

Italian opera and German historiography

January 2001 saw Parma in full festival. The former ducal capital hosted Italy's official centennial commemorations of the death of Giuseppe Verdi, including the first part of a large international conference and a star-studded performance of his *Messa da Requiem*. Banners and posters bearing Verdi's likeness sprang up across town (the portrait chosen was Giovanni Boldini's 1886 colour pastel of the aged composer);¹ impressive piles of publications and composer-related merchandise decorated well nigh every shop window. It was in this exalting atmosphere that a local journalist cornered one of the few German participants in the conference. What, he asked her, did the Germans make of Verdi these days? When she objected that she was hardly qualified to speak on behalf of her nation's taste, the reporter shifted ground. Shouldn't the Germans care more about Wagner? Or did her presence in Parma indicate that she, personally, preferred Verdi? Her response – that both composers were popular in Germany, and that it was perfectly possible to like both – satisfied him no better. He persisted until he got what he wanted: the sensational news (proclaimed not without irony) that, nowadays at least, all Germans *loved* Verdi.

I start with this personal anecdote because, though well outside the time-frame of my book, it encapsulates several of its themes. On the most basic level, it demonstrates the extent to which music is able – and seen fit – to rouse feelings of collective identity. Although Parma has, in recent years, rehashed the Verdi festival to raise its regional profile (and, hence, its tourist appeal), the focus in 2001 was clearly on Verdi as national icon. This was driven home by all those Italian flags that framed the Verdi banners, not to mention the attendance of the Italian president and other state dignitaries. To be sure, on centenary day itself the centre-left national daily *La Repubblica* published a survey revealing that the average Italian's knowledge of operatic matters was rudimentary at best. But the survey also demonstrated that expertise in the life and works of Verdi was not required for counting him among the 'great' nineteenth-century Italians who 'glorify' their country: he still topped the list of national heroes, garnering twice as many votes as his closest contenders,

¹ The portrait is reproduced in Francesco Degrada (ed.), *Verdi e la Scala* (Milan, 2001), 45.

Garibaldi and Manzoni.² Verdi, in short, is one of the most famous Italian citizens in history, and he is a figure of national pride precisely because of his *international esteem*. This explains why the journalist so badly wanted to interpret my presence in Parma as proof of German ‘surrender’.

Significantly, though, the reporter was not interested in my French, English and American colleagues: it was the Germanic angle he needed. Beyond highlighting Verdi’s iconic position in Italian culture, this attitude shows that such national identification is often fostered by defining an outsider, by marking out the boundaries of one’s own group through comparison with an Other; and this Other, in the case of nineteenth-century Italian opera, is obviously German music – a relation still frequently epitomised in the opposition of Verdi and Wagner. There are good reasons, of course, for pitting these two against each other. Since the late nineteenth century, they have been thought the most eminent opera composers of their time. Both were born in 1813. Both started out in the late 1830s. For both, the 1870s were an important turning point in their careers (albeit for different reasons). And both continue to loom large in global operatic programmes. What is more, both were deeply affected by the parallel course of their native countries. During the nineteenth century, the Italian and the German lands each sought to unify their splintered ensembles of territories, and both achieved political unity through military victories within a decade of each other, Italy in 1860 (with later acquisitions), Germany in 1871. In the process of nation-building before and after unification, both relied on culture to summon feelings of national identity, especially after the failed 1848 revolutions; and for both countries, this meant above all a turn to music, the art form in which they – arguably more than any other European nation – could boast a long-standing and widely disseminated heritage. The elevation of Verdi and Wagner to the status of national emblems was thus intricately linked to Italy’s and Germany’s need for unifying symbols during the protracted phase of political state-building and, thereafter, for cementing culturally the achieved unity.

Yet precisely because both composers fulfilled such similar functions nationally while competing onstage internationally, they also came to signify each nation’s respective enemy – the Other, the rival – that imperilled its ascent. This musical antagonism was partly grounded in foreign policy, resonating above all with the long territorial quarrels between Habsburg Austria and northern Italy; after 1945, such hostilities flared up again when Italians blamed German Nazism (as opposed to Italian fascism) for the devastation wrought by World War II.³ Bearing this historical background in

² *Gli album de La Repubblica*. Special Verdi supplement (27 January 2001), 20–1.

³ A good survey of Austro-Italian relations is Rupert Pichler, *Italiener in Österreich, Österreicher in Italien. Einführung in Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft und Verfassung 1800–1914* (Vienna, 2000); cultural

mind, that Parma journalist's question suggests more than sensation-seeking curiosity about the Germans' positions towards their musical tradition or collective identity. Rather, it harkens back to a binary mode of thinking that was fundamental to nineteenth-century European art music. As such, it can point us to a more general, indeed vital, aspect of the nexus between music and national identity – one that previous scholarship has for the most part left under-articulated: the role of foreign culture in the development of a nation's self-image. In particular, it reveals the importance of Italian music in defining what it meant to be German. How did members of the German cultural community perceive Verdi during the various phases of national consolidation? When and how did they encounter his operas, and did their responses to Wagner really get in the way of appreciating Verdi? Moreover, can we generalise about musical tastes of German speakers in the first place, thus lumping together developments across different geographic spaces and political systems, across time, across social and gender divides?

Verdi and the Germans addresses these questions from a variety of historical perspectives. It seeks to provide answers by focusing not on composers and works hailed as national idols, but on a foreigner who – sometimes through his mere presence in the repertory, sometimes more subtly by way of musical style, plot structures or personal appearance – counteracted this one-way association between nationalism and a nation's own cultural products. In short, my book examines the function of music in the context of nation-building by crossing national boundaries. It looks at the position of a musical 'outsider' within a nation desperate to assert its cultural supremacy; and it confronts the construction of this Other with images of the German Self in both musical and wider political contexts. As I shall argue, Verdi is uniquely suited for these purposes. After all, Italian opera had been the most prominent and most institutionally backed foreign musical influence in German lands since at least the eighteenth century, routinely eclipsing the works of native composers. From the mid-1850s, its success was chiefly due to Verdi. That he continued the Italian grip on opera was particularly vexing at a time when German composers were preoccupied with finding their own operatic voice, not least because the Italian-born genre remained the most sumptuous, most representative and, hence, most politically prestigious among the 'serious' performing arts.

In the broadest terms, then, my book studies the presence and perception of Verdi (the man and his works) in German-speaking countries in light of

interactions are discussed in Brigitte Mazohl-Wallnig and Marco Merigli (eds.), *Österreichisches Italien, Italienisches Österreich? Interkulturelle Gemeinsamkeiten und nationale Differenzen vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Vienna, 1999).

was so intricately entwined with the rise of nationalism, a lot can be gained from discussing both developments together. In order to clarify this dual methodological direction, I will briefly survey salient trends in the study of music and nationalism before outlining in more detail, and against this theoretical frame, some key historical backdrops to Verdi's appearance on the German map. What follows, in short, will be a double exposition of the methodological and historical considerations that form the backbone of this book.

Music and Germanness

To explore music's links with nationalism is, of course, not a new idea. On the contrary, the last two decades have witnessed a surge of interest in the interactions between everything national and what Pierre Bourdieu has called the 'field of cultural production'.⁶ This interest has partly been advanced by rapid geopolitical changes. Since the 1989 revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe, for example, many smaller nations of the former Soviet Union have experienced a sharp rise of nationalism in conjunction with claims to political independence; and these claims typically go hand-in-hand with an emphasis on distinct cultures – just as had been the case in nineteenth-century Italy and Germany.⁷ In the academic world since the 1980s, the examination of nationalism's socio-cultural implications has gained additional impetus from 'constructivist' approaches. At base, these share the premise that nations are not historically given objects but contingent constructs of human minds – in Benedict Anderson's influential formulation, they are 'imagined communities' whose appeal as prime common denominator of collective identities stems from their ideological suffusion of all strands of life.⁸ Such an understanding directs interest away from pre-existing ethnic, linguistic, geographic or territorial factors and towards the multifarious processes by which nations are 'built' or 'formed'. The resulting paradigm shift has contributed to the increasing attention historians have recently paid to musical life; vice versa, it has encouraged

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York, 1993), esp. 29–73.

⁷ On this parallel, see also Philip V. Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism: Cultural Identity and Modern History* (Santa Barbara, 2004), esp. 73–6.

⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London, 1991). Similarly influential was the notion of collective identity as fostered by 'invented traditions', suggested by Eric J. Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions' in Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), 1–14.

were acceptable only if the German side prevailed – if, according to Brendel, they had a ‘truly Germanic foundation’. In the *neudeutsch* context, this meant advanced Beethovenian ambitions, above all in instrumental music; pertaining to the theatre, Brendel credited Wagner with finally having realised the ‘ideal of a purely German opera’.²⁹ From this, it is clear that Italian opera composers were not eligible for Germanisation: from the language of the libretto to the conventions of the genre, their foreignness was too palpable.

Italian music, then, was a quantitative **menace to the claim of German hegemony**: one that critical subterfuge could not simply whisk away, however much Germanic critics tried to reject, ignore or appropriate it. Nevertheless, apart from its unrivalled dissemination throughout the Western world, there are cogent qualitative reasons for examining Italian opera in the context of German nationhood. As noted above, codes of collective identity emerge not only through emphasis on one’s own (perceived or desired) traits; they are also a result of distinguishing oneself from others. Thinking in terms of **binary oppositions** – we/they, insider/outsider, Self/Other – is of course an innate human strategy for ordering the world. According to sociologist Bernhard Giesen, such thinking shapes collective identities on three fundamental levels, which he calls primordial (distinctions given to us by birth, such as gender, family and race), traditional (group identities relying on ‘familiarity with implicit rules of behaviour, with traditions and social routines’) and universalist (those pertaining to the sacred).³⁰ Music comes into play **on the middle level**; it partakes in what social anthropologist Michael Herzfeld has termed ‘cultural intimacy’ – those aspects of cultural engagement which lay out a common societal ground of identification, above all concerning nationhood and the state.³¹ Cast in these terms, German encounters with Italian music assume symbolic significance. The political archenemy that threatened the territory of post-Enlightenment Germany was France; but in the musical field it was Italy, or – as we shall see – **everything Latin**.³² Moreover, unlike political opponents, this musical Other **could not be conquered**.

²⁹ 380–1; for his aesthetic concern with ‘modernity’, see Barbara Titus, ‘Conceptualizing Music: Friedrich Theodor Vischer and Hegelian Currents in German Music Criticism, 1848–1887’, PhD thesis, University of Oxford (2005), 117–29. On the shift from ‘cosmopolitan’ to ‘universal’ in German claims to superiority, see Sponheuer, ‘Reconstructing’, esp. 40–1.

³⁰ Brendel, ‘Zur Anbahnung’, 272, 271: ‘das Ideal einer rein deutschen Oper’.

³¹ Bernhard Giesen, *Kollektive Identität. Die Intellektuellen und die Nation 2* (Frankfurt, 1999), 42; also *Intellectuals and the German Nation: Collective Identity in an Axial Age*, trans. Nicholas Levis and Amos Weisz (Cambridge, 1998), 11–50; and Assmann, *Gedächtnis*, 151–60.

³² Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*, 2nd edn (New York and London, 2005), 3, 15–16.

³³ On nineteenth-century German views of France, see Michael Jeismann, *Vaterland der Feinde. Studien zum nationalen Feindbegriff und Selbstverständnis in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1792–1918* (Stuttgart, 1992), 76–95; for a wider perspective, Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1992), 359, 372–8.

features associated with various nations. But the rise of nationalism in the later eighteenth century engendered a belief that each *Volk* (now conceived more widely as a nation) bore inherent characteristics, and that these – *pace* Herder's influential ideas – became manifest not just in language but also in folk song and art music. Various reasons were provided for the assumption of such a shared *Volksgeist*, or 'spirit' of a nation, ranging from what we would now call ethnicity to external conditions such as landscape and climate, and finally to the influences of language, religion, culture and education.³⁵ Music thus became a tool both to measure a nation's essence and to stimulate its cultivation. Partly as a result, the proliferating musical discourse took on a moral and educational tone.³⁶

Yet this tone implied that German writers were biased when it came to assessing other nations. They invariably made comparisons with German music. As Mary Sue Morrow has demonstrated, this was especially noticeable in the later eighteenth century with regard to instrumental music, largely because it was here that German composers stood the best chance of winning the game. As it happened, Italian compositions were the most distinct and extensively disseminated rival fare on the market, and therefore figured prominently in critical writing. Not surprisingly, binary modes of thinking kicked in. Among the stylistic features commonly attributed to Italian music were, according to Morrow, 'tuneful melodies with homophonic accompaniments, a conspicuous absence of counterpoint, a preference for limited modulations'.³⁷ This was no value-free description: supposedly Germanic traits included complex harmony, the careful working-out of ideas, and thoroughness or depth. The idea was that Germans worked harder and therefore forged more intricate pieces: ones that were both more original

³⁵ See, for example, the entry 'Nationalmusik' signed 'K.' in Gustav Schilling (ed.), *Encyclopädie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften, oder Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst*, 7 vols. (Stuttgart, 1840–2), V: 123–4; and Taruskin, *History*, III: 120–4. For an (albeit tenuous) differentiation between the concepts of 'national style' and 'national character' in music, see Hentschel, *Bürgerliche Ideologie*, 359–83; on nineteenth-century concepts of Volk and nation, Reinhart Koselleck *et al.*, 'Volk, Nation, Nationalismus, Masse' in Otto Brunner *et al.* (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, rev. edn, 8 vols., VII (Stuttgart, 2004), esp. 325–68.

³⁶ Nationalism was certainly not the sole cause of this development, which was also related – among other things – to the professionalisation of musical life and its concurrent rise in social and aesthetic status. See, for instance, Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 60–75; and, on the increasingly moral slant of music criticism, Sanna Pederson, 'A. B. Marx, Berlin Concert Life, and German National Identity', *19th-Century Music* 18 (1994), 87–104.

³⁷ Mary Sue Morrow, *German Music Criticism in the Late Eighteenth Century: Aesthetic Issues in Instrumental Music* (Cambridge, 1997), 48. See also her 'Building a National Identity with Music: A Story from the Eighteenth Century' in Nicholas Vazsonyi (ed.), *Searching for Common Ground: Diskurse zur deutschen Identität 1750–1871* (Cologne, 2000), 255–69; and Pederson, 'A. B. Marx', 87–96.

and closer to the inner human ‘truth’. Italians, by contrast, produced shallow music tailored to the latest fashion.³⁸

Such clichés did not emerge from a void. In fact, they bear a striking resemblance to the anti-Italian rhetoric of eighteenth-century French authors who were engulfed in the operatic *Querelle des Bouffons* as well as the later showdown between ‘Gluckists’ and ‘Piccinnists’, and whose writings were well known in German lands.³⁹ However, if French critics had tended to denounce Italian opera as purely music-driven, by contrast to the French emphasis on drama and spectacle, German authors began to set the operatic genre wholesale against (German) instrumental music. It was in the 1810s and 1820s that this antagonism centred fully on Italian opera, and that both aesthetic implications and cultural resonances of the resulting prejudices became more invasive. While new German symphonic music – epitomised by Beethoven – was still in the fledgling stages of establishing itself in Europe, the sudden advent of Rossini polarised the musical world. In 1816, works of his were first heard in German lands, above all in Munich and Vienna; within a few years, his operas were the most widely circulating, accounted for the most new productions, attracted the greatest number of listeners, and constituted the largest share of theatrical repertoires throughout Europe. When, in 1822, Rossini visited Vienna for a four-month season, ten of his operas were programmed, with performances taking place almost every other night at the Hofoper. Moreover, the composer dominated social life, receiving unheard-of ovations from commoners and gentry alike: previously only kings and victorious military commanders had been granted such accolades.⁴⁰ As

³⁸ Morrow, ‘Building a National Identity’, 262. On the concept of depth in German music aesthetics, see Holly Watkins, ‘From the Mine to the Shrine: The Critical Origins of Musical Depth’, *19th-Century Music* 27 (2004), 179–207.

³⁹ A recent survey of the eighteenth-century French discourse on Italian opera is Alessandro Di Profio, “... l’opéra italien n’est pas autre chose qu’un concert...”. *Aventures et mésaventures d’un *topos critique** in Michelle Biget-Mainfroy and Rainer Schmusch (eds.), *‘L’esprit français’ und die Musik Europas. Entstehung, Einfluss und Grenzen einer ästhetischen Doktrin. Festschrift für Herbert Schneider* (Hildesheim, 2007), 20–30; on the German reception thereof, Elisabeth Schmierer, ‘Die deutsche Rezeption der Querelle des Gluckistes et Piccinistes’ in Herbert Schneider (ed.), *Studien zu den deutsch-französischen Musikbeziehungen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Bericht über die erste gemeinsame Jahrestagung der Gesellschaft für Musikforschung und der Société française de musicologie, Saarbrücken 1999* (Hildesheim, 2002), 196–217. The emerging German prejudices against Italian music also embraced French traits; see Bonds, *Music as Thought*, 88–9. On the shift from a French–Italian towards an Italian–German binary as fundamental to music-historiographical perspectives, see Laurenz Lütteken, ‘Italien, Deutschland und die Entstehung der musikalischen “Renaissance” im 19. Jahrhundert’ in Bodo Guthmüller (ed.), *Deutschland und Italien in ihren wechselseitigen Beziehungen während der Renaissance* (Wiesbaden, 2000), 200–1, and my argument below.

⁴⁰ This unprecedented adulation was famously captured in Stendhal’s casting of Rossini as a ‘conqueror’ and ‘hero’ akin to Napoleon; *Life of Rossini* (1824), trans. Richard N. Coe (New

to ephemeral pleasure of little substance. It could even endanger health if consumed in more than occasional doses.⁴³

One-dimensional though they may seem, these clichés encompassed wider issues. Most obvious, perhaps, was their gendered subtext. Although rarely explicated, the assorted metaphors suggest that a frivolous luxury item such as Italian opera was more suitable for female listeners than for men. Commentators regularly applied the term 'weak' or 'effeminate' (*verweichlicht*) to both the genre and the tastes of its audiences, on occasion even to the entire Italian people. At the same time, the element of physical bliss that German writers persistently evoked had a decidedly feminine, even erotic, touch. This was heightened by the emphasis placed on vocal virtuosity. In 1832, the long-time Italian correspondent for the Leipzig *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, Germany's leading music journal, summed up the prevalent image of the genre when he described the 'rich operatic trappings, the newly favourable operatic adornment, and the modern mushy operatic shallowness'.⁴⁴ Rossini's appeal, in other words, was not unlike the quickly fading beauty of a woman, dependent on fashion and subject to the natural transience of life.

These gendered associations raise the question of who actually fell for Rossini. German-language music historians and critics, for one, tried

⁴³ On Schumann and Hoffmann, see Bernd Sponheuer, *Musik als Kunst und Nicht-Kunst. Untersuchungen zur Dichotomie von 'hoher' und 'niederer' Musik im musikästhetischen Denken zwischen Kant und Hanslick* (Kassel, 1987), esp. 11–15, 23; also Pederson, 'Music Criticism', 114–15. August Wilhelm Ambros considered the whole Rossini phenomenon a 'desert'; *Culturhistorische Bilder aus dem Musikleben der Gegenwart*, 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1865), 33; Wagner used various nature metaphors in *Oper und Drama*, 250–5 (trans. 39–45). On German-language Rossini reception, see also Joseph Loschelder, 'Rossinis Bild und Zerrbild in der Allgemeinen musikalischen Zeitung Leipzig', *Bollettino del centro rossiniano di studi* [13] (1973), no. 1, 23–42, no. 2, 23–42; Hans Christoph Worbs, 'Zur deutschen und österreichischen Rossini-Rezeption im Vormärz' in Jürgen Schläder and Reinholt Quandt (eds.), *Festschrift Heinz Becker zum 60. Geburtstag am 26. Juni 1982* (Laaber, 1982), 106–50; Christoph-Hellmut Mahling, 'Zur Beurteilung der italienischen Oper in der deutschsprachigen Presse zwischen 1815 und 1825' in Angelo Pompilio et al. (eds.), *Atti del xiv congresso della Società Internazionale di Musicologia. Trasmissione e recezione delle forme di cultura musicale, Bologna 1987* (Turin, 1990), 14–16; Sieghart Döhring, 'Rossini nel giudizio del mondo tedesco' in Paolo Fabbri (ed.), *Gioachino Rossini, 1792–1992: Il testo e la scena. Convegno internazionale di studi, Pesaro, 25–28 giugno 1992* (Pesaro, 1994), 93–104; and Arnold Jacobshagen, 'Schmetterling und Adler. Die italienische Oper im Musikschrifttum des Biedermeier' in Sebastian Werr and Daniel Brandenburg (eds.), *Das Bild der italienischen Oper in Deutschland* (Münster, 2004), 159–69.

⁴⁴ [Peter Lichtenthal], Milan correspondence in *AmZ* 34 (1832), 791: 'den reichern Opernschmuck, die neugefällige Opernzier und die modern-weichliche Opern-Seichtigkeit unserer so eben verflossenen zwanzig Correspondenz-Jahre'. On the physicality and eroticism associated with the performance of Rossini's operas, see Nicola Gess, *Gewalt der Musik. Literatur und Musikkritik um 1800* (Freiburg and Berlin, 2006), 63–110. Georgia Cowart has observed such effeminating of Italian opera already in eighteenth-century French discourse: 'Of Women, Sex and Folly: Opera under the Old Regime', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 6 (1994), 205–20.

aristocratic governance. As the century progressed, this critique only intensified, impresarios being pilloried for neglecting German works and the royal owners of theatres for betraying the national cause. What is more, the nobility in general was accused of attending opera for non-musical reasons – social representation and amusement – rather than for the ‘absolute’ aesthetic values cultivated by the *Bildungsbürger*; and the piecemeal, distracted listening habits encouraged by Italian opera further imperilled these values.⁴⁸ Operatic taste thus turned into an ethical and socio-political bone of contention.

