

Giuseppe Verdi

La Forza del Destino



This month **Bridget Mermikides** transcribes a beautiful 19th century piece by the Italian composer that was also used to great effect in a series of Stella Artois lager adverts.

ABILITY RATING



Moderate

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: A minor	✓ Free stroke and rest stroke
TEMPO: 85bpm	✓ Rubato and expression
CD: TRACKS 19-20	✓ Consistency of tone

THE SOUND AND REPERTOIRE of the nylon-string guitar is very often associated with Spain, South America and - to a much lesser extent - Germany, Austria and France in the case of baroque, classical and impressionist transcriptions. However, this month we are looking at an arrangement of a work by a distinctively Italian composer. Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) - whose works include a staggering 28 operas - is one of the most influential composers of the 19th century. There are in fact some links to the guitar in Italian and Verdi's music. A lot of mandolin music (by such composers as Vivaldi) have later been transcribed for the guitar; Paganini - who was originally a mandolinist - has since had his virtuoso violin works adopted by guitarists and Verdi himself includes a guitar and a mandolin in the orchestra in his 1887 opera *Otello*. Verdi was a master of orchestration and high drama, and had an extraordinary talent for writing simple, memorable and hugely popular melodies that are widely known to this day. These include *La Donna è Mobile* - from the opera *Rigoletto* (1851) - which is used in everything from Disney movies to football chants and the *Drinking Song* - from *La Traviata* (1853) - one of the best known operatic tenor melodies all of time.

This month we are looking at an


arrangement of a melody from the overture of Verdi's 1862 opera *La Forza del Destino*. This theme, although short, is particularly evocative and you may recognise it from the scores of the superb French films *Manon des Sources* and *Jean de Florette* (1986) as well as TV adverts for Stella Artois lager.

Solo classical guitar music tends to be either written specifically for the guitar or transcribed and re-arranged from piano pieces. However, as we've seen in this series with the Mozart clarinet concerto, Bach's *Air On A G String* and Schubert's *Ave Maria*, it is also possible to adapt orchestral works to the instrument. This

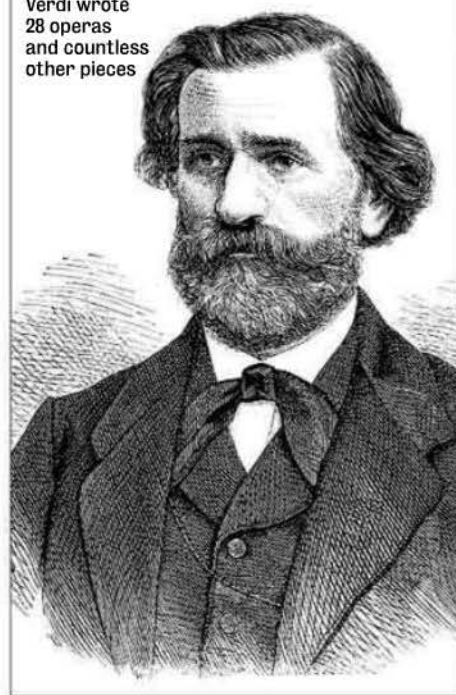
“Verdi had an extraordinary talent for writing simple and memorable melodies”

inevitably requires careful and considerate arrangement in order to capture the essence of the piece despite the technical challenges of condensing many musical lines to a playable guitar part.

The actual Verdi melody appears just once in his overture, but I've repeated it here (the second time up an octave, to add dynamics, as well as listener and player interest) and composed additional material that acts as an introduction and ending.

The main melody, harmony and adapted counter melodies all work well on the guitar (in Verdi's original key of A minor) and this arrangement should be a welcome addition to your repertoire. I do hope you enjoy learning and playing it. 

