholarship to enable him to continue his studies in Milan. His intention was to enter the Conservatorio, but unfortunately he was past the age of admission. Instead Verdi studied privately with Lavigna, the accompanist at the Scala Theatre. Lavigna set before the pupil the works of Palestrina and Marcello, of Bach and Beethoven, names that Verdi never ceased to revere. In this period an opportunity fell for the youth to display his practical efficiency. The conductor of the Milan Philharmonic Society fell sick and Verdi took his place at a rehearsal of Haydn's 'The Creation'. His success led to the composition of an Opera for the Society, which he wrote under the title 'Oberto Conte di San Bonifacio'.

In 1836 Verdi married Barezzi's daughter, Margherita. The marriage was followed by adversity. After losing a little girl, in 1839 his infant son died and soon afterwards Margherita followed her children to the grave. This was a hard period for Verdi and it occasioned no surprise at his resolution not to write any more music. However, a friend of his, after a short period, presented the libretto of an Opera which he thought might appeal to Verdi. The master read it with growing interest and in the end, after having revived in him the creative inspiration, set to work on the 'Nabucco'. The Opera 'Ernani' soon followed. Both these operas had a note of patriotism in them criticising Austrian domination in Italy.

A definite step forward was taken by Verdi with his Opera 'Macbeth', changing the usual romantic subject into a noble tragic theme.



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Verdi had conceived a great admiration for the works of Shakespeare and from them he received the inspiration for the tragic note. In 1846 he was invited to Paris where he produced 'Ernani', and in the following year he went to London to perform 'I Masnadieri', an Opera based upon a tragedy by Schiller.

Unfortunately this opera was a failure due to the fact that critics found the music too blatant for their taste. Verdi in fact had infused into the polite Italian Opera of the period a new life drawn from vulgar sources, Paris and London, less susceptible than Italy to the patriotic appeal that was stirring the continent, condemned the style.

From this followed the period of glory in Verdi's music. 'Rigoletto', 'Trovatore', 'Traviata' were composed in the period of three years; three operas which have done most to familiarise his name throughout the world. They are perfect in form and manner and contain a touch of sensitiveness and humanity rarely reached by other dramatic composers. 'Il Trovatore' remains alive by reason of its wealth and vigorous melody and the resourcefulness with which the dramatic situations are portrayed. 'La Traviata', a domestic tragedy of contemporary society, shows a greater mastery of orchestral colour than Verdi had hitherto displayed.

Verdi never studied the score of other composers since for him music was something to be performed through inspiration. He was not therefore influenced to any great extent by his contemporaries, with one exception — Meyerbeer.

Verdi, who had developed his own style upon the basis of Rossini's serious operas, found in the showy orchestrations of Meyerbeer's music the means of enlarging his own scope of expression. 'Un Ballo in Maschera' (1859), 'La Forza del Destino' (1862), 'Don Carlos' (1867) are all historical dramas and suffer from the fault of attempting to compress too much dramatic incident. Musically these works show an enormous advance in subtlety of characterization and richness of orchestration.

In 1862 Verdi was appointed to represent Italian music at the Great Exhibition in London. For this occasion he composed a Cantata 'The Hymn of the Nation', which is remarkable only for the fact that the text was by Arrigo Boito.

In the meantime two other important works were to be written. In 1868, Verdi was approached by an agent of Khedive Ismail Pascha with a proposal that he should compose an opera for performances in Cairo to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal. The Italian libretto was written by Chislanzoni. The resulting opera, 'Aida' was certainly the most completely successful work of art Verdi had so far produced. In 1873 Alessandro Manzoni, one of the intellectual leaders of the Italian revival, died. Verdi felt impelled to pay tangible homage to the man whom he deeply revered, and composed a 'Requiem Mass', which resulted in one of the masterpieces of nineteenth century sacred music.

Verdi was now over sixty and, exhausted by the labour of composing and conducting the Requiem in Italy and abroad, retired to Sant'Agata for some rest. Later Verdi met Boito through Ricordi's introduction. This new acquaintance brought about the composing of 'Otello', for the idea of turning again to Shakespeare tempted Verdi and he was thus able to produce some of his most beautiful music.

As a conclusion to such great musical work Verdi wrote in his late years 'Falstaff'. Essentially, though a comic opera, the music of 'Falstaff' does not differ from Verdi's other operas. The note is one of freshness and youth. Where the music differs is in its even greater subtlety and extraordinary swiftness.

For the remainder of his life, Verdi lived quietly at Sant'Agata. He occupied himself with the composition of some sacred pieces. These were first performed by Arturo Toscanini when still very young.

He died in 1901 on 27 January at the age of eighty eight.

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