All this explains why Rossini became such a lightning rod in musical discourse, establishing the Italian–German antagonism as a cornerstone to the very conception of German music. Put crudely, the latter was everything Italian opera was not. It emerged from the grey, foggy north, not the clear, sunny south; it was directed at inner truth, not false surface; it derived from learned art, not unrefined nature; it flourished in Protestant more than in Catholic regions; it was aimed at the bourgeoisie more than the aristocracy; it spoke to the mind and heart, rather than stirring superficial emotions; it was solid, mighty and full of ‘character’, not feeble, soft and artificial. Ultimately, as Bernd Sponheuer has argued, such oppositions could be reduced to the fundamental binary of the spiritual versus the physical, or the realm of intellect (*Geist*) versus sensuality (*Sinnlichkeit*). This, in turn, amounted to a dichotomy – still ingrained in German musicology today – between ‘serious’ and ‘entertainment’ (or popular) music: a dichotomy which excluded Rossini from the ambit of ‘true’ art while buttressing the construal of German music as universal.⁴⁹

Just how important the Italian Other was for the idea of a superior German music is evident from a pair of poems by the Dresden poet and composer Carl Borromäus von Miltitz, published in 1834 under the title ‘Deutsche

⁴⁸ Eduard Hanslick most obstinately attacked the Italian seasons and their truculent influence on public taste; see, for instance, ‘Musikalische Briefe. (Die italienische Opernsaison.)’, *Presse* (24 June 1856), reprinted in Dietmar Strauß (ed.), *Sämtliche Schriften. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, 6 vols. to date (Vienna, 1993–), I/3: 258–62. For a European perspective on the commonplace association of Italian opera and aristocratic audiences, see Gunilla Budde, ‘Stellvertreterkriege. Politik mit Musik des deutschen und englischen Bürgertums im frühen 19. Jahrhundert’, *Journal of Modern European History* 5 (2007), 103–13. The now-classic study of changing listening habits in relation to restratified early nineteenth-century audiences is James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1995).

⁴⁹ Sponheuer, ‘Reconstructing’, 40. An extraordinarily outspoken synopsis of such views is to be found in [Johann Christian Lobe], *Musikalische Briefe. Wahrheit über Tonkunst und Tonkünstler . . .*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1852), I: 23. On the growing differentiation in the nineteenth century between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ musical spheres, see Weber, *Music, and Great Transformation*, esp. 235–45; and Derek B. Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis: The Nineteenth-Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris, and Vienna* (Oxford, 2008), esp. 3–12, 85–113, who also stresses the changing meanings of the term ‘popular’.

und italienische Musik'. With eight metrically regular stanzas, the poem on 'Italian Music' conjured blue skies, gaudy flowers and charming scents – a voluptuous world of carnal pleasures resonant with *Italiensehnsucht*, that German longing for the natural beauty, archaic landscape, warm climate and classical heritage of Italy as it was cultivated in the wake of the famous Italian journeys by archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann and by Goethe.⁵⁰ Alas, for all its contentment, this Arcadian world knew art and life only as a superficial game. Against it Miltitz evoked German music in eleven metrically irregular stanzas with typical romantic markers: seriousness, honesty and depth; inwardness, longing and the mind (*Gemüt*). This spiritual world had to be won in battle, involving both sorrow and glory, both mourning and 'true consecration'. Yet why should Germans opt for an elusive sphere of struggles rather than the pleasant world at hand? The three additional stanzas argued that Italy's easy manner could not address purely human matters such as love and anguish. It left German hearts cold. The principles behind Italian and German music were simply irreconcilable: where the goal of the former was merely 'to seem and glow' (*scheinen*), the latter strove rather to *be*.⁵¹

The otherworldly tone of these last stanzas not coincidentally chimed with the German-born idea that art – and music in particular – was an emanation of the sacred, indeed some kind of religion (*Kunstreligion*) itself. This idea further enhanced the position of non-vocal music, owing to its alleged ability to speak for and to all humanity, uninhibited by language and reason.⁵² The archetype of a composer striving for Miltitz's world of universal human expression (irrespective of personal setbacks and public taste) was of course Beethoven. Since Germanic critics unequivocally hailed him as the apex of musical development, it is natural that the German epithets emerging from the Italian–German dichotomy crystallised around his masculine,

⁵⁰ On literary topoi of German longing for Italy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see, for instance, Gunter Grimm et al., 'Ein Gefühl von freierem Leben': deutsche Dichter in Italien (Stuttgart, 1990); Klaus Heitmann and Teodor Scamardi (eds.), *Deutsches Italienbild und italienisches Deutschlandbild im 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 1993); Günter Österle et al. (eds.), *Italien in Aneignung und Widerspruch* (Tübingen, 1996); and Frank-Rutger Hausmann, *Italien in Germanien. Deutsche Italienrezeption von 1750 bis 1850* (Tübingen, 1996). A survey in English of Winckelmann's and Goethe's Italian journeys and their literary influence is contained in Richard A. Block, *The Spell of Italy: Vacation, Magic, and the Attraction of Goethe* (Detroit, 2006), esp. 17–109.

⁵¹ Carl Borromäus von Miltitz, 'Deutsche und italienische Musik', *Caecilia* 16 (1834), 282–4 (emphasis in original). It is telling of his laboured reasoning that Miltitz had himself started as an opera composer in Italy, where his success was thwarted by intrigues in which Rossini was allegedly involved.

⁵² On the concept of *Kunstreligion*, see Hermann Danuser, "'Heil'ge deutsche Kunst'? Über den Zusammenhang von Nationalidee und Kunstreligion' in *Deutsche Meister*, esp. 222–5; and Elizabeth Kramer, 'The Idea of *Kunstreligion* in German Musical Aesthetics of the Early Nineteenth Century', PhD thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2005).

determined and withdrawn figure.⁵³ Consequently, around 1830 a number of writers began to pit Rossini and Beethoven against each other. Most influential in this was probably the Austrian musicologist Raphael Georg Kiesewetter: in his widely read *Geschichte der europäisch-abendländischen oder unsrer heutigen Musik* of 1834, he organised music history by epoch-making personalities, labelling the time since 1800 the 'epoch of Beethoven and Rossini'. For Kiesewetter, these 'darlings of our time' seemed complementary, one representing instrumental music, the other opera.⁵⁴

Yet this equilibrium was precarious. Not only did Rossini already betray, for Kiesewetter, the influence of German instrumental music in opera; but Beethoven's case also demonstrated the extent to which musical traits were often imputed to the composer himself and vice versa. Such a procedure dwarfed Rossini, who seemed to prefer worldly success over the refinement of his art, a luxurious lifestyle over revolutionary (read: lasting) artistic achievements, and who had shied away from fulfilling his potential no sooner than he had amassed sufficient material profit. While neatly matching the man with his works, this viewpoint also validated stereotypes of the Italian people: in the popular mind, Rossini was the prototypical Latin charmer and happy-go-lucky slaggard, an opportunist and bon vivant.⁵⁵ The image of 'Beethoven hero' could not have been more different.

Latin music

Even within Kiesewetter's *Geschichte*, though, the duumvirate of Beethoven and Rossini was not compelling. As the author himself admitted, Beethoven was already dead and Rossini had taken the stage over a decade after him

⁵³ A survey in English of contemporary Beethoven images and recent literature is K. M. Knittel's 'The Construction of Beethoven' in Samson (ed.), *Cambridge History*, 118–50. For the association of German music with masculinity, see also Morrow, *German Music Criticism*, 63–4.

⁵⁴ R[aphael] G[eorg] Kiesewetter, *Geschichte der europäisch-abendländischen oder unsrer heutigen Musik. Darstellung ihres Ursprunges, ihres Wachsthumes und ihrer stufenweisen Entwicklung* (Leipzig, 1834), esp. 97–8; translation modified from the one by Robert Müller, *History of the Modern Music of Western Europe* (London, 1848), 245–6. Many nineteenth-century music historians referenced this monograph, which went through a second, slightly altered edition in 1846. A similar opposition of Rossini and Beethoven can already be found in Wilhelm Christian Müller's *Aesthetisch-historische Einleitungen in die Wissenschaft der Tonkunst*, 2 vols, II: *Übersicht einer Chronologie der Tonkunst mit Andeutungen allgemeiner Civilisation und Kultur-Entwickelung* (Leipzig, 1830), 340. See also Sponheuer, *Musik als Kunst*, 20–31.

⁵⁵ Such stereotypes were piled up in Eduard Maria Oettinger's *Rossini. Komischer Roman*, 3rd edn, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1851), and reinforced by Rossini's early retirement. Germanic clichés of contemporary Italians are gathered in Victor Hehn, *Italien. Ansichten und Streiflichter* (St Petersburg, 1867), 91–137.

This all-out attack on Italian culture quickly found its way into the *Gazzetta*'s entertainment section. Ricordi supplied it with sarcastic notes to help readers gauge Bülow's 'impertinence' correctly, giving one particularly valuable clue to the scandal's prehistory: Bülow's ostensible aspiration in 1871 to become musical director at La Scala and director of the Milan Conservatory, which Ricordi confessed to having helped thwart.¹⁹ After resigning as Kapellmeister in Munich, Bülow had moved to Italy between 1869 and 1872, scoring triumphs as a pianist and as organiser of the 1870 Milanese Beethoven commemorations. With some critics finding him a revelation for Italian musical life, a fierce debate over his artistic merits sprang up; and this dispute escalated when he became associated with the Milanese directorships. While Bülow himself heard gossip that Verdi had suggested him for the Conservatory post, the composer let the ministry know he had never approved such a nomination. Ricordi meanwhile threatened to withhold the operas he owned, including most of Verdi's oeuvre, should any foreigner take over at La Scala. When he learned of this clandestine war and of open hostilities against him, Bülow quickly renounced his 'ambition to serve this beautiful country and help renew her faded musical art'; but the episode reverberated in the press for some time.²⁰

What this conflict implies is that Bülow's arrival in Milan at the time of the *Requiem* opened old wounds. Privately he conceded that he had hoped his article would better his standing in Italy and help him gain a musical

romanischer Barbarei anzuwohnen. Hoffentlich wird Verdi's Requiem in Paris sicher vor den Werbungen deutscher Theater-Intendanten bleiben, welche auch in rein geschäftlichem Interesse wohl daran thun würden ihre Blicke zur Abwechslung einmal nach Osten, statt nach Westen, zu richten.' Translation adapted from *Dwight's Journal of Music* 34 (1874), 274–5.

¹⁹ GMM 29 (1874), 184–5. The first position opened with Eugenio Terziani's return to Rome in 1871, the second when Lauro Rossi succeeded Mercadante at the Naples Conservatory the following year. Details of Bülow's candidacy remain unclear. According to the critic Filippo Filippi, he had been officially approached for La Scala – a view adopted by La Mara [Marie Lipsius], *Hans von Bülow. Neubearbeiteter Einzeldruck aus den musikalischen Studienköpfen*, 8th edn (Leipzig, 1911), 37; Hans Busch (ed.), *Verdi's 'Aida': The History of an Opera in Letters and Documents* (Minneapolis, 1978), 127; and Alan Walker, *Hans von Bülow: A Life and Times* (Oxford and New York, 2010), 171 n 20. Prosperi (*La messa*, 106) and Marco Jacoviello ('Verdi e la Messa da Requien: Un'estetica della morte' in Margherita Rubino [ed.], *Recordor: Memorie classiche e spunti su Giuseppe Verdi* [Genoa, 2001], 105) imply that both posts were to be fused under Bülow's direction. See also Capra, "Un eretico", 39n18; and Hinrichsen, 'Una gran bestialità'.

²⁰ See Filippi's letter to Bülow of 22 March 1871 and the latter's response of 23 March 1871, in Bülow, *Briefe*, IV: 471–3: 'il mio desiderio, la mia ambizione di servir questo bel paese nell'aiutare il rialzamento della sua decaduta arte musicale, è stata una buaggine giovanile, anzi fanciullesca e – basta'. See also *Briefe*, IV: 475–7; Verdi to Giuseppe Piroli, Abbiati III: 443; and Giulio Ricordi to Verdi of 6 January 1871, in Busch, *Aida*, 127. Eventually, Terziani's assistant Franco Faccio was nominated his successor, while Alberto Mazzucato took over the reins at the Conservatory. See the Florence correspondence of 2 May 1871 by K. R-e., *NBMz* 25 (1871), 156.

directorship, possibly in Bologna.²¹ But while opposition in 1871 had been mainly national, his assault on Verdi was all too personal. As usual, the composer himself maintained a public silence; but he agreed with Ricordi that the Italians were partly to blame for flattering German artists too much.²² Elsewhere, Bülow became the object of caricature. Punning on his name, the Milanese 'literary, artistic and theatrical' periodical *Il trovatore*, for example, depicted him as an ugly '*Hans... Wurst*' (buffoon) burning his wings when puffing himself up to snuff out Verdi's 'ardent and luminous torch' (Figure 2.1). Another cartoonist cast Bülow as a snake curling around Verdi's 'Attila thermometer' but failing to cool it down with his breath: as the caption explained, he only fuelled enthusiasm for Verdi.²³ A second skit compared Bülow to a 'cheeky little boy' who closed his eyes to proclaim the demise of the sun, thus smudging Italy's pride.²⁴ Liszt clearly had a point when, both worried and amused, he reported to friends from the Villa d'Este near Rome that a hail of printed bullets was blowing Bülow to shreds, on account of his 'dazzling' article; and he urged his former son-in-law to adopt a more tactful stance towards Verdi, given the susceptible national fibre of the Italians.²⁵ In his already desperate nervous condition, Bülow suffered the consequences of his 'caprice russe' with resignation: realising that his 'Italian project' had failed, he packed up his belongings and, by mid-June, left the country for good.²⁶

However, the 'affare Bülow'²⁷ was not quite over. Knowledge of it sped beyond Italy, adding to the work's presence in musical discourse. What is

²¹ Letter to Eugen Spitzweg of 28 May 1874 in Bülow, *Briefe*, V: 183–5. He might have hoped to succeed Angelo Mariani, although no such ambition is mentioned in the survey of the Bolognese musical scene – including Bülow's visit there – in Axel Körner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy: From Unification to Fascism* (New York, 2008), esp. 230–43.

²² Letter to Giulio Ricordi of 16 June 1874, Abbiati III: 690–1.

²³ *Il trovatore* 21/25 (21 June 1874), 5. See also Ricordi's last note on Bülow's article in GMM 29 (1874), 187; and Rosen, 'Introduction', xxiv.

²⁴ 'Carolus', 'Al Barone Hans De Bülow', *Lo spirito folletto* 14 (1874), 176.

²⁵ Letters to Baron [Antal] Augusz of 13 June 1874 (in Franz Liszt, *Selected Letters*, trans. and ed. Adrian Williams [Oxford, 1998], 778); Marie zu Sayn-Wittgenstein (undated, in *The Letters of Franz Liszt to Marie zu Sayn-Wittgenstein*, trans. and ed. Howard E. Hugo [Cambridge, MA, 1953], 177); and Bülow of 5 June 1874 (in La Mara [Marie Lipsius (ed.)], *Briefwechsel zwischen Franz Liszt und Hans von Bülow* [Leipzig, 1898], 388). For Liszt's appreciative view of the *Requiem*, see his *Letters to Olga von Meyendorff, 1871–1886*, in the Mildred Bliss Collection at Dumbarton Oaks, trans. William R. Tyler; introduction and notes by Edward N. Waters (Washington DC and Cambridge, MA, 1979), 254, and Liszt, *Selected Letters*, 815.

²⁶ Letters to Liszt (3 June 1874; in Liszt, *Briefwechsel*, 386); Spitzweg (12 June 1874) and B[ernard] Ullman (23 June 1874), in Bülow, *Briefe*, V: 185–91. See also Frithjof Haas, *Hans von Bülow. Leben und Wirken. Wegbereiter für Wagner, Liszt und Brahms* (Wilhelmshaven, 2002), 87; on the article's ruinous effect on his standing in Italy, see *Lo spirito folletto* 14 (1874), 148; and E. Spagnolo, 'Teatri e notizie artistiche', *Gazzetta di Milano* (1 June 1874).

²⁷ Verdi to Ricordi on 16 June 1874, Abbiati III: 690.

church music written by someone who was otherwise known only from the theatre. The former was controversial particularly because its melodic charm had quickly made it popular fare not in churches but in concert halls; the latter faced additional opposition due to its apparent lack of musical vigour and its association with Strakosch's promotional enterprise.⁶⁰

Such questions of religious character and style were by no means confined to German lands; they had also been raised in Italy in connection with Verdi's *Requiem*. Yet there, as we have seen, they could be countered with chauvinistic celebrations, à la Fortis, of a new 'masterwork'; even some French critics greeted the composition as evidence that the two 'sisterly nations', rather than Germany, headed the musical world.⁶¹ By contrast, the debate had wider implications in German lands, where most musical genres outside opera were considered national territory: even Palestrina – an Italian composer perceived as a watershed in music history – had been adopted (though not always painlessly) during the nineteenth century as the 'father figure' of German sacred polyphony.⁶² This attitude did not preclude appreciation of later religious music by the likes of Allegri and Pergolesi. But the last Italian to be at least partly subsumed under the rubric 'German-Italian sacred style' was Cherubini, whose two *Requiem* compositions, alongside the one by Mozart, were the most regularly performed in German lands.⁶³ Otherwise, Germans identified Italian music with opera not least because they thought that Italian church music – the other area in which Italy had

⁶⁰ See for instance August Wilhelm Ambros, *Bunte Blätter. Skizzen und Studien für Freunde der Musik und der bildenden Kunst* (Leipzig, 1872), 84–92; Emil Naumann, *Italienische Tondichter von Palestrina bis auf die Gegenwart. Vorträge*, 2nd edn (Berlin, 1833), 540–1; and Theodor Helm, 'Musikbrief aus Wien', MW 1 (1870), 359. For Italian and French responses, see Gino Stefani, 'La Messe Solennelle di Rossini nella critica dell'epoca', *Bollettino del centro rossiniano di studi* 8/4–6 (1968), 137–48.

⁶¹ Jules Ruelle, 'Le Requiem de Verdi', *L'Art musical* 15 (1876), 169–70. On religious and national debates in Italy, see Laura Basini, 'Reviving the Past: Italian Music History and Verdi', PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley (2003), 1–43. English music writers sounded similar concerns and were sometimes even harsher on the *Requiem* than their German colleagues, insisting as they did on England's cultural kinship with Germany; yet they were less affected by confessional or political considerations.

⁶² See esp. Winfried Kirsch (ed.), *Palestrina und die Idee der klassischen Vokalpolyphonie im 19. Jahrhundert. Zur Geschichte eines kirchenmusikalischen Stilideals* (Regensburg, 1989); and James Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination: Interpreting Historicism in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge, 2002), esp. 36–168. An alternative solution was to downplay the importance of Palestrina in comparison to contemporary German composers such as Jacobus Handl or to the later Protestant choral; see F[erdinand] S[imon] Gaßner, *Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst. Neue Hand=Ausgabe in einem Bande* (Leipzig, 1849), 465; and Gustav Schilling, *Geschichte der heutigen oder modernen Musik. In ihrem Zusammenhange mit der allgemeinen Welt- und Völkergeschichte* (Karlsruhe, 1841), 409.

⁶³ Emil Naumann, 'Verdi's Requiem', originally in *National-Zeitung*, reprinted in AMz 3 (1876), 120.

papers, though, attributed the opulent music less to peculiarities of the Roman Catholic ritual than to Catholicism as such: with its tendency towards 'sensuous appeal, easy comprehensiveness and sentimental intoxication', the singing teacher and ardent supporter of Brahms, Gustav Engel, held it set the *Requiem* apart from 'superhuman, stricter and purely spiritual' German Protestantism.⁷²

Alternatively, national characteristics were called upon, with the southern blue sky and heated passions providing the backdrop – just as the poet Carl Borromäus von Miltitz (cited in Chapter 1) had evoked it thirty years earlier. Hanslick in particular propagated this line:

Religious devotion, too, varies in its expression; it has its countries and its times. What may appear too passionate, too sensuous in Verdi's *Requiem* is derived from the emotional habits of his people, and the Italian has a perfect right to inquire whether he may not talk to the dear Lord in the Italian language?⁷³

Instead of such socio-cultural perspectives, Hanslick's colleague August Wilhelm Ambros – an Austrian musicologist known as a devout Catholic, who had spent much time in Italy during the 1860s – appealed to the music-historical imagination: he placed the work among the increasing number of Requiem compositions since 1600, which he linked to the rise of opera and a developing interest in dramatic aspects of texts. Since modern orchestration and harmonies had primarily grown out of opera, it was only natural that Verdi's setting showed features typical of his operas, as was true for instance of the Requiem settings by Cavalli and Mozart.⁷⁴

Several writers, finally, objected to the relevance of the *Requiem*'s cultural or national contexts altogether, stating the work should be dealt with solely on musical grounds. Yet they could not conceal the fact that their analytical views were also informed by extra-musical considerations. Commentators discussed so many compositional aspects that it is impossible here to reconstruct the musical debate in detail. Instead, I want to show how some

⁷² G[ustav] E[ngel], 'Requiem von Verdi', *Vossische Zeitung* (19 April 1876). See also the reviews signed -n. in *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* and '\$' in *Neue Preußische Zeitung* (both 19 April 1876).

⁷³ Eduard Hanslick, 'Verdi's Requiem' in his *Musikalische Stationen. Neue Folge der 'Modernen Oper'* (Berlin, 1880), 5; translation modified from his *Vienna's Golden Years of Music 1850–1900*, trans. Henry Pleasants III (London, 1951), 180.

⁷⁴ A[ugust] W[ilhelm] Ambros, 'Verdi's Requiem', *Wiener Abendpost* (12 June 1875). See also the reviews by 'sp' [Ludwig Speidel], *Fremden-Blatt* (13 June 1875); and H[ieronymus] Truhn, *Berliner Tageblatt* (16 and 19 April 1876). This position was frequently taken also outside German lands; see for instance P. Cominazzi's review in *La fama* 33 (1874), 81–2; and one in *Pall Mall Gazette*, anonymously cited in the special supplement to *GMM* 30/21 (23 May 1875), 3–5.

Clearly, it was a driving thrust behind attempts to bolster *Kulturprotestantismus* against Catholicism. Yet it also touched on Germany's relationship with the new Italian state. In order to (re)define its political self, as we have seen, the new *Reich* had to draw lines against both political and cultural Others; and while comparisons might emphasise its identity, self-confidence was more easily gained by avoiding altogether any whiff of the foreign within its borders.