Verdi wrote 28 operas and countless other pieces



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TECHNIQUE FOCUS

FREE STROKE, REST STROKE

Two common picking techniques in classical guitar are free stroke and rest stroke. With rest stroke the picking finger plucks a string and then comes to rest against the adjacent one. With the thumb this is the next string down (towards the floor) and with fingers it's the next string up (towards the face). With free stroke the finger doesn't rest on an adjacent string after plucking, but floats free until it's required to pick again. Rest stroke is often favoured for single note playing, while free stroke is for polyphonic playing (chords and arpeggios).



TRACK RECORD We struggled to find any commendable Verdi music CDs played on guitar; but of course his well-known operas, like *La Traviata*, and his wonderful *Requiem Mass* are vital to anyone's classical collection. However we did find a great YouTube video of Andrea de Vitis playing Tarrega's *Fantasia on Themes From La Traviata*, which is well worth searching out, as de Vitis has wonderful touch and tone.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 20

[Intro] The piece begins with 16-bar intro consisting of four, four-bar phrases. The use of rubato is normal and natural in this style of music and is used as a way of shaping and giving expression to the music. Rubato describes a kind rhythmic freedom where part of a phrase can be slackened or slowed to emphasise a particular note or two. This is very often compensated by a neighbouring part of the phrase speeding up slightly (and vice versa).

[Bars 5-8] The fretting hand's fingers can stay in contact with the strings for the E7b9 chord shape in bar 5, as it shifts positions down the neck. This helps

to create a smooth sounding connection between the chords. In bar 8 there is a half barre at the 5th fret and a bit of a stretch for the fretting hand on the Am9 chord. The challenge here is to make every note in the chord ring clearly. Keep an ear open for any bass notes still ringing when they should no longer be heard - for example, in bar 3 if the bass note A is still ringing from bar 1, mute it with the thumb (picking hand) immediately after the bass note D is plucked in bar 3. The same thing applies throughout the piece whenever the bass note, and consequently the harmony, changes.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 25

[Bars 16-22] The paused E7(b9) chord in bar 16 sets the stage for the melody, which begins half way through the same bar. Wherever possible play the melody (note with stems pointing upwards in the notation) using rest stroke and the accompaniment free stroke (see Technique Focus). Try to sound like two different people; one 'you' playing the tune, the other 'you' on the accompaniment. Aim to keep the accompaniment in the background by playing it slightly quieter.

Please note the fretting hand fingering suggestion in bars 21 and 22. This fingering helps to create a connecting second finger from the melody note C in bar 22 to the F in 23. The little slide also adds to the expression - check out the CD version to hear how it should sound. Also, be sure to keep hold of the melody F note while playing the next few accompaniment notes. The same exact thing occurs in bars 37-39.

Am Am**b**6 Am Asus2 A5 Asus2 Am Am**b**6 Am

31

Asus2 A5 Asus2 Am Dm Dmadd9 Dm Dsus2 Dm Dsus2 Dm

37

C/E F C/G G6 G C E7

43

Am9 Am Am9 Am Am**b**6 Am Am9 Am Am9 Am

49

Dm Dsus4 Dm Dadd9 Dm Dadd9 Dm E E(b9) E7

55

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 20

[Bar 48 to end] The melody section is repeated an octave up at bar 48 and there is some fretting hand fingering advice in the score. Again, aim to make the melody stand out from the accompaniment and allow the phrasing to breathe.

This section ends at bar 78 on an unresolved G chord, which is true to the original composition. The piece ends with a similar 16 bar section to the one heard at the very beginning. I hope you enjoy my arrangement of this great piece!

Chords: Eaug, E, Eaug, E, Am, Am^b6, Am, Am9, Am, Am9, Am

61

Chords: Am^b6, Am9, Am, Am9, Am, Dm, Dmadd9, Dm, Dsus2, Dm

67

Chords: Dsus2, Dm, C/E, F, C/G, G6, G, Am, Am9, Am

74

Chords: Dm, Dm9, Dm7, Dm9, Dm, E7^b9, Am9, Am, Am9, Am, Dm

81

Chords: Dm6, Dm7, Dm6, Am, Am9, Am, F7, E7[#]5, E7, Am

88