Nowhere was this defence mechanism more obvious than in reactions to the 1877 *Musikfest* in Cologne. The invitation proffered to Verdi and his *Requiem* was remorselessly attacked – at best as superfluous, at worst as undermining the festival's traditional 'missionary' aim to promote a noble, purified musical education along the Rhine, as a local daily unabashedly spelt out:

We Germans do not need to be instructed in such church music by a people whose music is in utter decay... Without being arrogant, we can be proud of our domestic creative products, which by far outshine this non-German work. We may cultivate these properly and should – before admiring foreign peacocks – be aware that we have a living and victorious German art.¹³⁴

More specifically, the musicologist and composer Hermann Zopff demanded that future music festivals should cater to both 'artistic and national matters': instead of unworthy composers – 'Graun, Kreutzer, Reissiger, Rossini or Verdi, or [the] sufficiently mangled works by Haydn, Mendelssohn etc.' – a festival's special forces should present rare works by masters from Palestrina to Wagner and by German contemporaries, among them Brahms, Bülow and Karl Goldmark as well as 'Volkmann... Brückler, Götz, Götze, Weißheimer, Winterberger and whatever the rest are called'.¹³⁵ The message is clear: the entire breadth of Germanic culture was to be supported; if not at any price, then certainly at the expense of foreigners such as Verdi. This strong language was partially conditioned by an ongoing discourse, beginning in the 1850s, about the goals of the *Niederrheinisches Musikfest*, given the raised profile of regular musical life in the Rhine provinces as well as the mushrooming of similar festivals across German lands. In contrast to these, the increasingly

¹³⁴ Review from *Düsseldorfer Anzeiger*, approvingly cited in MW 8 (1877), 368: 'Wir Deutsche haben nicht nöthig, von einem Volke, dessen Musik sich in ausgesprochenem Verfall befindet... uns in solcher Art von Kirchenmusik belehren zu lassen; wir können, ohne uns zu überheben, stolz sein auf unsere, die vorliegende ausländische Leistung weit überragenden heimischen Schaffensproducte, mögen diese nach Gebühr pflegen und sollten, ehe wir fremde Pfauen bestaunen, uns bewusst sein, dass wir eine lebende und siegreiche deutsche Kunst haben.' In a similar vein are B[ernhard Hartmann], '54. Niederrheinisches Musikfest zu Köln', *Elberfelder Zeitung* (23 May 1877); and Schrattenholz, '54. niederrheinisches Musikfest'.

¹³⁵ Dr H[e]rm[ann] Zopff, 'Provinzial-Musikfeste', NZfM 44 (1877), 405–6.

conservative management of the *Musikfest* resisted *neudeutsch* imports and, among contemporary composers, mostly championed Brahms. Seen in this light, Verdi's appearance unleashed a flood of pent-up anger at the festival's direction.¹³⁶ Trumpeted especially by local papers, denunciations of the *Requiem* betray the trepidation felt for the esteem of the festival and for the future of German art as such. They also bespeak angst that the Rhenish border regions might be infiltrated by their neighbouring Western countries, rather than aligning themselves with German currents.

Defending himself against the indictment of being a 'traitor to the Fatherland', Hiller himself pulled a different political string. Having earlier praised the musical and aesthetic qualities of the *Requiem* in words that could easily be read as a sideswipe against Wagner, he now argued that his invitation to Verdi was meant to improve relations between the two young (and newly friendly) states, and to better Germany's reputation abroad.¹³⁷ As we have seen, people with backgrounds as diverse as Ambros and Naumann mentioned rapprochement with Italy; the *Allgemeine Zeitung* even cited the Parisian daily *Le Figaro* as hailing Verdi's appearance in Cologne as a revolutionary reconciliation between two long-hostile artistic religions.¹³⁸ However, positive feelings towards Italy were a delicate matter. During the early 1860s, the success of the Italian national movement had commanded respect even from Prussian writers, encouraging similar German endeavours and giving birth to the notion of a parallel development in the formation of both states. Yet with the achievement of the *Reich*, condescending attitudes soon returned. After all, it was the Prussian army that defeated Austria in 1866 and thus won the previously Habsburg-ruled Veneto for its ally Italy, while its 1870 war against France brought about the withdrawal of French troops from Rome – a prerequisite for integrating the much-contested papal city into the new Italian kingdom.¹³⁹ In other words, Prussia could pride herself on having completed Italian unification – just as it was the Germans, or so they thought, who had inspired Verdi's new dress. That Verdi's *Requiem* provoked ambivalent and heated reactions in aesthetic, religious, cultural and political

¹³⁶ On these contexts, see Weibel, *Musikfeste*, esp. 611–22, 633–6; for a report on the battle provoked by the invitation of Verdi, also Dr L., 'Le festival rhénan'.

¹³⁷ Hiller, *Künstlerleben*, 276–7. A politically charged speech of his was reported by N., 'The Cologne Festival', *Dwight's Journal of Music* 37 (1877), 69; and Dr L., 'Le festival rhénan'.

¹³⁸ In [Bill], 'Musikfest', 2286.

¹³⁹ For German views of Italy, see esp. Wolfgang Altgeld, 'Beobachtungen zum deutschen politischen Italien-Interesse vor 1870' in Frank-Rutger Hausmann (ed.), *Italien in Germanien: Deutsche Italienrezeption von 1750–1850* (Tübingen, 1996), 445–66; Jens Petersen, *Italienbilder – Deutschlandbilder. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Cologne, 1999), 60–89, 90–119; and Schieder, *Nationalismus*, 329–46. On the Italian path to unification, see Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy: A Political History* (New Haven and London, 1997), 72–7, 83–92.

spheres, then, was hardly surprising at a time when the changed political scene had challenged long-established notions of German-language culture and had, at least temporarily, left Germans in the new Empire confused about their own national identity.

The *Requiem* through the years

In this chapter, I have adopted Bülow's metaphor of dressing up to describe typical strategies by which German-language critics tried to come to terms with Verdi's *Requiem*: strategies that revealed a network of cultural principles both deeply rooted in tradition and in a state of flux. The decisive issue was neither a Requiem in 'operatic robes' nor Verdi's appearance with 'Germanic dress' in concert halls. Rather, it was German intellectuals themselves trying out a new political wardrobe. As a *kleindeutsch* compromise, the *Kaiserreich* had to balance both the historic antagonisms (and recent battles) within its borders and the exclusion of German-speaking Austria. It did so, in Dieter Langewiesche's words, by dressing the new reality 'in historical costume' designed to veil the discontinuities of 1871.¹⁴⁰ Amidst such efforts to construct a common past and to propel shared cultural values, Verdi's religious work cut across both customary pan-German and recently cultivated Cultural Protestant convictions – ones that were part of the very fabric out of which the new identity was being forged. However, its unconventional 'clothes' caused not simply rejection (the path chosen by Bülow and dreaded by Ricordi), but also its very real popularity in public discourse. With its unique position in recent music history – spotlighted by Verdi's sensational tour – and its openness to generic, stylistic and religious interpretation, the work was more than just a paradigmatic Other: it provided a screen on which multiple images of musical, regional, confessional or political Selves and Others could be projected, enacted, discarded, refined.

Part of the *Requiem*'s appeal as cultural catalyst, of course, lay in its sheer newness. As demonstrated above, interest in it faded after 1878, the year that (following the death of Pope Pius IX) marked a crucial turn in Bismarck's internal politics and the start of his reconciliation with both Catholics and the Centre Party.¹⁴¹ During subsequent decades, the work seems to have become the preserve mainly of choral societies. Nevertheless, it continued

¹⁴⁰ Dieter Langewiesche, 'Was heißt "Erfindung der Nation"? Nationalgeschichte als Artefakt – oder Geschichtsdeutung als Machtkampf', *Historische Zeitschrift* 277 (2003), 616.

¹⁴¹ On Bismarck's anti-socialist politics from 1878, see Blackbourn, *History*, 197–203. Interest in the *Requiem* also diminished in Italy, a circumstance partly attributed by Gino Monaldi (*Verdi 1839–1898*, 2nd edn [Turin, 1926], 232–3) to the retirement of Stolz and Waldmann.

to exert influence on German scholars, who gradually steered towards the open-minded path Hanslick had most influentially paved. Music histories and dictionaries of the 1880s cited the *Requiem*, along with the string quartet, as a counterbalance to Verdi's operatic output and the pinnacle of his career; Naumann, in his widely disseminated *Illustrierte Musikgeschichte*, made a near volte-face by apostrophising its style as sublime and its masterly polyphony as worthy of Mendelssohn.¹⁴² In the early 1890s – after careful study of *Aida*, *Otello* and (lo and behold) the *Requiem* itself – even Bülow succumbed to its charm: so much so that he regretted his Wagnerian fanaticism of old and sought absolution from Verdi for his 'great journalistic bestiality'. And once again he sounded national overtones. Yet this time he alluded not to Italy's supposed inferiority but to the recently renewed Triple Alliance of 1882 between Germany, Austria and Italy: he concluded by toasting 'VERDI, the Wagner of our dear allies!'¹⁴³ From 1898, the *Quattro pezzi sacri* underscored both the growing perception of Verdi as a serious composer (a view previously impelled, as the next chapter will reveal, through admiration for the technical finesse of *Falstaff* as well as the awe inspired by the ageing composer's personality) and the impression that the kind of 'secularised church music' that had been introduced primarily by his and Brahms's *Requiem* compositions corresponded powerfully with the individualistic zeitgeist.¹⁴⁴ In short, the *Requiem* was gradually construed as a milestone in the development of modern, subjective spiritual music.

Performances on occasion of the 1901 Verdi commemorations buttressed this position as a 'glorious memorial' (*Ruhmesdenkmal*) of 'sincere, deeply

¹⁴² Emil Naumann, *Illustrierte Musikgeschichte. Die Entwicklung der Tonkunst aus frühesten Anfängen bis auf die Gegenwart*, 2 vols. (Berlin and Stuttgart, [1880–5]), II: 1080; see also his *Italienische Tondichter*, 556–61; Hermann Mendel and August Reissmann (eds.), *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon. Eine Encyklopädie des gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften für Gebildete aller Stände*, 12 vols., XI (Berlin, 1879), 14; Hermann Kretzschmar, *Führer durch den Concertsaal*. Part II/I: *Kirchliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1888), 252–6; and Friedr[ich] Gernsheim's popular guide *G. Verdi, Messa da Requiem* (Leipzig, [1896]), itself a notable indicator of canonisation.

¹⁴³ Bülow's letter to Verdi of 7 April 1892 and the composer's magnanimous answer can be found in Verdi, *I copialettere*, 375–6 (partially translated in Phillips-Matz, *Verdi*, 712); yet on Verdi's reactions, see also Abbiati IV: 438–40. Bülow's 'confession' was part of his urge during his ailing last years of life to make peace with the world (see Haas, *Bülow*, 271), and he had asked for its publication. Only four years earlier, though, he had still called Verdi an ape for stealing, with his *Requiem*, the laurels Berlioz deserved; see the entry in an album made in 1888 by his then-lover Cécile Gorrisen-Mutzenbecher, as cited in *Katalog Musikantiquariat Dr Ulrich Drüner* 53 (June 2002), 5 (I owe knowledge of this unpublished source to Anselm Gerhard). On the changing German perception of Verdi in light of his late works, see Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁴ See for instance Leopold Schmidt, 'Die neuen Werke Verdi's', *Berliner Tageblatt* (14 June 1898); and the review of the *Pezzi sacri* by -Sa in *Neue Preußische Zeitung* (21 January 1899).

numerous presents, particularly from female admirers in both the chorus and the audience.³⁰ The 1877 festival attracted the largest crowds in decades, and for the first time a composer outdrew the virtuoso soloists, which that year included the young violinist Pablo de Sarasate. The excitement caused by Verdi's appearance could only be compared to that aroused in 1854 by Franz Liszt – the most internationally courted of all musicians at mid-century, and one who had earned his fame primarily as travelling virtuoso, not as composer.³¹ Thus, the influential liberal daily *Frankfurter Zeitung* dubbed Verdi not only the festival's 'hero' but also its 'star' (*de[r] 'Star' des diesjährigen Festes*): only this recent English-language borrowing seemed to capture the extraordinary public furore around Verdi.³²

This vogue was more than the result of sensational publicity and pent-up curiosity on the parts of bourgeois spectators. Unlike their mixed musical responses, many critics, too, expressed amazement on beholding Verdi in person. Thus, the pattern of perception again ran counter to that effective with Beethoven, whom many eyewitnesses had found wanting in the flesh, compared to the popular hero-imagery.³³ Verdi, by contrast, far exceeded the expectations of most commentators. They were astounded by his calm and dignified demeanour off the podium, his charisma, benign smile, 'mild' and friendly looks, politeness, kindness and solemn modesty – aspects sometimes contrasted approvingly with Wagner's pretensions. Flabbergasted, several attendees also remarked that Verdi showed no hint of the stern eyes and 'harshness around the corners of his mouth' that they had anticipated on the grounds of the recently 'circulating portraits, which depict[ed] the maestro's features as severe and gloomy'. On the contrary, the composer seemed likable, 'indeed entirely opposed to the picture of the famous man we have become used to cultivating'.³⁴ Even his simple clothing and unaffected posture were

³⁰ Tony Kwast-Hiller (Ferdinand Hiller's daughter), 'Erinnerungen an Verdi', *Frankfurter Zeitung* (30 January 1901). See also *AMz* 4 (1877), 181; and Ursula Kramer, "Bier, Rheinwein und viel zu essen." Giuseppe Verdi und seine Beziehung zu Deutschland. Die Freundschaft mit Ferdinand Hiller' in Axel Beer *et al.* (eds.), *Festschrift Christoph-Hellmut Mahling zum 65. Geburtstag*, 2 vols. (Tutzing, 1997), I: 704–10.

³¹ *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (27 May 1877), partly reprinted in *AMz* 4 (1877), 174.

³² *Frankfurter Zeitung* (25 May 1877). According to Hans Schulz and Otto Basler (eds.), *Deutsches Fremdwörterbuch*, 7 vols., IV (Berlin and New York, 1978), 412–14, the English term 'star' entered the German language around 1873.

³³ See Comini, *Changing Image*, Chapter 2, esp. 22, 32.

³⁴ 'Die erste Gesammtprobe zu Verdi's Requiem', *Fremden-Blatt* (8 June 1875): 'Verdi ist eine sehr freundliche Erscheinung von besonderer Bonhomie und Güte und der Vorstellung ganz entgegen, die man sich von dem berühmten Manne nach den zumeist verbreiteten Bildern zu machen gewöhnt hat, auf denen die Züge des Maestro hart und finster dargestellt sind'. See also Guckeisen, 'Zweiter Tag'; reviews in *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* (10 June 1875, by F. M. [Ferdinand Manussi von Montesole]) and *Kölnische Volkszeitung* (23 May 1877); and the

forme and simple accompaniments, lauding Verdi's move towards dramatic integration and often leaving mellifluous vocality as the only putative token of his Italianness.⁸³ But again, German-language critics went further: they emphasised above all the use of motivic reminiscences – of 'leitmotifs' that defined several of the opera's 'musical figures' (*Tongestalten*).⁸⁴ Although largely confined to the two motifs of Aida and the priests, this motif-hunting clearly betrayed the critics' expectations even before the 1876 publication of Hans von Wolzogen's path-breaking 'thematic guide' to Wagner's *Ring*.⁸⁵ Operatic 'progress' had become synonymous with all of Wagner's ideas, not just (as in Italy) with the orchestral dominance and declamatory style of his early works; and this was notwithstanding the ambivalence with which Wagner's latest projects were still eyed by much of the German press. A truly changed Verdi thus had to follow Wagner entirely. At this point, many Germans contended that Verdi often 'relapsed' into old habits, especially in the last act of *Aida*. But they regarded the opera as a substantial 'move towards a true *Tondrama*', thus defining music drama as both the only conceivable alternative to Italian number opera and the superior successor to *grand opéra*.⁸⁶

This twist in German reception is particularly obvious in comparison with French reviewers. In fact, it seems to have been some of the latter who rejected the idea of an 'Italian Wagner' (*Wagner de l'Italie*) most decisively, emphasising instead Verdi's own artistic evolution: *Aida* was Verdi's crowning achievement, a testimony that great art was not dependent on 'the theories of the Bayreuth mystic'.⁸⁷ After France's military defeat by Prussia, Italian opera

⁸³ See esp. the reviews in *Il secolo* and *Gazzetta di Parma* (by Parmenio Bettoli), repr. GMM 27 (1872), 54–5, 139–40. On Italian Wagner reception in the 1870s, see Ute Jung, *Die Rezeption der Kunst Richard Wagners in Italien* (Regensburg, 1974); and Marion S. Miller, 'Wagnerism, Wagnerians, and Italian Identity' in David C. Large and William Weber (eds.), *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics* (Ithaca and London, 1984), 167–81.

⁸⁴ *Neue Preußische Zeitung* (23 April 1874). For general discussions of potential Wagnerian influence, see Wilh[elm] Frey, 'Aida', *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (1 May 1874); Ambros, 'Aida'; and Hanslick, *Moderne Oper*, 252–3.

⁸⁵ As Thomas S. Grey has shown, the term 'leitmotif' had been in the air at least since the 1860s; '... wie ein rother Faden: On the Origins of "Leitmotif" as Critical Construct and Musical Practice' in Ian Bent (ed.), *Music Theory in the Age of Romanticism* (Cambridge, 1996), 193; and *Wagner's Musical Prose* (Cambridge, 1995), 349–74.

⁸⁶ *Neue Preußische Zeitung* (23 April 1874); in a similar vein is C[arl] K[ipke], 'Leipzig', MW 10 (1876), 549.

⁸⁷ Oscar Comettant in *Le Siècle*; F. de Lagenevais [Henri Blaze de Bury] in *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*; both reprinted in *L'Art musical* 15 (1876), 139, 165–6. On occasion of *Aida*'s 1880 premiere at the Paris Opéra, commentators more decidedly reclaimed the work as French; see Karen Henson, 'Exotisme et nationalités: *Aida* à l'Opéra de Paris' in Hervé Lacombe (ed.), *L'Opéra en France et en Italie (1791–1925). Une scène privilégiée d'échanges littéraires et musicaux* (Paris, 2000), 293–4. For more on the French musical scene, see Michael Strasser, 'The Société

the positions of German and Italian opera on the international scene had significantly shifted – almost reversed – in comparison to the early 1800s. For the first time, a German composer dominated both discourse and repertory, at least with regard to novelties. In 1876, Wagner accomplished the artistically unprecedented, aesthetically controversial and economically risky venture of establishing his own theatre to mount his operatic tetralogy. Six years later, *Parsifal* received accolades; and by the time of the composer's death in 1883, German obituaries almost unanimously affirmed his unrivalled status as the prophet of future musical developments and a saviour of national culture. Taking place regularly from 1882, the Bayreuth Festival further enshrined this view, with scores of musicians, journalists and dignitaries from all over the globe paying their tribute to Wagner's theatrical genius.⁹⁰ Italian opera, by contrast, seemed to waver, its hegemony waning even in Italy; only two new works – Boito's *Mefistofele* and Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* – had earned international acclaim since *Aida*. Earlier the sport of Germans, talk of Italian musical decline now pervaded Italian criticism, too, its cultural pessimism underpinned by a harsh economic recession and discontent with the results of Italian unification.⁹¹

When *Falstaff* arrived in 1893, the scene looked different again. Three years earlier, Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* had ushered in a new type of Italian opera, followed in 1892 by Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. Both works quickly embarked on an international circuit which confirmed that a young generation of Italian composers was on the rise, bringing with it short operas of topical interest, compelling dramatic appeal, advanced harmonies and a blaring emphasis on vocalism. Meanwhile, German theatrical composition stagnated in the shadow of Wagner; only Humperdinck's fairy-tale opera *Hänsel und Gretel* of late 1893 provided a shimmer of hope. By century's end Wagner headed the increasingly historical – and German-dominated – repertory of German-language theatres, leaving his closest rivals Mozart, Lortzing and Verdi far behind. What is more, although no single French composer (except Meyerbeer) could challenge the popularity of these names, French opera as a whole had long relegated Italy to third place in terms of overall performance numbers, with works by Gounod, Bizet, Thomas, Massenet

⁹⁰ See Susanna Großmann-Vendrey, *Bayreuth in der deutschen Presse. Beiträge zur Rezeptionsgeschichte Richard Wagners und seiner Festspiele*, 4 vols., III/I: *Von Wagners Tod bis zum Ende der Ära Cosima Wagner (1883–1906)* (Regensburg, 1983), esp. 37.

⁹¹ Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 2nd edn, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1992), III: 278. For more background on the changed Italian scene, see *The Operas of Verdi*, III: 263–92; Alexandra Wilson, *The Puccini Problem: Opera, Nationalism, and Modernity* (Cambridge, 2007), 11–22; Alan Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera: From Verismo to Modernism, 1890–1915* (Hanover and Boston, 2007), 3–20; and – with a focus on Bologna – Axel Körner, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy: From Unification to Fascism* (New York, 2008), 221–62.

Wagnerian traces, many Germanic commentators remained torn between recognition and disillusionment – between siding with the unresponsive audiences and rising to the intellectual challenge of defending the works. The reversed relation between the operas' emotional and intellectual appeal bespeaks more essential problems in the German-language reception of late Verdi.

An article on *Otello* by the Berlin critic and music teacher Oscar Eichberg helps sort out these issues. Appearing in the spring of 1888, it was one of the earliest and longest German discussions of this opera. Written by someone who had contributed to the burgeoning market of 'listeners' digests' of Wagner's operas, moreover, it clearly articulated the obstacles that marred *Otello*'s reception from a Wagnerian perspective.¹⁰² If *Aida* was still a hybrid of old and new, *Otello* – Eichberg held – carefully avoids all remaining 'generic faults of Italian opera, casts aside all traditional vocal and operatic trumpery... and allows only dramatic truth to have the decisive bearing on both plot and music'. The gist is clear: Verdi had recognised 'the necessity to break with "opera" and give a serious, great, veritable drama to the people'; and this was possible only because of the German reformer. Just as Italian critics had swathed *Otello* in nationalist panegyrics, so Eichberg celebrated this putative influence as a 'tremendous, if unintended, triumph' of 'German art and German essence'.¹⁰³ In this respect, Verdi could not have done better.

Nevertheless, *Otello* was not *entirely* Wagnerian. Verdi, *pace* Eichberg, had followed Wagner only up to the complete dismissal of the old form but had not adopted his new symphonic web of leitmotifs. Eichberg therefore charged the opera with gross formal deficiency. For him, Verdi's orchestration was still

Kalbeck was commissioned to write the translations; by 1887 he had only just begun his (later) extensive activity in that line. Verdi voiced dissatisfaction with details of the German *Otello* in a letter to Giulio Ricordi of 22 January 1888, in Busch, *Otello*, I: 336–7.

¹⁰² See Oscar Eichberg, *Parsifal. Einführung in die Dichtungen Wolframs von Eschenbach und Richard Wagners. Nebst einer Zusammenstellung der hauptsächlichsten musikalischen Motive in Wagners Parsifal* (Leipzig, 1882); on the post-Wolzogen industry of opera guides and their influence on general listening habits, see Christian Thorau, *Semantisierte Sinnlichkeit. Studien zu Rezeption und Zeichenstruktur der Leitmotive Richard Wagners* (Stuttgart, 2003), 175–82.

¹⁰³ Eichberg, 'Othello', 61–2: '[*Otello* ist] ein Werk... in welchem alle jene Gattungsfehler der italienischen Oper sorgsam vermieden, aller überkommener Gesangs- und Opernfirlefanz bei Seite geworfen... und nur allein der dramatischen Wahrheit wie auf die Handlung, so auch auf die Musik der einzige bestimmende Einfluss verstattet werden... /... Wol aber darf kühn behauptet werden, dass [Verdi] die Ueberzeugung unseres grossen Reformators von der Notwendigkeit, mit der "Oper" zu brechen und dem Volke ein ernsthaftes, grosses, wahrhaftiges Drama zu geben,... ausdrücklich und lediglich eben von Richard Wagner... gelernt hat. Dieser Einfluss Wagner's auf Verdi und damit auf die ganze italienische Kunst ist ein eben so grossartiger, als unbeabsichtigter Triumph des deutschen Künstlers, und zugleich deutscher Kunst und deutschen Wesens.' For Italian pride in *Otello*, see esp. the review by Ugo Capetti in *Conversazioni della Domenica*, reprinted in *Otello... Giudizi*, 32: 'Non è perduta ancora l'Italia musicale....'

Parsifal had simply banned, while also preserving his fiery temper and lyricism. Thus, the Milanese composer-critic Amintore Galli agreed, ‘Verdi has solved the problem of music drama and has created its Italian type’.¹⁰⁷ French commentators, too, were relieved by the lack of leitmotifs and the fact that the orchestra, though refined and prominent, did not drown out the singing. As the eminent critic Camille Bellaigue – a friend of Boito’s – argued, this made *Otello* the long-sought-after ‘new model for the lyric drama’. Alluding to the indigenous *drame lyrique*, in short, Bellaigue saw compact, flexible lyricism as both alternative and antidote to Wagner’s music drama:¹⁰⁸ *Otello* signalled the Latin reconquest of world opera.

Against this background, Eichberg’s article exposes as the fundamental predicament of many late nineteenth-century Austro-German critics their rigid views of different musical traditions, which caught them in a double bind. Within an increasingly nationalistic climate – with physiognomic thought morphing into racism, and talk of degeneration pervading anthropological, national and cultural discourse – they could not wholeheartedly approve of a composer foreswearing his native idiom. Yet their continuing belief in German musical universality partially exempted German (read: Wagnerian) tendencies from such reproaches. What is more, the ingrained idea of German supremacy impeded their perception of a non-Wagnerian path into the operatic future even though, in theory, they required it – and even when, in practice, it was exuberantly signposted (if for no less chauvinistic reasons) in Mediterranean reviews. Just as German images of Verdi’s persona continued to be inflected by nationalist preconceptions, then, responses to *Otello* conformed to pre-established moulds. Critics lacked appropriate generic models between and beyond Verdi’s ‘old’ number opera and Wagner’s ‘new’ music drama; but the latter had so successfully reinforced the Italian-German dualism that commentators could not accept the idea of *Otello* being *sui generis*, let alone of it pointing to an alternative, Latin-dominated post-Wagnerian opera.

¹⁰⁷ F[rancesco] D’Arcais, review in *L’Opinione*, reprinted in *Otello... Giudizi*, 42; also in *Nuova Antologia* (16 February 1887), reprinted in *Otello... Giudizi*, 85–91. A[mintore] Galli in *Il Teatro illustrato*, reprinted in *Otello... Giudizi*, 70: ‘Verdi ha sciolto il problema del dramma musicale e ne ha creato il tipo italiano’.

¹⁰⁸ Camille Bellaigue in *Revue des deux mondes* (1 March 1887), reprinted in *Otello... Giudizi*, 118: ‘On cherchait le type nouveau du drame lyrique : le voilà !’; translated in Busch, *Otello*, II: 690. On the signal function of the term *dramma lirico* as an alternative to Wagner’s music drama, see James A. Hepokoski, ‘Music, Drama, and the *Dramma Lirico*’, typescript, 3–5; published as ‘Musica, drama and *dramma lirico*’, trans. Silvia Tuja, in ‘*Otello*’ di Giuseppe Verdi [Programme book La Scala, 7 December 2001] (Milan, 2001), 57–61. Stephen Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford, 1999), 20, however, has noted the wide range of stylistic traits encompassed by the term in fin-de-siècle French usage.



3.6 ‘Verdi, the Latin (*wälsche*) Wagner’: caricature by Carl von Stur in *Der Floh* (13 February 1887), reprinted in Karl Storck, *Musik und Musiker in Karikatur und Satire. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Musik aus dem Zerrspiegel* (Oldenburg, [1910]), 389, fig. 413. Courtesy of the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University.

This analytical impasse was aptly expressed in a Viennese caricature: shortly after the Milanese *Otello* premiere, it portrayed Verdi as the ‘welsch Wagner’ (Figure 3.6). Clad in the latter’s signature attire (velvet cap and all) and pulled by a Lohengrin swan, the aged Verdi this time sports an elongated nose: a marker of Otherness fortified by allusions to well-worn clichés – barrel organ and noisy drum, screaming singers and brutal characters (*Otello* manhandling Desdemona under the eyes of Jago). Whether poking fun at Verdi’s latest ‘manner’ according to the dominant Germanic critical trope or deriding the latter itself, the caricature highlights the Austro-German *Otello* problem: however elaborate and influenced by Wagner, this was no music drama in the proper Wagnerian track. It could thus belie the idea that Wagner had once and for all surpassed Italian operatic production, chronologically and conceptually. Once more, Verdi exposed German music-historiographical biases to the full.

daily explicated the underlying premise: ‘in the end one marvels at the master even more than at the work . . . It is not the most admirable work of Verdi, but Verdi is most admirable in *Falstaff*.¹²⁰

As Verdi’s last opera, and one outside an immediate generic tradition, *Falstaff* has naturally garnered much biographical attention since its inception. But for many contemporary Austro-Germans, Verdi’s personal development became a formative principle: an ersatz leitmotif guiding them in lieu of fresh melodies or structuring motifs. Compared to many Italians, Germans were more easily reconciled with such a personalised perspective, which allowed them to celebrate Verdi’s late achievements – morbid or otherwise – as testaments to Germanic influence. Those who, like Eichberg, asserted Verdi’s Wagnerian orientation indulged in the notion that, notwithstanding age and fame, he had not been too idle to adopt his rival’s principles. As Kretzschmar had it: ‘Rich in honours, goods and years, and ready to rest on his laurels, he now begins to retrain, uninhibitedly taking himself to the school of Wagner. This is no small matter; only a few musicians have undertaken something similar.¹²¹ We can now see why this author, in the obituary cited at the beginning of this chapter, emphasised the person over the music. Wagner’s suspected impact provided a piquant national subtext to the personal reverence of Verdi, which otherwise concurred remarkably with the composer’s popular exaltation in the mass media. Yet there was a further twist: the assumption of Verdi’s turn towards the academic positioned him as a counterexample to a culture which increasingly rested on mere outward appearances and mass appeal. Many Germanic commentators thus wrested Verdi from precisely the entertainment industry which he was earlier seen to serve, and which now so fervently fashioned him as a bourgeois celebrity.

Despite its lack of leitmotifs, *Falstaff* could also, for the first time, be paired with a work by Wagner. Like *Die Meistersinger*, it was the only mature comic work by an otherwise ‘tragic’ composer (*Un giorno di regno* was as obscure as *Das Liebesverbot*); both contained cruel moments (*Falstaff*’s involuntary dive into the Thames being frequently related to the Act 2 brawl of Beckmesser); both invoked older musical traditions and included unorthodox fugues while forging a new path towards national comic opera; both therefore stood out among their composers’ oeuvres as well as amid

¹²⁰ *Neue Freie Presse* (23 May 1893): ‘schließlich bewundert man noch mehr den Meister als das Werk . . . Es ist nicht das bewunderungswürdigste Werk Verdi’s, aber Verdi ist am bewunderungswürdigsten in “Falstaff”. A similar pronouncement was made in *La Lombardia*, reprinted in *Falstaff . . . Giudizi*, 45–6. For recurring attributions in the Italian press, see for instance *Falstaff . . . Giudizi*, 55, 71, 77.

¹²¹ Kretzschmar, ‘Verdi’, 388: ‘An Ehren, an Gütern und an Jahren reich, reif für die Ruhe auf dem Lorbeer, beginnt er jetzt umzulernen und begibt sich unbefangen in die Schule Richard Wagners. Das ist keine Kleinigkeit; nur wenig Musiker haben etwas Ähnliches unternommen’.

contemporary musical culture.¹²² Even the *Falstaff* tour of Genoa, Rome, Venice, Trieste, Vienna and Berlin, undertaken by La Scala's ensemble immediately after the premiere, seemed Wagnerian: the 'authorised' presentations recalled Wagner's confinement of *Parsifal* to Bayreuth, in both its innovative artistic intent and its financial daring.¹²³ With respect to the musical fabric, though, many writers conceded that *Falstaff* was no imitation of *Die Meistersinger*. A satisfied Eichberg intimated that, 'despite all affinities', Verdi's style was finally 'completely his own'. At least in the comic genre, he had accomplished the task *Otello* had left uncompleted: 'to give the Italians a unique companion piece to Wagner's work'. Some critics now even began to reckon that, with its fusion of German and Italian art, *Falstaff* might point towards a post-Wagnerian 'music of the future' – an ironic thought in view of Wagner's warning against the infiltration of Germany with *wälschem Tand*, spelt out precisely in *Die Meistersinger*.¹²⁴

Even if authors denied any direct influence, they implicitly viewed Verdi's lifelong battle for his dramatic goals through a German lens. This battle conformed to the idea of the artist-genius overcoming obstacles. What is more, Hanslick answered the 'familiar question of whether Verdi, in his *Otello*, has become an entirely different composer' by citing the parable of an old ivy plant whose leaves had 'gradually changed from their original form'.¹²⁵ This and other botanical metaphors frequently served not to judge the 'youthfulness' of Verdi's late works or to allude to his rough manners and rural origins, but to underline his steadfastness: firmly rooted and growing healthily like a gnarled oak tree, the composer manifested features usually associated not with artificial products of Latin civilisation but with nature-based German art.¹²⁶

¹²² See, for instance, Helm's review in *MW* 24 (1893), 473. Recent commentators, of course, have pointed out more subtle references to Wagner's work; see for example Senici, 'Verdi's *Falstaff*', 299–300; and Anselm Gerhard, 'Arrigo Boito und G. Verdi: "Falstaff". Liebe und Trug "in den Gärten des Decameron"' in Hans Joachim Hinrichsen and Laurenz Lütteken (eds.), *Meisterwerke neu gehört. Ein kleiner Kanon der Musik: 14 Werkporträts* (Kassel, 2004), 258–84.

¹²³ For a view of the tour as an 'audience-friendly' alternative to Bayreuth, see *NBMz* 47 (1893), 259. It might also have been inspired by the sensational European circuit of Wagner's *Ring* with its original Bayreuth sets, undertaken by the Austrian impresario Angelo Neumann in 1882–3; see Kreuzer, 'Authentizität', 149–52.

¹²⁴ O[scar] Eichberg, cited in *NZFM* 61 (1894), 127; review in *Neue Preußische Zeitung* (7 March 1894); compare also the Milanese review signed 'Il Misovulgo' (crowd hater) in *Il corriere della sera*, reprinted in *Falstaff... Giudizi*, 20. The opinion that *Falstaff*, more than the 'heavy' *Meistersinger*, could point to the future of comic opera became more common during the following decades. For the nationalist message of *Die Meistersinger*, see Chapter 1.

¹²⁵ Hanslick, *Skizzenbuch*, 326; trans. *Vienna's Golden Years*, 293–4.

¹²⁶ Comparison of Verdi with a tree, or of his late works with fruit, abides. On the national implication of such metaphors, see Robin Lenman, *Artists and Society in Germany, 1850–1914* (Manchester, 1997), 19.

Opera scholar Hermann Abert even demanded a paradigm shift, as it had been foreshadowed by Hanslick's later writings: scholarship should detach itself from Wagner's theories and explore Verdi's output 'scientifically' – on its own terms, within its own contexts.¹⁰

Such agendas did not only involve Verdi, of course. The means and ends of musical criticism were frequently debated in the early 1900s, when the young discipline of musicology established itself more broadly in German-language universities, claiming legitimacy as an independent *Wissenschaft* by analogy to the natural and social sciences.¹¹ After World War I, Abert's younger colleague Wilibald Gurlitt thus called for a new kind of music history that combined a music-centred *Problemgeschichte*, concerned with style analyses, with a history of ideas that sought to understand music as an 'expression of the spiritual life of a time, nation, personality'. This *Ausdrucksgeschichte* would replace the traditional anecdotal biographies with more psychologically and contextually informed scholarship.¹²

The numerous writings on Verdi that appeared around 1913 took a first step towards such contextualisation. No longer was German music drama automatically upheld as the goal of all opera. As had happened earlier with the *Requiem*, many authors conceded that *völkisch* origins inevitably influenced artistic output; the conception of opera, the conservative Alsatian music historian Karl Storck explained, 'naturally varies between nations, depending on the people's character [Volksart] and the role of opera in their cultural life'.¹³ The difference between this 'national' perspective, which emphasised a culture's folkish and ethnic roots, and mid-nineteenth-century views was spelt out by the singing teacher Hugo Rasch: 'Latin nature' (*romanisches Wesen*), he argued, is 'not necessarily inferior to ours just because it is so very different'. In other words, Rasch did not insist on the superiority of German culture. A shift in terminology was telling, the pejorative *welsch* of old giving way to the neutral adjective *romanisch* for Latin countries.¹⁴ Rasch's openness

¹⁰ Hermann Abert, 'Giuseppe Verdi', *Zeitschrift der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 2 (1900/1), 206. See Eduard Hanslick, *Aus meinem Leben*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1894), I: 91; on his influence on the emerging discipline of musicology, see Karnes, *Music*, 21–75.

¹¹ This development is surveyed in Alexander Rehding, *Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought* (Cambridge, 2003), esp. 4–6.

¹² Wilibald Gurlitt, 'Hugo Riemann und die Musikgeschichte...', *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (1918/19), 584. On the influence of World War I on music writing, see Andreas Eichhorn, 'Republikanische Musikkritik' in Wolfgang Rathert and Giselher Schubert (eds.), *Musikkultur in der Weimarer Republik* (Mainz, 2001), 198–211, esp. 206; and Thomas Röder, 'Das Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen deutschen Musikfachpresse' in Christa Brüstle et al. (eds.), *Von Grenzen und Ländern, Zentren und Rändern. Der erste Weltkrieg und die Verschiebung in der musikalischen Geographie Europas* (Schliengen, 2006), 223–38.

¹³ Karl Storck, 'Giuseppe Verdi. Zu seinem 100. Geburtstag', *AMz* 40 (1913), 1242.

¹⁴ Hugo Rasch, 'Der nationale Verdi', *AMz* 40 (1913), 1247.

might seem surprising at a time of increasingly aggressive nationalism; in the years leading up to the war and beyond, as Reinhard Koselleck has shown, the concept of the 'nation', or *Volk*, was widely understood as 'a moral-religious, socio-political and historical *Letztinstanz*' that governed politics as well as individual action and consciousness.¹⁵ Yet the pervasiveness of this concept meant that it had to be applied to other peoples as well. To what extent Verdian discourse was transformed by a loosening of cultural chauvinism can be inferred from two writings by the Thuringian critic Max Chop. In 1890 he insisted on judging Verdi by German ideals; his verdict, predictably, was none too positive. But in a 1913 monograph on the composer, he warned against measuring an Italian 'by the yardstick of the German':¹⁶ Chop's volte-face, like Kretzschmar's, could not have been more complete.

In an attempt to eschew the earlier, German-oriented perspective, many writers used the idea of *völkisch* determinism to explain perceived weaknesses in Verdi's operas, above all his libretti. Critics increasingly stressed the composer's feel for theatrically effective situations; and such reassessment of the plots was linked to a widening recognition of the dramatic potential of *bel canto* and closed musical numbers. The national-conservative musicologist Alfred Heuß saw the merit of Verdi's compositional technique in melodic characterisation; the prominent Viennese critic Julius Korngold declared Verdi the greatest master of 'now-lost dramatic melody'.¹⁷ With regard to his well-known 'barrel-organ' arias, writers pointed out that simplicity of means did not preclude expressivity and gripping effect. The putative revolutionary function of Verdi's earliest operas was also highlighted to legitimise their contemporary success and physiognomy, as well as their lack of impact outside Italy.¹⁸

In their effort to understand the 'entire' Verdi, authors sought above all to discern commonalities between his creative periods (needless to say, three were usually assumed). Paul Bekker, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*'s influential music critic, for instance argued that Verdi showed a consistent urge 'to be true' – first to religious and patriotic sentiments and later to 'absolute' human

¹⁵ Reinhart Koselleck, 'Volk, Nation, Nationalismus, Masse. xiv.' in Otto Brunner *et al.* (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 10 vols., new edn (Stuttgart, 2004), VII: 389.

¹⁶ M. Charles [Max Chop], *Zeitgenössische Tondichter. Studien und Skizzen. Neue Folge* (Leipzig, 1890), 177; Max Chop, *Giuseppe Verdi* (Leipzig, 1913), 9–10.

¹⁷ Alfred Heuß, 'Verdi als melodischer Charakteristiker', *Zeitschrift der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 15 (1913), 63–72; Julius Korngold, 'Verdi', *Neue Freie Presse* (4 October 1913).

¹⁸ See Storck, 'Verdi', 1239; and Chop, *Verdi*, 34–5. An extreme political reading is D[avid] J. Bach's 'Verdi' in the Austrian social-democratic *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (10 October 1913). See also Birgit Pauls, *Giuseppe Verdi und das Risorgimento. Ein politischer Mythos im Prozeß der Nationenbildung* (Berlin, 1996), 282.

As Weißmann suggested, the turn to Verdi was related once again to reverence for the man. But this now included his whole life, just as critical recognition began to take in his earlier operas. A list of terms from Weißmann's lengthy article on Verdi in the influential journal *Die Musik* illustrates the positive aspects he and others found: artistic sincerity, conscientiousness, an urge to perfection, authenticity, composure, childlike naivety, fervour, a critical mind, love, solitude, humanity, modesty, naturalness, freshness, physical and mental health, unbroken power, virility, youthfulness, passion and glow. Although consonant with accounts of Verdi at the time of *Falstaff*, these attributes centred on youthfulness, physical strength and manliness: the headstrong peasant counteracted the crisis of masculinity that since the 1890s had been associated with 'unmanly' industrial labour, the women's movement and the manicured nouveaux-riches.²⁸ His virility distinguished him from the notoriously vain Wagner and from other, 'bohemian' types of artists, enabling him to continue his musical mission until old age. Thus, Verdi embodied exactly the qualities needed to overcome Wagnerism and the debasement it was thought to have brought on contemporary opera.

Yet these virtues had to be distilled for German use. As the composer-conductor Felix Weingartner explained to readers of Vienna's leading liberal daily, the guilt they commonly experienced when abandoning themselves to 'Verdi's so entirely undisguised [*unverkünstelte*] appearance' was related to waning interest in 'all things unmediated' under the influence of 'refined' taste. In order to tap into the values of Verdi's art, therefore, he thought it necessary first to 'cleanse ourselves of false modernism and too-closely followed Wagnerism'.²⁹ Forty years after Verdi's alleged aesthetic purification under Germanic influence, then, it was time for Germans to purge themselves of Wagnerian ideology. Hence the frequent appropriation of Verdi's famous dictum 'Torniamo all'antico: sarà un progresso': 'Back to Verdi' was, for some authors, the agenda of 1913.³⁰ This was matched by complaints about the 'disgraceful' standards of Verdi productions and translations as well as

²⁸ See George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford, 1996), esp. 77–106. In music, Verdi's manpower might also have countered a flourishing brand of homosexual Wagnerism. On the perception of Wagner's works as feminine, see Heinrich Kralik, 'Verdi und Mozart', *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (27 January 1926); and Paul Bekker, 'Wagner heute', *Anbruch* 15 (1933), 3–6.

²⁹ Felix Weingartner, 'Zu Verdis hundertstem Geburtstag', *Neue Freie Presse* (9 October 1913); also 'Verdi, der Begründer der modernen Spieloper', *Signale* 71 (1913), 1451–4; and his statement in 'Verdi im Urteil lebender Musiker', *Berliner Tageblatt* (9 October 1913).

³⁰ Friedrich Schwabe, 'Verdi und die deutsche Bühne', *AMz* 40 (1913), 1246: 'Zurück zu Verdi und mit ihm wieder vor zu Wagner'; also Rasch, 'Der nationale Verdi', 1248. On the Verdi quote, see Chapter 2, n38.

poet had been driven 'by enthusiasm for, and opposition to the thorough-going oppression of, Giuseppe Verdi'. This infatuation turned into a lifelong spiritual affinity: anecdotes about his bellowing out of Verdi arias in cafés and arguing with friends over his much-ridiculed passion are legion.³⁷ Around 1910 he took a closer interest in the composer's life and decided to write a novel about him; already his first novella of 1913, *Die Versuchung* ('The temptation', a meditation on creative vocation sparked off by a performance of *Aida*), was dedicated to the composer's memory. Werfel's curiosity was aroused by the fact that so little was known about a man as famous as Verdi – something he believed made the composer's life seem deceptively simple, just as it would emerge in Weißmann. But lack of sources and artistic doubts delayed his work;³⁸ *Verdi. Roman der Oper* appeared in 1924. Two years later, as mentioned, the poet edited the first German selection of letters (translated by the Viennese critic Paul Stefan and fashioned under topical headings into something of an autobiography), including a lengthy essay on 'the Verdi image'. Both writings retell many familiar anecdotes. Yet Werfel claimed to have employed biographical data merely to evoke a vision of the composer, to 'create this truth for ourselves – the mythical *legend of the man*'. Verdi's well-known quotation 'To copy the truth can be a good thing, but *to invent the truth* is better, much better' served as his motto.³⁹ In other words, Werfel's imagination filled in the gaps in Verdi's biography, weaving a narrative that would explain both his personal attraction to the man and his contemporary relevance. Since much has been written about Werfel's musical and (left-wing) political background, his Verdian efforts and the novel in particular, I will limit my discussion to features crucial to the ways

³⁷ Franz Werfel, 'Ein Bildnis Giuseppe Verdis' in his *Gesammelte Werke: Zwischen Oben und Unten. Prosa, Tagebücher, Aphorismen, Literarische Nachträge*, ed. Adolf D. Klarmann (Munich, 1975), 361; also the unpublished letter quoted in Norbert Abels, "Die Wahrheit erfinden". Über Franz Werfels "Verdi. Roman der Oper" in Albert Gier and Gerold W. Gruber (eds.), *Musik und Literatur. Komparatistische Studien zur Strukturverwandtschaft* (Frankfurt, 1995), 219. For paradigmatic anecdotes, see Max Brod, *Streitbares Leben 1884–1968* (Munich, 1969), 25–7; and Friedrich Hollaender, *Von Kopf bis Fuß. Mein Leben mit Text und Musik*, ed. Volker Kühn (Bonn, 1996), 58. In 1922, Werfel also 'converted' his future wife, Alma Mahler, to Verdi; see Peter Stephan Jungk, *A Life Torn by History: Franz Werfel 1890–1945* (London, 1990), 96.

³⁸ Werfel feared that his novel might be 'false, subjective, an insult to Verdi', especially since the composer himself would have detested such publicity; 'Zufallstagebuch' in *Zwischen Oben und Unten*, 686 (entry of 14 June 1923); and Mautner, *Kitsch*, 147–8; see also 'Das Bildnis Giuseppe Verdis' in Werfel (ed.), *Giuseppe Verdi: Briefe* (Berlin, 1926), 13, 16.

³⁹ Franz Werfel, *Verdi. Roman der Oper* (Berlin and Vienna, 1924), 8 (6). This and subsequent quotations are modified from the English edition, *Verdi*, by Helen Jessiman (London, [1944]), and referenced in parentheses. The Verdi quote ('Copiare il vero può essere una buona cosa, ma inventare il vero è meglio, molto meglio') is in a letter to Clara Maffei of 20 October 1876, in Gaetano Cesari and Alessandro Luzio (eds.), *I copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Milan, 1913), 624.

in which the composer's reception interacted with the cultural climate of inter-war Austria and Germany.⁴⁰

Werfel's fascination with Verdi was rooted in a Schopenhauerian concept of music that pervaded many of his writings. Music, for him, was the primary mystical experience of life, and singing was its highest manifestation. The 'bodiless, undisturbed world of song' represented the 'idea of moral freedom, the longing of mankind for the heart of God' – and nowhere more so than in opera.⁴¹ Werfel's two major texts on Verdi thus outline the rise of what he considered an essentially Italian art form. In the nineteenth century, according to his dialectical view, the human voice – which had hitherto symbolised mankind as the 'zenith of creation' – had been superseded by purely instrumental music. A corollary of the new, scientific perception of the world, this 'symphonic' music was incarnated by Wagner. But with Verdi there arrived a 'counter-revolutionary', the saviour of melody at a time when this 'greatest expression of the human voice was decaying'.⁴² Verdi, in short, was much more than Werfel's favourite composer: he was – as the novel's subtitle indicates – the beacon of opera and a highly symbolic figure in the poet's *Weltanschauung*.

Not surprisingly, then, the novel's main theme is Verdi's supposed struggle with Wagnerism. Werfel crystallised his narrative around 1883, the year of Wagner's death and part of Verdi's fallow period between *Aida* and *Otello*; and his presumed antagonism between the two composers signifies more universal antitheses. These include, in the musical sphere, the oppositions of voice/orchestra, opera/music drama, aria/symphony, simplicity/complexity, intuition/construction and spontaneous/theory-based composition; on the aesthetic level, populism/elitism, realism/idealism, truth/myth, naturalness/decadence, tradition/modernism and functional/self-sufficient art; in the human realm, emotions/spirit, sensuality/rationality, objectivity/subjectivity, altruism/egoism, humility/arrogance, masculinity/femininity, warmth/coldness, power/weakness, health/sickness, Italy/Germany, south/

⁴⁰ Contemporary reviews of *Verdi* are referenced in Lore B. Foltin, *Franz Werfel* (Stuttgart, 1972), 62, 66; Jennifer E. Michaels, *Franz Werfel and the Critics* (Columbia, 1994), 70–4, surveys scholarly interpretations. More recent readings include Henry A. Lea, 'Musical Politics in Werfel's "Verdi"' in Joseph P. Strelka and Robert Weigel (eds.), *Unser Fahrplan geht von Stern zu Stern. Zu Franz Werfels Stellung und Werk* (Berne, 1992), 231–41; Marc A. Weiner, *Undertones of Insurrection: Music, Politics and the Social Sphere in the Modern German Narrative* (Lincoln, NB, and London, 1993), 153–63; various contributions in *Sympaian. Jahrbuch der Internationalen Franz Werfel-Gesellschaft* 1 (1996); Abels, "Die Wahrheit"; Mautner, *Kitsch*, 107–86; and Dieter Borchmeyer, *Richard Wagner. Ahasvers Wandlungen* (Frankfurt, 2002), 502–22.

⁴¹ *Verdi*, 466 (161); 'Die Schwarze Messe. Romanfragment' (1919) in *Die Schwarze Messe. Erzählungen* (Frankfurt, 1990), 171.

⁴² 'Verdi in unserer Zeit' (1936), *Zwischen Oben und Unten*, 354–5.

north, peasant/citizen and, ultimately, humane being/demigod. This chain of opposites echoes the views of nineteenth-century music historians we encountered in Chapter 1, shorn of their depreciation. Instead, Werfel's repeated denial of Wagnerian influence can be read as the moral of the novel: after the fictional Verdi's protracted creative agony and his failure to address his rival personally, he finally rids himself of his inferiority complex by discovering that their styles, however divergent, pursue similar aims. Only when he burns the manuscript of *Re Lear*, in which he had endeavoured for years to adopt 'progressive' Wagnerian elements, is he able again to write his own music:

He could now see no reason why, as a musician, he should blush before Wagner. Independently from the German he had found a musical language equally true to the spirit of his time... In spite of all contradictions, if he had a brother among fellow artists it was this man!⁴³

From the construal of Verdi as the only composer capable of resisting Wagnerism stemmed Werfel's eagerness to revive his unknown operas: 'by reconstructing the huge subject "Verdi" (a task it will take many to complete)', he wrote in 1927, 'not only will audiences receive an unimaginable musical gift but, what is more, new, really new paths will open for the stagnating world of opera'. Werfel's veneration of Verdi's 'inexhaustible music' was thus directed not only against Wagner but also against avant-garde music. Accordingly, his Verdi rejects the abstract, anti-melodious, atonal and 'completely new' compositional principles of a young German called Mathias Fischböck (a sickly character who has been variously linked with Joseph Matthias Hauer, Ernst Krenek and Anton von Webern).⁴⁴ Verdi, then, was a force at once historical and of acute topical relevance.

At the same time, the poles associated with Verdi's persona largely correspond to Weißmann's:⁴⁵ traditional human qualities of warmth and strength offset the chilly alienation of post-war life. Yet at least some of them could also be signposts for what literary scholar Helmut Lethen has called 'cool conduct': a newly distanced, outwardly orientated, heroic and pre-rational code of behaviour extolled by many thinkers of the so-called 'new objectivity' (*Neue Sachlichkeit*), the movement away from expressionism that became manifest precisely at the time of Werfel's novel, and one that Lethen links

⁴³ *Verdi*, 486–7 (171); also 'Das Bildnis', 28–9.

⁴⁴ 'Verdis "dunkle Epoche"' (1927), *Zwischen Oben und Unten*, 350–1; 'Verdis "Don Carlos" und seine Kritiker' (1932), *Zwischen Oben und Unten*, 353; *Verdi*, 283–92, 304–17 (98–106, 109–14). Views on this character are summarised in Mautner, *Kitsch*, 177–83.

⁴⁵ According to Mautner, *Kitsch*, 149–53, Werfel seems not to have known Weißmann's writings.

Revival politics changed significantly in 1931, when most Verdi operas came into the public domain (with the exception of some later ones like *Don Carlos*, whose librettists had died after the composer). This is illustrated by the case of *Les Vêpres*, which the Stuttgart Landestheater requested in 1928. When the theatre did not produce its own translation, Ricordi approached Werfel, but backed out in light of his busy schedule. Instead, Stuttgart used a version by the Swiss journalist Gian Bundi, which Ricordi eventually published in 1930.⁷⁶ After the end of copyright protection, however, the firm could not prevent Julius Kapp, dramaturge at the Berlin Staatsoper, from adapting the opera anew (as we shall see in the next chapter, ruthlessly so). Hence Ricordi's double tactic: Bundi was not allowed to rework his rather tame translation, which continued to be marketed. At the same time, Ricordi signed a deal with Vienna's Universal Edition for Kapp's version, which – again with outstanding singers – had succeeded under Erich Kleiber in June 1932: Ricordi thus secured profits from this edition as well.⁷⁷

In the end, each revival has its own story, the common denominator being Ricordi's opportunism. Averse to experiments, the firm opted for speed rather than quality – something perhaps related to the impending end of copyright protection.⁷⁸ As for Werfel, he was neither the first nor the only successful adapter of Verdi; the extensive discussion of his texts was instead partly due to his literary fame, which in turn ensured him the collaboration of leading theatres. The prime engineers of the 'renaissance', then, were directors, translators and conductors: it was they who insisted on trying out operas and often promoted their 'excavations' in the press. In this pioneering era of audio-visual media, what is more, such attempts were not limited to the stage. While relatively few Germans could yet benefit from the recording industry, German radio services rapidly expanded from their beginnings in October 1923, becoming an important shaper of public taste: with the number of listeners quickly reaching the millions, radio made highbrow culture accessible to new segments of the population. Music broadcasts were the most immediately attractive programmes, taking up roughly two-thirds of the entire transmission

⁷⁶ For Ricordi's negotiations over *Les Vêpres*, see *I-Mr*, esp. 1927/8: 13/181; 1928/9: 5/413 and 6/111; 1929/30: 9/57 and 247; 1930/1: 11/208.

⁷⁷ In exchange, Ricordi relinquished a set of performance materials to Universal Edition; *I-Mr*, 1931/2: 16/442; 1932/3: 1/84, 442–3 and 3/280. The cast included Anni Konetzni, Emanuel List, Helge Roswaenge and Heinrich Schlusnus.

⁷⁸ How protective Ricordi was of the copyright is evident in the firm's persistent attempts to exact royalties for Verdi's popular operas from German theatres which had bought the scores before the Berne Convention (and thus performed them for free). Despite a 1917 verdict in favour of Ricordi, many theatres refused to pay until the firm used *Turandot* to obtain an agreement; *I-Mr*, 1925/6: 15/357–9; and *D-Mhsa*, Staatsoper 2474.

time.⁷⁹ Italian opera, with its closed musical numbers and often lightly scored accompaniments, was especially suited to the technical limitations of early recordings and radio.⁸⁰ A *Rigoletto* especially arranged for broadcast appeared as early as 1923 and was soon followed by other adaptations, including non-canonic fare. In 1931, for example, the recently founded Berliner Funkstunde featured a radically shortened version of *I masnadieri*. Five years later, Viennese radio launched an original revival with *Alzira*, translated by composer and singer Lothar Riedinger, which was taken up by Reichssender Berlin in 1938. The radio thus emerged as an alternative medium for revivals, particularly of operas that were unlikely to fill a theatre.

Apart from this diversity of driving forces, the revival movement's geographical variety is worth noting. 'Weimar culture' has of course often been equated with Berlin's vibrant metropolitan life. Yet Verdi was equally embraced elsewhere, with even provincial houses striving to launch 'original' revivals. The most famed productions took place in Berlin, Dresden and – from Krauss's arrival – more conservative Vienna: renowned venues which could afford to spice up old works with impressive stagings, first-rate casts and newly commissioned translations. From this economic viewpoint, it is perhaps significant that, apart from *La forza*, only *Don Carlos* (in various versions), *Simon Boccanegra* and, on a lower level, *Macbeth* and *Les Vêpres* would gain some popularity – most of the operas premiered at major houses; by contrast, those that had first been tried at smaller theatres later resurfaced only occasionally and in minor venues. Overall, though, the 'renaissance' did not just bring back little-known works from across Verdi's career; it also renewed interest in his canonic operas. As a result, the number of Verdi performances in all German-language theatres soared between 1918 and the early 1930s; in the 1931–2 season, for the first time ever, Verdi overtook Wagner.⁸¹ This could not leave critics unaffected.

⁷⁹ Erik Levi, *Music in the Third Reich* (London, 1994), 126. On the social impact of radio technology, see Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 238–45, and Corey Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany: Mass Communications, Society, and Politics from the Empire to the Third Reich* (Oxford and New York, 2008), esp. 128–40; on its role in musical culture, Christopher Hailey, 'Rethinking Sound: Music and Radio in Weimar Germany' in Bryan Gilliam (ed.), *Music and Performance During the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge, 1994), esp. 14–15; and Michael Stapper, *Unterhaltungsmusik im Rundfunk der Weimarer Republik* (Tutzing, 2001), esp. 41–53. The constitution of a radio 'listening public' has been analysed by Brian Currid, *A National Acoustics: Music and Mass Publicity in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (Minnesota, 2006), 29–44.

⁸⁰ See Richard Petzoldt, 'Verdi auf der Schallplatte', *Skizzen* (October 1938), 18–19; and Alfred Baresel, *Was weißt Du von Verdi?* (Leipzig and Berlin, [1931]), 17–18. On criteria for music's suitability for early broadcasts, see Stapper, *Unterhaltungsmusik*, 158–266, esp. 204–6.

⁸¹ Performance figures are detailed in Table 5.1 on page 203. On Viennese cultural conservatism, see Susanne Rode-Breymann, *Die Wiener Staatsoper in den Zwischenkriegsjahren. Ihr Beitrag zum zeitgenössischen Musiktheater* (Tutzing, 1994), esp. 24–36.

developments, an opportunity to change for the better.¹²⁷ Understanding this ambivalence is key to positioning the 'Verdi renaissance' more securely among the multiple tensions of Weimar modernity.

Most *Opernkrise* discussions focused on the perceived stagnation in operatic composition and the question of whether Wagner had once and for all exhausted the potential of music theatre. Paradoxically, though, more contemporary operas were programmed during the Weimar years than in either the preceding or subsequent decades. In the 1926–7 season alone, fifty-six new works received their world premieres, more than one-fifth of all productions in German-language theatres. Yet most were obviously ill received, since their overall share in performance numbers was scarcely 5 per cent – compared to around 14 per cent for Wagner and 11 for Verdi.¹²⁸

In light of these widening discrepancies between new compositions, critical opinion and audience expectation, looking to opera's past – and particularly its Italian heritage, that origin and stronghold of the genre – offered respite, both aesthetically and in terms of repertory. In 1923, the Berlin music writer (and composer by training) Walter Dahms called for a wholehearted embrace not just of Italian opera but of what he called, in a bold gesture to Nietzsche, 'Music of the south': he argued that passion, naturalness and ease (features Weißmann and Werfel had associated with Verdi) would lead to a general recovery of post-war musical life and its release from the dominance of the intellect.¹²⁹ Many agreed. Bekker saw the path to operatic salvation in acknowledging 'the stimuli given by Debussy, Verdi and Puccini' and reflecting on 'the musical archetype of opera'.¹³⁰ Others insisted, like Werfel, on a return to the human voice as part of opera's essence; again, Verdi was crucial. Heuß, for example, considered the analysis of Verdi's compositional

¹²⁷ This positive side of the discourse has recently been highlighted by Moritz Föllmer and Rüdiger Graf in their edited volume *Die 'Krise' der Weimarer Republik. Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmusters* (Frankfurt, 2005). For a similarly constructive perspective on the opera crisis, see Rachel Nussbaum, 'The Kroll Opera and the Politics of Cultural Reform in the Weimar Republic', PhD thesis, Cornell University (2005), 101–8. Spengler's two-volume work was published in various editions from 1918.

¹²⁸ Köhler, 'Struktur', 48, 53, 42–5. An excellent survey in English over the post-war operatic scene is Guido Heldt, 'Austria and Germany, 1918–1960' in Mervyn Cooke (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera* (Cambridge, 2005), 146–58. For a discussion of related problems with opera outside German lands, see Boris de Schloezer, 'The Operatic Paradox', *Modern Music* 4/1 (1926), 3–8.

¹²⁹ Walter Dahms, *Musik des Südens* (Berlin and Stuttgart, 1923), esp. 102–3; along similar lines see Adolf Weißmann, 'Italiens Musik und Deutschland', *Anbruch* 7 (1925), 385. Dahms had moved to Rome in 1922.

¹³⁰ Paul Bekker, excerpt from *Die Weltgeltung der deutschen Musik* (Berlin, 1920), reprinted in Bekker and Franz Schreker, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Christopher Hailey (Aachen, 1994), 345–6. For more on his aesthetics of opera, see Andreas Eichhorn, *Paul Bekker – Facetten eines kritischen Geistes* (Hildesheim, 2002), 123–47.

public's diverse cultural yearnings. The rising popularity of operetta, revue and cabaret was frequently reckoned either to draw audiences away from opera or to hasten its decline into lowbrow amusement. Even more challenging was the impact of film. In its early days often perceived as a democratic entertainment available to all but the very poorest, it threatened to usurp bankrupt opera theatres.¹⁵¹ Moreover, it seemed able to represent the contemporary world realistically. Some stage designers (like Heckroth) therefore incorporated cinematic technology to make their stagings all the rage. Indeed, avant-garde *Regie* arose in part in response to the heightened visual expectations nourished by film. Yet, as Schoenberg asserted, opera could maintain its generic individuality only by turning away from attempts at realistic depictions of everyday life.¹⁵² The Verdi revival helped bring about just this. It encouraged a reassessment of opera's inherent breach of verisimilitude; a focus on the unmediated human voice and closed musical numbers; a new, dance-influenced style of direction; a combination of abstract stage settings and decorative magic; and the acceptance of far-fetched stories.

Finally, the turn towards Verdi and cultural *italianità* in opera was linked to a more general reawakening, after the deprivations of war, of German longing for 'the south'. As Chapter 1 has shown, Italy had symbolised both menacing and liberating Otherness for German intellectuals since at least the Enlightenment. In 1927, art historian Wilhelm Waetzold wrote that this clichéd idea of sunny, humanistic Italy lived on in the popular imagination (it still does). But, he added, the cultural dialectic between north and south had become trivialised by the easy accessibility through tourism of a once-remote country. In line with other modernising effects on Italy such as that of industrialisation, this had led to a more realistic view of its blessings and woes.¹⁵³ Politics, too, helped undermine the antagonism of old. Although Italy had belatedly taken up arms against Germany and Austria-Hungary and gained territory in World War I, it was plagued immediately thereafter by a loss of faith in its government, nationalist frustration, international isolation, a disrupted economy, inflation, social and political divisions – all problems well known to German and Austrian contemporaries.¹⁵⁴ Cultural

¹⁵¹ Thus, for instance, Eugen Schmitz, 'Der Musikkritiker von heute', *Jahrbuch der Musikbibliothek Peters* 37 (1931), 68, 71–2.

¹⁵² Arnold Schoenberg, 'Gibt es eine Krise der Oper?', *Anbruch* 8 (1926), 209; also Gilliam, 'Stage and Screen', 2–3.

¹⁵³ Wilhelm Waetzold, *Das klassische Land. Wandlungen der Italiensehnsucht* (Leipzig, 1927), 4–6, 288–90.

¹⁵⁴ For surveys in English of Italy's post-war situation, see Paul Corner, 'State and Society, 1901–1922', and Thomas Row, 'Italy in the International System, 1900–1922' in Adrian Lyttleton (ed.), *Liberal and Fascist Italy, 1900–1945* (Oxford, 2001), 30–7, 101–4; on its

affinity was felt also in the context of Weimar Germany's notorious cosmopolitanism: compared to the multiple non-European Others that entered the scene – above all jazz, that hotly debated symbol of everything ostensibly American or African, primitive or 'authentic' – Latin culture seemed reassuringly familiar.¹⁵⁵ Amidst the lower middle classes' 'almost comical admiration for Italy', their fondness for regional literature and *Heimatkunst*, and the popular youth music and singing movements, then, Verdi's forgotten operas emerged as a neat compromise between artistic aspirations, popular desires and economic strictures.¹⁵⁶ Thus the Verdi revival not only helped dispel the spectre of opera's financial and aesthetic demise; in so doing, it also strengthened – at least among some moderately conservative minds – a sense of traditional cultural identity amidst the newly fragmented, polymorphous and multi-cultural palette of contemporary artistic offerings.

Verdi and Weimar culture

Tracing the 'Verdi renaissance' in concentric circles through the first decades of the twentieth century, we have observed how it arose within a network of interlocking factors. The scholarly canonisation of Verdi interacted with revivals of his lesser-known works. These, in turn, were idealised by their advocates in light of contemporary human and artistic needs: in their moral and dramatic qualities, their simplicity and passion, their imagination and remoteness from modern life. German intellectuals and musicians thus moved from accepting the old composer under the auspices of his late, seemingly Wagnerian operas to lionising the 'entire Verdi' as an independent musical phenomenon. This change was furthered, after the catastrophic experience of World War I, in a cultural transformation marked by economic and social reforms, new means of mass communication and recreational activities, and a disruption of traditional codes of collective and national identity. So fundamental were these developments that they fostered similar cultural responses in the new German and Austrian republics. Although Berlin is often described as the hotbed of 'Weimar culture', the 'Verdi renaissance'

relations with Germany, Markus Dreist, *Die deutsch-italienischen Beziehungen im Spannungsfeld der europäischen Politik 1918–1934* (Frankfurt, 2000), esp. 237–48.

¹⁵⁵ On German jazz reception, see John, *Musikbolschewismus*, 284–303; and, with further references, Jonathan Otto Wipplinger, 'The Jazz Republic: Music, Race, and American Culture in Weimar Germany', PhD thesis, University of Michigan (2006), esp. 3–6.

¹⁵⁶ Weißmann, 'Italiens Musik', 385. Göhler ('Verdis Oper "Macbeth"', 143–5) even suggested concert performances by choral societies to enrich their repertory and train audiences to appreciate these works.

In 1941, Joseph Gregor explained the relevance of Verdi's supposed Risorgimento link: the Viennese theatre historian (and librettist of some late Strauss operas) deemed the struggle for Italian unification comparable only to 'the exigencies of our present times'. Some critics went so far as to assert that Verdi's endeavours 'to defend the special mission of his race against the onslaught of foreign and inappropriate elements' had foreshadowed the fascist revolution.²² This analogy was brought to its logical conclusion by Alfred Baresel, a critic known for his earlier writings on jazz. In 1938, he refashioned Verdi as a 'prophet of urban misery [and] the affliction of the unemployed': he could, in fact, 'be called the first national socialist among artists'. Even including Bruckner and the notoriously nationalist and anti-Semitic Wagner, Germany's rich Valhalla could not boast a single composer of similarly robust accumulation of ideological credentials.²³

Baresel's short biography of Verdi deserves attention for more than its proto-fascist recoding of the composer. Based as it was on the author's illustrated booklet *Was weißt Du von Verdi?* of 1931, it highlights typical modifications in Verdi literature between the Weimar and Nazi eras, even if the earlier text already dabbled in *völkisch* rhetoric and a popular-scientific style.²⁴ Like the *Volksausgabe* of Werfel's novel, Baresel's abbreviated revision eliminated many technical terms and music-theoretical excursions. Also trimmed were mentions of Werfel (although Baresel's synopses of *La forza* and *Simon Boccanegra* referred to his adaptations), comparisons with Wagner, the idea (adopted from Werfel) of a writer's block caused by Wagnerism, allusions to a previous misjudgement of Verdi, praise of Italy as the homeland of music – everything, in short, that could be seen to play German and Italian culture off against one another. On the political level, Verdi's 1870 foreboding about a European war gave way to the notion of an historical parallel between post-1848 Italy and post-1918 Germany, while Mussolini made an appearance with his speech on the composer's death: thus was

²² Gregor, *Kulturgeschichte*, 340; Runge, 'Maestro'.

²³ Alfred Baresel, *Giuseppe Verdi. Leben und Werk* (Leipzig, 1938), 26: 'Er war der Prophet des späteren Großstadtelends, der Not der Arbeitslosen... Gewiß kann man den "maestro della rivoluzione italiana" auch den ersten nationalen Sozialisten unter den Künstlern nennen!' On ideological difficulties with Beethoven (whose racial and family backgrounds were contested) and Wagner, see David B. Dennis, *Beethoven in German Politics, 1870–1989* (New Haven and London, 1996), 134–6, 146–54; Esteban Buch, *Beethoven's Ninth: A Political History*, trans. Richard Miller (Chicago and London, 2003), 259–60; Peter Reichel, *Der schöne Schein des Dritten Reiches. Faszination und Gewalt des Faschismus*, 2nd edn (Munich and Vienna, 1992), 351–2; and Saul Friedländer and Jörn Rüsen (eds.), *Richard Wagner im Dritten Reich* (Munich, 2000), esp. Reinhold Brinkmann's fine essay 'Wagners Aktualität für den Nationalsozialismus. Fragmente einer Bestandsaufnahme', 109–41.

²⁴ On the following, see Baresel, *Verdi*; and Baresel, *Was weißt Du von Verdi?* (Leipzig and Berlin, [1931]).

Baresel's Verdi nazified.²⁵ Yet the composer did require some 'correction' to be fully aligned with National-Socialist *Weltanschauung*. His religious works had already been sidelined in 1931. (Their near-complete neglect in brief articles during the Third Reich obviously reflected the party's ambivalence towards the churches and towards religion as a competing belief-system.²⁶) In 1938, Baresel additionally did away with suggestions of Verdi's personal independence, 'illegitimate' relationship with Giuseppina Strepponi, anti-authoritarianism, international fame and 'liberal' attitude.

The accounts of Verdi's life story disseminated in the popular media of the Third Reich thus reflected a sentimentality familiar from writings we encountered in the *Kaiserreich*. A telling case in point is the serial 'Verdi – die Nachtigall von Le Roncole' ('Verdi – the nightingale of Le Roncole'), issued in the radio weekly *Die Sendung* between November 1938 and April 1939. The opera consultant at the Propaganda Ministry's Theatre Department, dramaturge Fritz Chlodwig Lange, drew brazenly on that nineteenth-century gossipmonger, Arthur Pougin; what is more, he invented episodes such as an encounter with Marie Duplessis (the real-life model of *La traviata*'s courtesan heroine), and spiced Verdi letters from Werfel's edition with contemporary slang. In all, Verdi was once more presented as the prototypical Italian patriarch and clairvoyant composer; a patriot remaining faithful to his 'race'; a happily married peasant whose willpower had triumphed over grief. Only the rhetoric had shifted to the 1930s.

As might be expected, Italian writers of the fascist era were prone to deal in kindred idealisations, jingoism and all; nor did they omit to underline the 'modernity' of this exemplary Italian vita, which they thought untainted by the internationalism that had attached to Puccini.²⁷ Their embrace of anecdotes and willingness to embellish, though, appear not quite as zealous as those of their Germanic colleagues. Verdi's sacred works, for instance, received more attention. Italians also acknowledged an anti-Verdian backlash

²⁵ On Verdi's foreboding of war, see his letter to Opprandino Arrivabene of 13 September 1870, in Annibale Alberti (ed.), *Verdi intimo. Carteggio di Giuseppe Verdi con il conte Opprandino Arrivabene 1861–1886* ([Milan], 1931), 121; on Mussolini's speech, Walter Rauscher, *Hitler und Mussolini. Macht, Krieg und Terror* (Graz, 2001), 15.

²⁶ On attitudes towards religion among Nazi leaders, see Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945* (Cambridge, 2003); for a critical discussion, see the *Journal of Contemporary History* 41 (2007), 5–78, 185–211. A survey of the churches' fate under Nazi rule is contained in Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (London, 2000), 717–28; and Evans, *Third Reich*, 220–60.

²⁷ Examples include the essays by Cornelio di Marzio and Roberto Farinacci in Giuseppe Mulè (ed.), *Verdi. Studi e memorie a cura del Sindacato nazionale fascista musicisti nel XL anniversario della morte* (Rome, 1941), 1–8, 9–14; and A[ndrea] Della Corte, 'L'Italia onora Verdi, artista e patriota. Allora e adesso', *La stampa* (26 January 1941). See also Harvey Sachs, *Music in Fascist Italy* (New York, 1987), 196–7.

even this did not suffice for some, such as the musicologist Gerigk. A party member since 1932, he had already begun his rise through the ranks of Nazi cultural administrators, a progress that would lead to his appointment, in 1937, as head of the Music Bureau within Alfred Rosenberg's office 'for the total intellectual and ideological education and training of the NSDAP'. (Among other things, he would be in charge of supervising music publications, co-editing the infamous *Lexikon der Juden in der Musik* and, during the war, identifying valuable musical objects to be confiscated from the occupied territories.) Gerigk asserted in 1934 that the northern Italian Verdi simply *must* have had a generous share of German blood; by contrast to the usual Italian 'refuse' (*Unrat*), this made him 'racially valuable'.³⁴ Others grounded this contention historically. Because northern Italy had been part of the 'Europe-embracing German Empire', the Berlin dramaturge Hans Hartleb believed, Verdi's artistic profile could be explained 'only by the especially fortunate marriage of Italian and German genotype [*Erbgut*] that dominated his character'.³⁵ According to some writers, in other words, Verdi had been successful not because of his *völkisch* purity but, on the contrary, because of his biological and intellectual bonds with Germany.

Racing against Wagner

These last assumptions may make one wonder: why did scholars of Gerigk's standing bother with pseudo-scientific (albeit then frequently trodden) terrain to tie a long-dead foreign composer more closely to German culture? Moreover, what made them so desperate to do so that they swallowed evident contradictions, such as that between Verdi's putative German blood and his *völkisch* purity? After all, there was no shortage of Austro-German musicians who might confirm the Nazis' belief that – as Goebbels put it – 'Germany was the classical land of music'.³⁶ Nor did Verdi belong among those non-German

II: *Male Bodies: Psychoanalysing the White Terror*, trans. Stephen Conway (Cambridge, 1989), 130–41.

³⁴ Gerigk used this claim to criticise Italy's delayed adoption of racial legislation (which would eventually occur in 1938); 'Das Heroische', 892. On Gerigk, Rosenberg's Music Bureau and the *Lexikon der Juden in der Musik* (Berlin, 1940), see esp. Gerhard, "Indianermusik", 264–6; Willem de Vries, *Sonderstab Musik: Music Confiscation by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg under the Nazi Occupation of Western Europe* (Amsterdam, 1996), 35–9; and Pamela M. Potter, *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler's Reich* (New Haven and London, 1998), 142–7.

³⁵ Hans Hartleb, 'Giuseppe Verdi' in *Rigoletto*, programme note Volksoper Berlin (24 January 1935; *D-Bmm*), 4.

³⁶ Joseph Goebbels, 'Zehn Grundsätze deutschen Musikschaftens', *Amtliche Mitteilungen der Reichsmusikkammer* 5/11 (1938), 1; reprinted in Albrecht Dümling, 'The Target of Racial Purity:

Table 5.1: *Verdi and Wagner in German-language theatres: performance numbers, 1906–56*

	1906–7	1916–17	1926–7	1931–2	1932–3	1933–4	1934–5	1935–6
<i>Verdi</i>	713	780	1,439	1,420	1,265	1,280	1,468	1,497
(%)	(7.5)	(9.7)	(11.3)	(13.9)	(12.7)	(11.6)	(13.2)	(13.8)
<i>Wagner</i>	1,668	1,456	1,772	1,385	1,837	1,632	1,641	1,607
(%)	(17.5)	(18.2)	(13.9)	(13.5)	(18.5)	(14.8)	(14.7)	(14.8)
	1936–7	1937–8	1938–9	1939–40	1940–1	1941–2	1942–3	1956–7
<i>Verdi</i>	1,401	1,405	1,309	1,440	1,844	1,668	1,876	1,901
(%)	(12.8)	(13.1)	(11.8)	(17.7)	(16.3)	(12.2)	(13.5)	(13.0)
<i>Wagner</i>	1,515	1,402	1,327	1,154	1,237	1,183	1,047	821
(%)	(13.3)	(13.0)	(12.0)	(10.9)	(10.9)	(8.7)	(7.5)	(5.6)

composers who could (like Sibelius) enhance the reputation of the northern ‘master race’, or who (like Franck) were later aligned with Teutonic thought as natives of the annexed territories.³⁷

More revealing than party ideology, perhaps, are bare statistics. The previous chapter has shown how Verdi rose to the top of opera programmes shortly before the National-Socialist takeover. To be sure, his lead ended abruptly in early 1933. But the reversal towards Wagner proved only temporary, motivated as it was by the fiftieth anniversary of his death, the eagerness of theatre directors to comply with Hitler’s taste, and their fear of igniting the new ruler’s wrath with inappropriate choices.³⁸ As Table 5.1 demonstrates, the number of Verdi performances in all German-language theatres that maintained a permanent ensemble and orchestra remained relatively stable during the 1930s before increasing once more from 1939.³⁹

The “Degenerate Music” Exhibition in Düsseldorf, 1938’ in Etlin (ed.), *Art*, 55. A (problematic) translation is given in Jonathan Huener and Francis R. Nicosia (eds.), *The Arts in Nazi Germany: Continuity, Conformity, Change* (Oxford, 2006), 183–4.

³⁷ On the reception of the Finnish Sibelius, see Ruth-Maria Gleißner, *Der unpolitische Komponist als Politikum. Die Rezeption von Jean Sibelius im NS-Staat* (Frankfurt, 2002); on the appropriation of the Belgian-born French composer Franck, see Erik Levi, *Music in the Third Reich* (London, 1994), 239–40.

³⁸ On the temporary proliferation of German works and corresponding demands after the Nazi takeover, see Konrad Dussel, *Ein neues, ein heroisches Theater? Nationalsozialistische Theaterpolitik und ihre Auswirkungen in der Provinz* (Bonn, 1988), 257–8; and Levi, *Music*, 183–5.

³⁹ Data for the seasons in bold type are calculated from the operatic statistics by Wilhelm Altmann, published in *AMz* annually between 1928 and 1942, the others derive from Franz-Heinz Köhler’s periodic sampling in ‘Die Struktur der Spielpläne deutschsprachiger Opernbühnen von 1896 bis 1966’ (typescript Koblenz, 1968), 53–4. No detailed statistics for the years 1943–7 are available, and those in Dieter Hadamczik *et al.* (eds.), *Was spielten die Theater?*

The decline of Wagner performances after the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, of course, partly resulted from the state of war: the reduced musical forces, the worsening economy and, finally, the early curfew imposed during bomb raids were largely incompatible with his long and demanding music dramas. At the same time, audiences increasingly sought distraction in the theatre (as elsewhere). As well as Verdi, these circumstances also benefited Mozart, Puccini and even Lortzing, all of whom outdid Wagner in the 1941–2 season. Alongside lighter German works, what is more, Italian opera profited from the war-time ban on composers from enemy countries, which affected most of the French and Russian repertory. Additionally, recent foreign works tended to be avoided because they required payment of royalties abroad.⁴⁰

In light of all this, the rich operatic heritage of a politically friendly nation seemed like a treasure trove ready for further exploration. A number of Donizetti's works, for instance, reappeared on German stages, and the Rossini canon likewise expanded. Most propitious, though, was Verdi's oeuvre. On the one hand, *Il trovatore* and *Rigoletto* (occasionally joined by *La traviata* and *Aida*) remained among the twenty most-often performed operas throughout the Third Reich, next to such warhorses as *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Der Freischütz*, *Zar und Zimmermann*, *La Bohème* or *Tiefland*. On the other, although the number of German premieres gradually declined, many rediscoveries continued to make their way around German stages, some becoming part of the core repertory.⁴¹ Less successful works were still occasionally mounted, such as *La battaglia di Legnano* in Aachen in 1933 and *I masnadieri* in Schwerin and Hamburg in the following two years. As an upshot of all this, Verdi again capped Wagner. This time, challenged only by the Mozart commemorations in the winter of 1941–2 (and again in 1955–6), he remained in the lead for decades to come.

At least initially, Verdi's unabashed popularity was a thorn in the side of many party liners. During the first years of Hitler's regime, calls for an all or predominantly German repertory circulated widely. Yet such Germanising was more easily demanded than carried out. To be sure, the new leaders were swift in implementing what they called *Gleichschaltung*; but this affected

Bilanz der Spielpläne in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1947–1975 (Remagen-Rolandseck, 1978), 72–86, include only West Germany. The discrepancy between absolute performance figures and their share in the repertory in 1942–3 is due to the German theatres installed in annexed regions, which increased the overall number of performances.

⁴⁰ On war-time repertory politics, see Dussel, *Ein neues*, 247–9, 257–62; Boguslaw Drewniak, *Das Theater im NS-Staat. Szenarium deutscher Zeitgeschichte 1933–1945* (Düsseldorf, 1983), 328–35; and Köhler, 'Struktur', 52–6.

⁴¹ These data are again based on Altmann's statistics in *AMz*. Premieres of Verdi's most successfully revived operas are listed in Appendix 2.

mostly the administration. Following the Civil Service Law of April 1933, racially undesirable as well as politically suspect directorial personnel at German theatres were replaced with more conformist (if often inexperienced) staff. By the end of the year, more than half of Germany's opera houses were headed by a new Intendant, and a number of musical directors had also been sacked. With the establishment of the Reichskulturkammer, or Reich Culture Chamber, in November that year, moreover, Goebbels had forged an apparatus to control all cultural activity. Two of its seven sub-chambers – those for music and theatre – intervened in operatic matters; only approved individuals were henceforth allowed to be publicly active in opera, whether as composers, librettists, directors or conductors.⁴²

For all its legislative monopoly and executive machinery, however, the party did not (and could not) weed out theatrical repertoires as ruthlessly as it did the personnel. Its chief objective was the removal of operas by Jewish composers as well as 'degenerate' (*entartet*) works – particularly the Weimar-era *Zeitopern*, with their topical (often sexually explicit, internationally orientated or socially critical) plots, the influences of jazz and dance music, and their modernist musical language. True, attempts were also made to reduce a more general 'foreign infiltration'. In 1935, the Theatre Chamber issued a memorandum in favour of a German repertory, one that was expressly endorsed by the still-reigning president of the Music Chamber, Richard Strauss; yet the 275 operas by 118 German composers were merely recommended, not mandatory.⁴³ That same year, the head of the Propaganda Ministry's separate Theatre Department, Reichsdramaturg (or Reich Dramaturge) Rainer Schlösser, called for a maximum one-to-four ratio of foreign to German works. Yet only the 1933–4 season came close to reaching that goal.⁴⁴ It simply proved impossible to dispense with much foreign fare. As the conservative music bibliographer Wilhelm Altmann admitted, even the best German would not want to ban the operas of Verdi, Rossini, Auber and Puccini. Still, like Pfitzner earlier, he grumbled at dogged efforts 'to dig up the youthful works of Verdi', which he considered to be of only historical interest. Instead, he wanted to see 'unjustly forgotten or abandoned German operas' revived.⁴⁵ The Nazi regime, though, did not press the point further.

⁴² Administrative and personnel changes in opera are surveyed in Levi, *Music*, 170–94. On the Reichsmusikkammer, see Levi, *Music*, 24–34; and Steinweis, *Art*, 32–164.

⁴³ See Dussel, *Ein neues*, 252–7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 257–9; Boris von Haken, *Der 'Reichsdramaturg' Rainer Schlösser und die Musiktheater-Politik in der NS-Zeit* (Hamburg, 2007), esp. 139–65.

⁴⁵ Wilhelm Altmann, 'Für einen deutschen Opernspielplan', *Die Musik* 25/II (1933), 901–2. See also the review of *Ernani* signed E. R. in the daily of the German Labour Front, *Der Angriff* (14 February 1934). On Pfitzner, see Chapter 4.

equivalent of those blue eyes. Next to Shakespeare – who, in Nordic racial theory, also counted as Teutonic – Schiller was regularly declared a crucial stimulus for Verdi's development. A secondary-school textbook of 1942 even introduced Verdi as a composer who 'turned dramas by (among others) Schiller (Louise [sic] Miller, Don Carlos) and Shakespeare (Macbeth, Othello, Falstaff) into works for the musical stage and achieved successes also with a number of other operas': thus was Verdi's oeuvre rearranged according to putative Nordic input.⁷⁴

Still more important was a second point of contact with German culture: Wagner. As the preceding chapter has demonstrated, it was no longer fashionable to believe that the ageing Verdi had imitated his German adversary. Instead, many writers drew parallels between the two composers, seeing them as differentiated only by national background. Like Wagner, Verdi was often depicted as a musical warrior whose life had been a gigantic battle for both his country's unification and the purification of its national genre. What is more, Verdi had won this battle – or so it was argued – not just through his notorious ability to resist Wagnerism, but also because he had vanquished the 'theatricality and hollowness of grand opera, which had become overpowering in the Jew Meyerbeer'.⁷⁵ Notwithstanding his Parisian works and French influence, Verdi's artistic trajectory was tantamount – in composer Ernst Schliepe's words – to a raid against 'everything outmoded and degenerate in the then-dominating operatic style'.⁷⁶ This claim, as will become clear in the next section, was validated by the relative obscurity of Verdi's French works and the rebranding of *Don Carlos* (the most well known of these) as a mid-century Italian number opera. From this perspective, Verdi could be cast as an ally in Wagner's rejection of *grand opéra*. Their 'fateful alliance' was even associated with the fact that both were born in the same year, thus symbolising Italy's and Germany's 'cultural community' (*Kulturgemeinschaft*).⁷⁷ Yet the importance of this coalition arose not just from French music's long-despised cosmopolitanism: too revealing was the vocabulary applied to the

⁷⁴ [Robert] Oboussier, review of *Don Carlos* in *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (26 October 1936); K[arl] H. Ruppel, 'Verdi. Zum 125. Geburstag des Meisters am 10. Oktober', *Kölnische Zeitung* (8 October 1938); Adolf Strube (ed.), *Deutsche Musikkunde für die höhere Schule. Der zweite Theil: Für die 5. bis 8. Klasse* (Leipzig, 1942), 447–8. On Nazi appropriations of Schiller and Shakespeare, see esp. Georg Ruppelt, *Schiller im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland. Der Versuch einer Gleichschaltung* (Stuttgart, 1979); Hortmann, *Shakespeare*, 121; and John London, 'Non-German Drama in the Third Reich' in London (ed.) *Theatre under the Nazis*, 239–47.

⁷⁵ Wilhelm Herzog, 'Wagner – Verdi' in Herbert Gerigk (ed.), *Meister der Musik und ihre Werke* (Berlin, 1936), 195.

⁷⁶ Ernst Schliepe, *Formen der Oper* (Berlin, 1935), 13.

⁷⁷ Richard Petzoldt, 'Verdi auf der Schallplatte. Zum 125. Geburtstag des Meisters am 9. Oktober', *Skizzen* 12/10 (1938), 15–16; Willi Schmid, 'Wagner und Verdi', *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* (14/15 August 1933).

musical battle against the West. By 1939, Alsace-born Mozart scholar Erich Valentin tellingly saluted the former artistic antagonists as ‘educators and standard-bearers at the head of their people’: as cultural Führers who had become icons of the new political age. Two years later, Holl explained that they were ‘two of the mightiest pillars of that intellectual bridge which, in the middle of Europe, fatefully links the most fruitful cultural land of the south with that of the north’.⁷⁸

As will have become apparent, official approval of Verdi increased during the first decade of the Third Reich: up to a point, responses to the composer reflected diplomatic manoeuvres between Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. At first, a rapprochement between the countries had seemed unlikely. Fantasising about annexing German-speaking parts of Tyrol, Hitler believed the racially kindred Britain to be his dream ally, while Mussolini pondered treaties with Poland and Hungary. However, the two dictators cautiously drew together as they each became increasingly isolated internationally. In November 1936, Mussolini proclaimed the ‘Rome–Berlin Axis’; but the friendship between the two totalitarian states was still largely imaginary. Attempts ensued to foster bilateral relations, starting with exchanges in theatre and music. Such contacts had already been instigated by the two countries’ Propaganda Ministries in the form of guest performances, lectures and the programming of contemporary works. In November 1938, these efforts were formalised in a so-called *Kulturabkommen*, or ‘Cultural Agreement’. The tacit intention was to make the newly (and arduously) forged political tie between Germany and Italy appear to be artistically and historically pre-destined, and thus to lay the groundwork for a military bond. The concrete manifestation of Holl’s ‘intellectual bridge’ was, then, this military alliance of Italy and Germany, ratified in the ‘Pact of Steel’ of May 1939.⁷⁹

This background helps explain why nationalist resistance to Verdi’s popularity in Germany gradually faded: the budding political bonds with Italy rendered critique of its most successful opera composer inopportune and,

⁷⁸ Erich Valentin, ‘Verdi und Wagner’, *ZfM* 106 (1939), 136; Karl Holl, ‘Blick auf Verdi’ in *Die Jungfrau*, [1]: ‘zwei der mächtigsten Pfeiler jener geistigen Brücke, die inmitten Europas das fruchtbarste Kulturland des Südens mit dem fruchtbarsten Kulturlande des Nordens schicksalhaft verbindet’. Notably, Holl avoided such political paeans in the 1942 edition of his *Verdi*; perhaps he could not do likewise in the context of the *Giovanna* premiere. See also Alessandro Luzio, ‘Un asse artistico Verdi-Wagner’, *Corriere della sera* (26 January 1941).

⁷⁹ On the Axis pact and its cultural ramifications, see Jens Petersen, ‘Vorspiel zu “Stahlpakt” und Kriegsallianz: Das deutsch-italienische Kulturabkommen vom 23. November 1938’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 36 (1988), 41–77; Andrea Hoffend, *Zwischen Kultur-Achse und Kultukampf. Die Beziehungen zwischen ‘Drittem Reich’ und faschistischem Italien in den Bereichen Medien, Kunst, Wissenschaft und Rassenfragen* (Frankfurt, 1998), esp. 17–34, 325–55; and Rauscher, *Hitler und Mussolini*, 225–51.

instead, offered his best chance yet of being absorbed into Germany's core culture, even of entering its new 'official' sphere. Hence the waning of all dubious comments on either Verdi or Italy; hence the fact that updated readings à la Baresel became more pronounced in the late 1930s. Furthermore, the previously annoying fact that an Italian composer was so frequently performed now seemed advantageous: it showcased Germans' interest in their military ally.⁸⁰ This is not to say that every production of, and article on, Verdi was politically motivated. But the pro-Italian climate undoubtedly facilitated public appreciation of Italian opera and its flagship composer. As Joseph Gregor announced in 1941: 'Those who emulate [Verdi] live not in the past, but among the best [composers and citizens] of today'.⁸¹ Politics once more tightened its grip on German Verdi reception. But this time it did so in unusually explicit and favourable ways. Never, indeed, had Verdi's value for German cultural policy been more pronounced.

Don Carlos revisited

Performances offered further opportunities to demonstrate Verdi's congeniality with Nazi *Weltanschauung* and foreign relations. As Giselher Schubert has argued, National-Socialist conceptions of *völkisch* music relied exclusively on aesthetic criteria of 'function' rather than 'substance' – which is to say that ideological significance in music was achieved only 'by means of staging, contextualizing, transforming a work and its production'.⁸² Depending as it did on a literal process of staging, opera thus offered a dual field for politicisation. With foreign works, this field was even wider: since they were usually performed in German translations, directors could tamper with plots on the textual level, particularly in the case of lesser-known operas. At the same time, stagings were more difficult to police than post-mortem exegeses of a composer's character or style. Even the most ruthless 'coordination' of theatrical personnel did not automatically align productions with Nazi

⁸⁰ This was explicated by Carl Werckshagen, 'Die Kriegsaufgabe der Hamburgischen Staatsoper', *Hamburgisches Jahrbuch für Theater und Musik* 1941 (Hamburg, 1941), 73–4. On the fragile sympathies for Italy, see Jens Petersen, 'Die Organisation der deutschen Propaganda in Italien 1939–1943', *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven* 70 (1990), 513–55; with respect to musical politics, Hoffend, *Kultur-Achse*, 238–56. Pro-Italian developments in theatre are surveyed in London, 'Non-German Drama', 224–8.

⁸¹ Gregor, *Kulturgeschichte*, 346.

⁸² Giselher Schubert, 'The Aesthetic Premises of a Nazi Conception of Music' in Kater and Riethmüller (eds.), *Music and Nazism*, 64, 66; also Carl Dahlhaus, 'Politische Implikationen der Operndramaturgie. Zu einigen deutschen Opern der Dreißiger Jahre' in Mahling and Wiesmann (eds.), *Bericht Bayreuth* 1981, 149.

few performances by the late 1930s; *Simon Boccanegra* gained traction only after having been treated by Swarowsky and Krauss in 1940.⁹⁸ Verdi's most popular works – *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore* and *La traviata* – meanwhile asserted their lead with approximately three hundred performances per season; and they offered little in the way of mass processions or topical allusions.

These data confirm the need for a closer look at individual productions and their reception – as in the case of *Don Carlos* – in order to estimate an opera's ideological resonances as well as possible links with contemporary images of Verdi. No work illustrates this better than *Nabucco*. On the one hand, Verdi's legendary early success was key for readings of him as a political revolutionary; as we shall see in the Epilogue, this aspect could be exploited even on German stages. On the other hand, racial considerations thwarted *Nabucco*'s suitability in a Nazi climate. At a time when even oratorios by Handel (that 'repatriated' German composer of heroic *Gemeinschaftsmusik*) were suspect when based on Old Testament texts, an opera about the liberation of the Hebrew people could hardly seem opportune, especially as their victory involved the tyrant's conversion to their religion.⁹⁹ In addition (as mentioned in Chapter 4), the 1928 revival of *Nabucco* in Mannheim had received only slight acclaim, partly on the grounds of a putatively flawed libretto.

In 1940, Julius Kapp – dramaturge of the Berlin Staatsoper and a party member since 1933 – attempted a new version. During the 1930s, he had become a prominent adapter of little-known operas, Verdian and otherwise. His 1932 *Vêpres siciliennes*, for instance, freed the plot from 'historical ballast' and reduced it to the 'three generally human and timeless conflicts' that supposedly dominated it: the tensions between victors and suppressed people, father and son, love and duty.¹⁰⁰ In 1934, Kapp produced *Ernani* with a happy ending, achieved by complete omission of the fourth act (some of its music replaced 'weaker' numbers in the earlier acts). Three years later, he deprived *La battaglia di Legnano* of its second act and neutralised the battle between Lombardy and the Germans such that a new title was needed: *Das heilige*

⁹⁸ These data derive from Altmann's annual statistics, particularly the one for the 1941–2 season, *AMz* 69 (1942), 177–8.

⁹⁹ See Katja Roters, *Bearbeitungen von Händel-Oratorien im Dritten Reich* (Halle, 1999); and Pamela M. Potter, 'The Politicization of Handel and his Oratorios in the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, and the Early Years of the German Democratic Republic', *Musical Quarterly* 85 (2001), 317–25.

¹⁰⁰ Julius Kapp, 'Meine Neubearbeitung des Werkes', *Blätter der Staatsoper [Berlin]*, 12/12 (1932), 3, and *Aus dem Reiche der Oper. Ein Blick hinter die Kulissen* (Berlin and Wiesbaden, 1949), 84–5. In the 1930s Kapp also tackled non-Verdian operas such as *Les Troyens*, *Les Huguenots*, *Donna Diana*, *Rienzi*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Dalibor* and *The Queen of Spades*.

Feuer – namely, ‘the holy fire’ of ‘self-sacrifice for the fatherland’.¹⁰¹ Small wonder that, in the case of *Nabucco*, Kapp’s main goal was to ‘de-Judaise’ the libretto.¹⁰² Moving the plot some twenty years forward, he started not with the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar’s capture of Jerusalem in 587 BC but with his quarrel with Memphis in 568. The Hebrews were transformed into Egyptians who worship their Sun-God. Zaccaria became Amon, High Priest of Memphis, his sister Anna the priestess Amenerdis, and Ismaele morphed into Psammetichus (III), son of the Egyptian king Amasis. True to his principles, Kapp additionally marginalised the religious conflict in favour of lovers caught in the firing line between warring nations. Apart from standard musical cuts, the last act suffered the most extensive surgery. Kapp’s Nabucco converts to just ‘a’ god; in the second scene – introduced by the first two sections (in reverse order) of the third-act ballet from *Macbeth* – Fenena’s *preghiera* is turned into a love duet;¹⁰³ in place of the crumbling Baal statue, Nabucco has Abigaille stabbed; and the protagonist, praising the triumph of love, proclaims his credo not to fight about gods ‘and what they are called, and which is the true one’; rather, he has everyone hail ‘the highest omnipotence’ (*Allgewalt*).¹⁰⁴ Instead of Abigaille’s now-redundant concluding scene, Kapp repeated the first-act finale, which had been curtailed in its original place: the opera thus ended with a choral homage to the king.

¹⁰¹ *Ernani. Oper in 4 Bildern (nach Victor Hugo) von Giuseppe Verdi. Völlige Neufassung für die deutsche Bühne von Julius Kapp* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1934); *Das heilige Feuer. Oper in drei Akten. Unter Benutzung von Cammaranos Libretto ‘Die Schlacht von Legnano’ für die deutsche Opernbühne neu bearbeitet von Julius Kapp. Musik von Giuseppe Verdi* (Berlin, 1937), esp. [3–4]. The former opera was premiered at the Staatsoper Berlin on 12 December 1934, the latter in Bremen on 6 March 1937; both were taken up in Chemnitz in 1937 and 1938, respectively.

¹⁰² Julius Kapp, ‘Verdi’s Oper “Nabucco”’, *Theater-Zeitung des Preußischen Staatstheaters Kassel*, 1939/40, no. 9, 6. This opera had been subject to large-scale cuts and religious censorship from early on. Omitting Abigaille’s dying scene, for instance, was standard in Italian theatres; see Roger Parker’s ‘Introduction’ in *Giuseppe Verdi: Nabucodonosor (Nabucco). Dramma lirico in quattro parti di Temistocle Solera*, ed. Parker (= *The Works of Giuseppe Verdi, I/III*) (Chicago and Milan, 1988), xviii.

¹⁰³ The third phrase is sung by Ismaele (alias Psammetich), the concluding one by both in unison, and the entire aria is transposed to A-flat major.

¹⁰⁴ *G. Verdi: Nabucco (Nebukadnezar). Oper in 4 Akten (7 Bildern). Neue Fassung für die deutsche Opernbühne von Julius Kapp. Klavierauszug* (Berlin, 1939), 217. Cuts in this version affected especially arias or arioso passages, as well as parts of ensembles, the entire marziale *banda* section at the beginning of the first finale and the brief equivalent passage in the last part’s prelude. Otherwise, Zaccaria’s prayer in Act 1, scene 1, the repetition of Abigaille’s cabaletta in Act 2, scene 1, and large chunks of Nabucco’s and Abigaille’s cabaletta in Act 3, scene 1 (including the section in parallel motion) had been cut. Apparently considered to be musically repetitive and to hold up the action, such passages generally tended to be excised in Verdi adaptations. Kapp also liberally changed note values and reattributed vocal lines between characters.

This scenario's whiff of the contemporary could hardly be missed. Nabucco's portrayal as a humane, forgiving leader chimed with the Führer cult but could also be read as wishful thinking; the plea for a single (and abstract) faith resonated with the Nazis' war on Germany's confessional division and their attempt to forge a unified church of 'German Christians'.¹⁰⁵

Giant sets reinforced this sense of topicality, their massive stone squares and imposing, unadorned ashlar constructions bearing all the marks of contemporary architecture: the Memphis portal might even have evoked associations with the recently finished Reich Chancellery by Hitler's favourite architect Albert Speer, complete with neo-antique pylons, simple façade and the hint of a spread eagle above the entrance (Figure 5.1).¹⁰⁶ Yet for all its 'political correctness', Kapp's venture did not exactly raise the roof at the Kassel Staatstheater, where (rather than at Berlin's prestigious Staatsoper) it premiered: it was repeated one single time.¹⁰⁷ Several commentators agreed that the black-and-white characters and the story of suppression needed revision, emotionally remote as they allegedly were from audiences in the 'new Germany'. However, optimism about the music was guarded. One critic considered the chorus numbers of the captive people particularly embarrassing because of the contrast between serious text and the trivial, 'uninhibited joy of music-making' (*bedenkenlose Musizierfreudigkeit*). Even the Verdi biographer Holl, who in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* most vocally disclosed Kapp's multiple 'displacements', thought the opera of merely historical interest.¹⁰⁸

Worse, Kapp's efforts were not necessarily welcomed by the Nazi authorities. In 1935, the Music Chamber had expressly discouraged the retexting of Handel's Old Testament oratorios, although to little avail. Peter Raabe, who succeeded Strauss as president that year, was a declared advocate of *Werktreue*. He argued vehemently against popularising operas and operettas by 'defiling' them, because it was difficult to set rules for adaptations. If old works needed manipulations to be appreciated, he reasoned, this was a sign

¹⁰⁵ See Evans, *Third Reich*, 220–33.

¹⁰⁶ The sets were by Richard Panzer, director was Franz Ulbrich. For images of the Chancellery and other 'official' Nazi architecture in Berlin, see Steven Lehrer, *The Reich Chancellery and Führerbunker Complex: An Illustrated History of the Seat of the Nazi Regime* (Jefferson, NC, 2006), esp. 78–84.

¹⁰⁷ Of Kapp's Verdi adaptations, only *Les Vêpres* and *Ernani* premiered in Berlin, and none was published by Ricordi. Although the firm had been interested in *Nabucco*, Kapp withdrew, possibly because Ricordi suspected him of fraud. See the fragmentary Leipzig correspondence in *I-Mr*, 1938/9: 9/29, 302, 495; 10/120; 13/423–4.

¹⁰⁸ Bartholomäus Ständer, 'Verdis "Nabucco" in neuer Fassung', *AMz* 67 (1940), 19–20; Karl Holl in *Signale* 98 (1940), 62–3, and *Frankfurter Zeitung* (11 January 1940). More optimistic was *Musik-Woche* 8 (1940), 20, and – of course – the promotional flyer (*D-Mhsa*, Staatstheater 1073).

opera and drama it was pieces with Jewish topics by canonic masters that, side-by-side with harmless mainstream items, were initially tried.

This was the context in which *Nabucco* appeared in April 1935, as the first Verdi opera to be mounted by Berlin's Kulturbund: a situation which rendered its story as apposite as it was problematic in the Third Reich's public sphere. The same was true of the 1928 translation by the Jewish conductor Leo Schottlaender. In a leading Jewish daily, he argued that the opera was based on the 'idea of freedom, which uplifts the subjugated [people] in faithful trust in the Jewish God's goodness'; and he emphasised the libretto's religiousness as well as Verdi's empathy for the victims. Nor did Schottlaender shy away from reprinting his free rendition of that celebrated chorus 'Va pensiero', whose evocation of the Jewish homeland was timely indeed: during the 1930s, many German Jews, not just Zionists, emigrated to Palestine, and the Palestine Symphony Orchestra (founded in 1935) drew considerably on musicians from the Kulturbund.¹¹⁴ More pertinent still was Schottlaender's translation of the chorus's final stanza, which departed furthest from the Italian text:

Singe, Harfe, in Tönen der Klage
 Von dem Schicksal geschlagner Hebräer.
 Als Verkünd'rin des Ew'gen uns sage:
 'Bald wird Juda vom Joch des Tyrannen befreit.'

[Sing, harp, in sounds of lament, / Of the fate of defeated Hebrews. / Tell us, you enunciator of the eternal: / 'Judea will soon be liberated from the tyrant's yoke.'][¹¹⁵

Given the rigid censorship of Jewish publications, there was no clearer way to drive home to readers (and listeners) both the opera's topicality and their own precarious situation. Schottlaender's by-and-large dramaturgically faithful version further underscored the notion of Jewish deliverance in its last scene: Abigaille enters during Nabucco's speech and is then struck down by lightning (not poison). Only after she has been granted redemption does the king proceed with his worship. This allows the opera to conclude with the grand

¹¹⁴ Between 1933 and 1939, a comparatively large group of c. 52,000 German Jews emigrated to Palestine; Evans, *Third Reich*, 555–60. On the foundation of the future Israel Philharmonic, see Levi, *Music*, 54. Schottlaender himself was at this time living in Switzerland.

¹¹⁵ Leo Schottlaender, 'Va pensiero. Einige Worte zum "Nebukadnezar"', *Jüdische Rundschau* (29 March 1935). The Italian text is less specific in its inspiration of courage: 'O simile di Solima ai fatti / Traggi un suono di crudo lamento, / O t'ispiri il Signore un concerto / Che ne infonda al partire virtù!' ('Either, similar to the fate of Jerusalem, / give forth a sound of harsh lamentation, / or let the Lord inspire you with harmonies / that will infuse our suffering with courage!'); cited from Roger Parker, *Leonora's Last Act: Essays in Verdian Discourse* (Princeton, 1997), 24–5.

a cappella chorus in honour of Jehovah, rounded off by the (transposed) orchestral chords of the original ending.¹¹⁶

Schottlaender, in short, underscored everything Kapp had suppressed; as did Singer, in a production that had to make do with a single set and few backdrops. The burden of the staging was borne by the costumes and props, which contrasted the ‘pomp of the old-Babylonian rulers’ (rendered by colourful pseudo-exotic dress) with the Jewish masses.¹¹⁷ The latter were clad in simple long caftans, the men sporting long beards and headgear. Their religious identity was bolstered during the Act 3 prophecy, in which Zaccaria emphatically raised the tablets with the Ten Commandments (here indicated by Hebrew ciphers). In the final tableau, the image of Baal gave way to menorahs, and all lifted their arms in collective prayer (Figure 5.2). The (exclusively Jewish) press acknowledged this powerful Hebrew colouring. But some critics viewed the work sceptically – as less than fully-fledged Verdi and, hence, a ‘musically dubious compromise’ with the political situation. As in Kassel five years later, banalities in the music were mentioned, and one commentator felt disappointed by the ‘famous chorus of lament by the Hebrew slaves’, which he found less effective than other choral numbers. Praise went predominantly to the performance.¹¹⁸ Henceforth, Kulturbund audiences preferred *Un ballo* and *Rigoletto*, the staples of ordinary German theatres. When Hinkel banned all German works (save some of Handel’s biblical oratorios), Verdi was the preferred choice among the remaining canonic repertory. In October 1938, the Kulturbund honoured his 125th birthday with a production of *La traviata* – the last opera to be fully staged by the league; a concert of Verdi extracts in June 1941 became the Kulturbund’s last-ever performance. By September that year it was dissolved, and most of the remaining artists ended up in camps.¹¹⁹

These two productions of *Nabucco* reveal the ideological extremes to which Verdi’s operas could be stretched in Nazi Germany. As a politically friendly foreigner, the composer was both accepted by ‘official’ culture and

¹¹⁶ Temistocle Solera. *Nabucco (Nebukadnezar)*. Oper in vier Akten. Frei ins Deutsche übertragen von Leo Schottlaender. Musik von Giuseppe Verdi [Klavierauszug] (Milan, 1957), 241–50; a slightly different text is in the eponymous libretto (Munich, n.d.). Anna was given the more typically Jewish name Rahel, and ‘Viva’ translated as ‘Hoch’. The ending, after Abigaille’s incised dying scene, seems to have resembled nineteenth-century Italian practices, as described by Parker, ‘Introduction’, xviii.

¹¹⁷ Thus according to the stage designer Heinz Condell, cited in Stephan Stompor, *Jüdisches Musik- und Theaterleben unter dem NS-Staat*, ed. Andor Izsák (Hanover, 2001), 46. For further production photographs, see *ibid.*, 46–7; and *Geschlossene Vorstellung*, 123.

¹¹⁸ Reviews in *Schild* (12 April 1935) and *Gemeindeblatt* (14 April 1935). These and other, more favourable, ones are found in *D-Bda*, Kulturbund 2.63.2, M 5/73–6.

¹¹⁹ A complete performance list is contained in *Geschlossene Vorstellung*, 376–425; for the ban on German repertory, see *Geschlossene Vorstellung*, 119.

Labour Front.¹²³ As principal conductor and Intendant, Goebbels appointed ardent party member Erich Orthmann, a former director of the Mannheim opera (where he had conducted the local premieres of *Nabucco* and *Don Carlos*). At the Volksoper, Orthmann initially offered stalwarts such as *Fidelio*, *Der Freischütz* and *Tosca*, alongside the rarer *Barbier von Bagdad* by Peter Cornelius, Auber's *Fra Diavolo* or even – at the time of the Olympics – Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. Of Verdi's oeuvre he chose *Un ballo*, *Otello* (including the first performance in Germany of the 1894 Paris ballet) and *Il trovatore*. However, when Orthmann chanced on a vocal score of *Giovanna d'Arco*, he promptly realised that this work could add glamour to the upcoming Verdi commemoration and thus cement the reputation of his house as 'one of the first theatres of the Reich'. Insisting on the opera's 'outstanding musical value', he urged Ricordi to dig out the performance materials, which were believed to have gone missing.¹²⁴ The tight schedule did not deter the propaganda machinery. Widely billed as a 'German first performance' (*Giovanna* had previously appeared in German lands as part of an 1857 Vienna *stagione*), the venture was hailed as an epoch-making 'cultural deed of the utmost importance'. The Ministry organised a special press conference, and the theatre was decked out with the German and Italian colours. The presence of artistic and political notables, ten members of the Italian embassy, twenty Italian journalists and critics from all over Germany made the premiere a gala evening whose foreign-political dimension could not be mistaken.¹²⁵

Apart from the political symbolism of the revival, the work itself offered a remarkable combination of ideologically potent messages. Verdi's first Schiller opera, *Giovanna* was served up under the drama's original title, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*. The plot centred on patriotism, heroism and rallying calls to battle, as well as demonstrating the 'Führer principle', that cornerstone of Nazi ideology and the Hitler cult. But the frosting on the cultural-political cake was the parallel between the opera's subject and the current military situation. In the summer of 1940, German troops had taken the strategic town of Orléans, an acquisition celebrated thus in Goebbels's

¹²³ Volksoper Berlin, *Aufbau und Entwicklung* (Berlin, [1938]), 6; Klaus Geitel, 'Die Jahre der "Stullenoper". Das Theater des Westens zwischen 1933 und 1945' in *100 Jahre Theater des Westens: 1896–1996* (Berlin, 1996), 155–84. On the Labour Front and Strength Through Joy organisations, see Evans, *Third Reich*, 455–76.

¹²⁴ Promotional flyer in *D-Bmm*. The Volksoper's then-choirmaster Ernst Senff confirmed this motivation in a letter to me of 9 December 2000. Ricordi dispatched whatever remained of the parts, many of them in manuscript, as late as November 1940; *I-Mr*, esp. 1940/41: 3/430–1; 5/81, 164, 491; 8/114–6.

¹²⁵ Flyer in *D-Bmm*; reviews by Alfred Brüggemann, *Musica d'oggi* 13 (1941), 114–16; Fritz Brust, *Das Reich* (2 February 1941); and C. P., *Corriere della sera* (28 January 1941).

diaries: 'We are in Orléans, [we] crossed the Loire. The virgin of Orléans, then, has been of no help. [...] A great historical moment!'¹²⁶ With this part of France occupied, Germany could claim for herself the assistance of Joan of Arc, at least as an icon of martial potency and anti-British propaganda – a coincidence the *Völkischer Beobachter* eagerly exploited.¹²⁷

Orthmann and his young dramaturge and stage director Hans Hartleb were not ones to pass up this opportunity. They amplified topical allusions in their free and prosaic translation, which avoided harking back to Schiller and did away with rhymes and text repetitions. Rather, additional text and stage directions sharpened the connections to contemporary military campaigns. Their characters shouted 'Heil' whenever possible, fiercely hated their English enemy, conjured the 'mission of battle', believed in 'proud victory' and proclaimed unconditional readiness to fight 'loyally and humbly until death'. All glorifying references to France were hidden under glowing invocations of the 'fatherland'.¹²⁸ Judging from surviving photographs, the staging fortified this political timeliness, despite pseudo-historical costumes and realistic sets (Figures 5.3 and 5.4). Against backdrops of war-torn landscapes, the prologue and first two acts featured crowds of country folk and troupes with shining armour, streaming banners and swords raised with the outstretched right arm of the Nazis' ubiquitous 'German greeting'. The final tableau glorified the heroine's last moments: multiple flags framed the scene, women knelt in prayer, soldiers formed a neatly aligned guard of honour, and beams of light suggested the angelically white-clad maiden's imminent journey heavenwards. Berlin's Giovanna had a heroic death if ever there was one.

In all, it was easy to decode this Verdi production as a political statement: a display of German military power and ideology; an example of high morals for troops and 'home front' alike; a plea for fraternity with the occupied French; an effort to foster undiluted sympathy for Italy. In spite

¹²⁶ Elke Fröhlich (ed.), *Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels, I: Aufzeichnungen 1923–41*, 9 vols., VIII: April–November 1940 (Munich, 1988), 179 (entry of 18 June 1940).

¹²⁷ H[ermann] K[iller], review in *VB* (26 January 1941). Ideologists likewise promoted Schiller's play, performances of which had declined since the onset of war, as anti-English propaganda; see Eicher, 'Spielplanstrukturen', 329–30; and Georg Ruppelt, *Hitler gegen Tell. Die 'Gleich- und Ausschaltung' Friedrich Schillers im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland* (Hameln, 2005), 22–4. The continuing French cult of Jean of Arc was tolerated by the German occupiers; Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation, 1940–1945* (London, 2002), 24–5, 166–7.

¹²⁸ Giuseppe Verdi, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (Giovanna d'Arco). Oper in einem Vorspiel und drei Aufzügen nach der gleichnamigen romantischen Tragödie Friedrich von Schillers von Temistocle Solera. Frei ins Deutsche übertragen von Erich Orthmann und Hans Hartleb (Milan and Leipzig, [1941]). See also Hans Striehl, 'Deutsche Verdi-Übersetzungen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Opernübersetzung', PhD thesis, University of Heidelberg (1944), 46–7.

German Verdi celebration: a ‘Verdi week’ at the Munich Staatsoper between 2 and 7 February 1941, directed by Krauss on behalf of Goebbels. Few documents concerning this festival have survived.¹³¹ But the choice of Munich for the Reich’s official Verdi celebration was clearly deliberate. The ‘Capital of the Movement’ had also been anointed ‘Capital of German Art’, its new House of German Art inaugurated in 1937 with a three-day festival including concerts, opera, theatre, dance and a pageant themed ‘Two Thousand Years of German Culture’. Eager to strengthen Munich further in comparison with both Berlin and the despised Austrian capital, Hitler harboured grandiose plans for its post-war future, including the construction of the world’s largest opera house; Krauss was to play an important role in this fantasy.¹³² Having been made Intendant of the Munich Staatsoper (in addition to being its musical director), he was the most powerful man in the German operatic world. Enjoying Hitler’s special protection, he had the freedom to pursue such ambitious projects as the extension of the annual opera festivals and the scenic and musical renovation of canonic works. Krauss systematically turned Verdi into the ‘fourth pillar’ of his repertory, alongside Wagner, Mozart and Richard Strauss.¹³³ Following his new *Aida* and *Don Carlos* came *Simon Boccanegra* in 1940, again newly translated by Swarowsky and directed by Hartmann. The production prompted the influential conservative local critic Wilhelm Zentner to herald a ‘Munich Verdi renaissance’: one that – unlike Werfel’s earlier, purportedly ‘disastrous’ activity – aimed to rid the works of ‘all outwardly operatic’ and falsely romantic ballast in order to throw into relief the ‘musical tragedy’ in its truly dramatic ‘original shape’ (we can glean what this meant from the above discussion of *Don Carlos*).¹³⁴ Krauss affirmed to achieve this renewal primarily by means of modern translations. These were to be closely tied to the music yet also digestible on their own; the

¹³¹ Only isolated documents are extant at *D-Mhsa* among the files of Krauss’s Munich directorship, which (unlike the archives of the Berlin Propaganda Ministry) have not otherwise suffered heavy losses. Whether someone was interested in their disappearance remains anyone’s guess. Some further materials are in *D-Bba*, R 55/20398, 133–45; for reviews, see Pfauntsch, ‘Verdi’, 163–76.

¹³² On Krauss’s Munich regime, see Oliver Rathkolb, *Führertreu und gottbegnadet. Künstlereliten im Dritten Reich* (Vienna, 1991), 106–13; and Michael H. Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich* (Oxford, 1997), 46–55. Hitler’s operatic plans are detailed in Spotts, *Hitler*, 284–6. For the inauguration of the House of German Art, see *München – ‘Hauptstadt der Bewegung’*. *Ausstellung im Münchner Stadtmuseum 22. Oktober 1994 bis 27. März 1995* (Munich, 1993), 310–30; and Large, *Where Ghosts Walked*, 258–65; on Munich’s theatrical scene, Michael Hermann, ‘Kompetenzrivalität und Selbstinszenierung. Theater in der “Hauptstadt der Deutschen Kunst”’ in Hans-Michael Körner and Jürgen Schläder, *Münchner Theatergeschichtliches Symposium 2000* (Munich, 2000), 189–210.

¹³³ Wilhelm Zentner, ‘Die Münchner Staatsoper unter Clemens Krauß’, *ZfM* 108 (1941), 643–8.

¹³⁴ Zentner in *ZfM* 107 (1940), 611; ‘Die Münchner Staatsoper’; and ‘Verdis “Simone Boccanegra” neu übersetzt in München’, *Signale* 98 (1940), 331–2. More reviews are to be found in Pfauntsch, ‘Verdi’, 121–38.

translators would intervene dramaturgically where necessary to adapt the stories to contemporary German sensitivities. In addition, Krauss argued against the foregrounding of *Regie*, advocating instead disciplined performances and musical ‘corrections’ of the score.¹³⁵

At the Propaganda Ministry’s Theatre Department, Krauss’s endeavours were – like Kapp’s – not universally appreciated. Despite endorsing his adaptation of *Simon Boccanegra* beforehand, for instance, Lange advised Krauss retrospectively that he should have used a new text by the director of the Leipzig Reich Radio, Carl Stueber, which Ricordi had recently published. If good translations existed, he opined, theatres ought not to produce their own, lest they give rise to ‘textual confusion’.¹³⁶ In other words, Krauss jeopardised the successful surveillance of operatic versions in use. Yet he refuted such fears by insisting on the ‘excellent’ quality and ‘pioneering effects’ of the Munich translations; if Ricordi were to publish them (as the firm in fact considered in some cases), the problem would be solved.¹³⁷

His authority thus confirmed, Krauss and his team unveiled *Falstaff* for the opening of the ‘Verdi week’, adding another success to what was meant some day to comprise Verdi’s ‘entire oeuvre in dignified dress’.¹³⁸ Their already legendary earlier productions followed. With stellar casts, Krauss’s performances were greeted nationwide by critics and politicians alike as a demonstration of outstanding cultural power at a time of war. They were apparently intended to exhibit Munich’s ‘cultivation of Verdi’ (*Verdi-Pflege*) as exemplary: theatre directors from throughout the Reich seem to have been invited.¹³⁹ A much larger purpose, though, was unveiled in the programme

¹³⁵ See Clemens Krauss, [preface to] *Simone Boccanegra. Oper in einem Vorspiel und 3 Akten von Francesco Maria Piave. Musik von Giuseppe Verdi. Einrichtung der Münchener Staatsoper*.

Vollständige neue deutsche Übertragung von Hans Swarowsky (Munich, [1940]), 3–4; and his draft essay on Verdi (presumably for the 1941 festival) in Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, F 59, 70/36. Such means were also applied to other foreign-language operas.

¹³⁶ Theatre Department to Krauss on 3 January 1939 and 12 September 1940, in *D-Mhsa*, Staatstheater 14691 (Lange’s manuscript of the latter is in *D-Bba*, R 55/20398, 119). Next to *Simon Boccanegra*, Stueber also translated *La traviata* and more recent Italian operas for Ricordi.

¹³⁷ Krauss to the Reichsdramaturg, for the attention of [Hannes] Keppler, on 16 September 1940, *D-Mhsa*, Staatstheater 14691, and *D-Bba*, R 55/20398, 122–3. In the event, Ricordi published Swarowsky’s *Falstaff* only because this opera was still in copyright and the Propaganda Ministry backed the ‘Verdi week’, for which *Falstaff* had already been announced; letters of 18 and 22 January and Krauss’s response of 20 January 1941 in *D-Mhsa*, Staatsoper 826 and 1763.

¹³⁸ [Otto Hödel], ‘Verdi auf dem Spielplan der Bayerischen Staatsoper’, *Dramaturgische Blätter [Staatsoper München]* 1940/1, no. 8–9: *Verdi-Sonderheft*, 95. As with *Aida*, sets for *Falstaff* were by Ludwig Sievert.

¹³⁹ *D-Bba*, R 55/20398, 136 and 138, has letters of thanks by the Theater der Mark Brandenburg and the Stadttheater Liegnitz. For the official recognition by Goebbels, who had no time to attend, see *D-Bba*, R 55/20398, 147; and Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, F 59, 70/55. The casts included Georg Hann, Hans Hotter, Hans Hermann Nissen, Karl Ostertag, Julius Patzak and Viorica Ursuleac. Goebbels in particular considered Krauss’s Munich productions as

book. The first page parades a photo of Führer and Duce, side-by-side; the next one shows Goebbels and Hitler flanking the laughing Italian ambassador, Dino Alfieri, who was honorary patron of the ‘Verdi week’; then comes Adolf Wagner, Gauleiter (or District Leader) of Munich and chief organiser of the week; finally, the two Axis foreign ministers, Count Galeazzo Ciano and Joachim von Ribbentrop, salute the spectators. Only after all this is Verdi first mentioned. The message is clear: this was explicit Axis propaganda, in line with Goebbels’s recent command ‘to speak up for Italy even more strongly’ in the face of growing doubts about its military achievements and waning support for Mussolini even among Italians.¹⁴⁰ Hence the playing of both national anthems and the presence of many uniforms at the festival. Hence a ceremony featuring Verdi’s string quartet and the Italian musicologist Fausto Torrefranca: that notorious detractor of Puccini’s internationalism explained that Verdi had ‘decisively determined the fate of opera as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*’, praised him as an archetype for the current ‘historically great’ times, and thanked the Germans for having initiated the present-day ‘Verdi renaissance’. Hence a private reception at which – for the benefit of the invited party officials, Italian dignitaries, Wehrmacht members and journalists – the Sicilian professor of moral philosophy Francesco Orestano discussed the ‘miracle of Verdi’ in terms of his human qualities, while the Munich State Secretary Max Koeglmeier spelt out the significance of the event: it testified to the mission of the ‘two greatest cultural nations’ to defend European art and ethos.¹⁴¹ In this case, it was hard to ignore the growing politicisation of Verdi, which transformed even pre-existing productions into Axis advertisements.

This ‘Verdi week’ was not, of course, the only musical event officially launched in support of the Axis alliance. As Andrea Hoffend has demonstrated, music was at the heart of pro-Italian propaganda, with Italian guest performances and prolonged festivals a regular feature of the theatrical

models of the ‘representational style of the times’; see Jürgen Schläder, ‘Die politische Instrumentalisierung des Musiktheaters. Historiographie zwischen Dokumentation und ästhetischer Interpretation’ in Körner and Schläder (eds.), *Symposium 2000*, 224–45.

¹⁴⁰ *Verdi-Sonderheft; Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels I, IX: Dezember 1940–Juli 1941* (Munich, 1998), 60 (entry of 20 December 1940); on his coeval concerns about Italy, see *Tagebücher*, 111 and 114. For explicit readings of the ‘Verdi week’ as Axis propaganda, see H. A. T., ‘Die Achse’, *Münchener Mosaik* 4 (1941), 49–50; and Wilhelm Zentner, ‘Verdi und München’, *Münchener Mosaik* 4 (1941), 51–4. On contemporary relations with Italy, see Petersen, ‘Die Organisation’, esp. 517; and Rauscher, *Hitler und Mussolini*, 417–66.

¹⁴¹ See Pfauntsch, ‘Verdi’, 146; and the reports by A. H. in *Neue freie Volks-Zeitung* (4 and 5 February 1941); Gertrud Runge, ‘Verdis Weg zum Musikdrama’, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (5 February 1941); ‘Verdi und Wagner’, *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* (7 February 1941); and Francesco Orestano, ‘Jubiläumsrede zur Verdi-Woche in München 1941’, *Deutsche Musikkultur* 6 (1941/2), 97–107. On Torrefranca, see Alexandra Wilson, *The Puccini Problem: Opera, Nationalism, and Modernity* (Cambridge, 2007), 125–54.

landscape after the *Kulturabkommen*.¹⁴² Yet a week-long festival honouring a single foreign composer was exceptional: the Nazis usually reserved such cycles for German masters. Just how propagandistically charged the preparations of the Munich Verdi festival must have been can be inferred from one further instance of National-Socialist appropriation – a case that also illustrates how the composer's usefulness steadily declined along with the growing military débâcle and Italy's fading prestige.

Between 4 and 11 April 1943, a Verdi cycle was organised in Vienna to mark the centenary of the first ever appearance there – and in the Reich – of a Verdi opera. The patrons were once more Alfieri and Goebbels; but this festival was hosted by the young and ambitious Baldur von Schirach, the former leader of the Hitler Youth who had been appointed Reichsstatthalter (Governor of a Reich Province) and Gauleiter (District Leader) of Vienna in 1940. If we are to believe Schirach's Secretary of Cultural Affairs, Walter Thomas, it was mostly up to the latter to design, and garner Goebbels's support for, this 'function [...] of explicit foreign-political as well as outstanding cultural- and national-political importance'.¹⁴³ And outstanding the cycle was, surpassing even the Munich event. Meant to demonstrate Vienna's commitment to Verdi, it featured ten operas in thirteen productions, performed both at the Staatsoper and at the Opernhaus der Stadt Wien. Apart from the popular repertory and *Otello*, it included a guest performance of *Falstaff* by the Teatro Comunale di Firenze as well as new productions of *Macbeth* at the Staatsoper under Karl Böhm and *Il trovatore* and *Don Carlos* at the Opernhaus, the latter in Swarowsky's translation with designs by the former expressionist illustrator Josef Fenneker. Vittorio Gui guest-conducted the Staatsoper's *Aida*, and many leading roles were cast with stars from other premier theatres, many of whom had been specially released from conflicting obligations.¹⁴⁴ In addition, Hans Knappertsbusch conducted the *Requiem*;

¹⁴² Hoffend, *Kultur-Achse*, 238, 246; also 'Musik – "Brücke der Freundschaft"? Die musikpolitischen Beziehungen zwischen nationalsozialistischem Deutschland und faschistischem Italien 1933 bis 1943' in Isolde von Foerster *et al.* (eds.), *Musikforschung – Faschismus – Nationalsozialismus: Referate der Tagung Schloß Engers, 8. bis 11. März 2000* (Mainz, 2001), 151–72.

¹⁴³ Walter Thomas to the Theatre Chamber on 21 January 1943, *D-Bba*, R 55/20456-II, 42. On the cycle, see *D-Bba*, R 55/20456-II; *A-War*, ÖBThV, Oper Dir. 805/42, 157/43 and Oper Ad. 100/43; Hoffend, *Kultur-Achse*, 249–50; and W. Th. Anderman [Walther Thomas], *Bis der Vorhang fiel. Berichtet nach Aufzeichnungen aus den Jahren 1940 bis 1945* (Dortmund, 1947), esp. 208. Ex post, Karl Böhm laconically claimed the event for his own directorship of the Staatsoper; *Life Remembered: Memoirs*, trans. John Kehoe (London and New York, 1992), 68. Baldur von Schirach (*Ich glaubte an Hitler* [Hamburg, 1967]) remained conspicuously silent.

¹⁴⁴ These included Matthieu Ahlersmeyer, Elisabeth Höngen, Hans Hotter, Carl Kronenberg, Max Lorenz and Set Svanholm (famous Italian singers were originally also to be invited). On the

Joseph Gregor assembled an exhibition about ‘Verdi and Vienna’; and the Milan Verdi scholar Carlo Gatti lectured on the composer. As for glamour, the original invitation list boasted no fewer than 180 names of local, Reich and Italian party functionaries, musicians, opera directors and other dignitaries, as well as representatives of thirty-six German-language papers from all over Germany and the annexed areas.¹⁴⁵

This looked good on paper. However, while Thomas was still contriving these plans, several hurdles appeared. For one thing, tension increased between Vienna and Berlin. Schirach was autocratic in all things cultural; in particular, his resolve to turn the Vienna Staatsoper into the Reich’s foremost stage was bound to challenge his erstwhile protector Hitler. Conflict erupted early in 1943, when Hitler closed down a Viennese exhibition of modern art that included pictures he had expressly branded as ‘degenerate’. The Führer threatened to suspend all subsidies for Vienna if Schirach did not forswear his inclination towards cultural ‘sabotage’. To comply, Schirach disposed of Thomas, whom Goebbels (frightened that Vienna might outshine ‘his’ Berlin) had pinpointed as the main source of Viennese libertarian evil: he was sent to the front immediately after the Verdi cycle.¹⁴⁶ On aesthetic and personal grounds alone, then, Thomas’s last Viennese brainchild was doomed to be viewed coolly by the Propaganda Ministry.

There were worse problems still. The tides of war had begun to turn when the Germans lost their first decisive battle, under catastrophic conditions, at Stalingrad in late January 1943. By February, Goebbels proclaimed ‘total war’ – the mobilisation of the entire German populace, whether at home or at the front. This situation was hardly conducive to the demands made by both Viennese opera houses for special supplies of raw materials (such as wood and cloth) and extra money, without which the new Verdi productions could not, literally, materialise. In addition, the military setback had started to poison relations between the Axis partners. After long negotiations, Schlösser persuaded Goebbels to secure substantial backing from the

festival’s goals, see Thomas’s letter to the Propaganda Ministry of 28 August 1942, A-War, Oper Dir. 805/42, 4640. The full programme is in *D-Bba*, R 55/20456-II, 81–9.

¹⁴⁵ A-War, Oper Ad. 100/43, 1941a (undated; a manuscript attachment has further names). For the surrounding events, see the daily reports in *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, VB (Wiener Ausgabe), *Wiener Kronen-Zeitung* and *Wiener Neueste Nachrichten*; on the exhibition, Österreichisches Theatermuseum Wien, AM 55 110 Gr and 555 078 Gr.

¹⁴⁶ On the conflict, see Schirach, *Ich glaubte*, 286–94; [Thomas], *Bis der Vorhang fiel*, 215–19; Rathkolb, *Führertreu*, 73–4; and Jochen von Lang, *Der Hitlerjunge. Baldur von Schirach. Der Mann, der Deutschlands Jugend erzog* (Munich, 1991), 329–43. For more on Schirach’s cultural politics, see Thomas Mathieu, *Kunstauffassung und Kulturpolitik im Nationalsozialismus. Studien zu Adolf Hitler – Joseph Goebbels – Alfred Rosenberg – Baldur von Schirach – Heinrich Himmler – Albert Speer – Wilhelm Frick* (Saarbrücken, 1997), 244–61.

Theatre Department, since he deemed a cancellation of the cycle and the dis-invitation of the Italian guests 'bad for foreign affairs'. But both men agreed that the Axis connection should no longer be emphasised.¹⁴⁷ The names of the patrons were duly dropped; social events were called off; and journalistic coverage was restricted to the local level in order to avoid further aggravating the public in regions where bombing raids had interrupted any semblance of normal cultural life. Finally, the occasion was redesigned as a special event for visiting front-line soldiers, armament workers and the wounded, to whom one-third of the tickets were donated.¹⁴⁸ In a remarkable about-turn, Verdi was reintroduced on his own terms, freed from the luxuriously fabricated and Axis-coloured dress that Nazi authorities had previously imposed on him.

However, while Hitler attempted to set the military record straight at a personal meeting with Mussolini,¹⁴⁹ first-class Verdi performances were still – possibly for one last time – imbued with Axis hues: Thomas could not refrain, in his opening speech, from announcing that they 'embody the Italians' spirit, character and imagination in the purest and clearest way' and therefore 'advance the spiritual and mental comradeship-in-arms of the Axis nations'.¹⁵⁰ Yet as the gestation of his cycle has shown, the impending break-up of the alliance meant that the political possibilities of exploiting Verdi's works shrank drastically. Invocations of the composer as Italian standard-bearer and model citizen soon faded; Verdi sank back into the realm of 'traditional' culture from which Goebbels and other party liners had, for one short historical moment, propelled him to the German political vanguard. In June 1944, the *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* described a new production at Berlin's Städtische Oper of *Simon Boccanegra* simply as the 'honourable salvation of a misjudged Verdi'. No word about national character, no mention of military bonds. The production's propaganda value had been reduced to a display of German cultural prowess at a time when London's foremost opera house had long since suspended its activity.¹⁵¹ But this message no

¹⁴⁷ Schlosser to Goebbels on 15 February 1943 and Thomas to Schlosser on 12 February 1943, *D-Bba*, R 55/20456-II, 72–3, 69. The Ministry granted 55,000 Reichsmark (half the expected cost), while the municipality covered the rest. Together, this amounted to almost half the budget Schirach had received for Vienna's musical life in 1942, and to slightly less than a third of his entire cultural budget for 1943; Rathkolb, *Führertreu*, 75.

¹⁴⁸ See *D-Bba*, R 55/20456-II, 96, 100, 107, 113–15, 134–6; *A-War*, Oper Ad. 100/43, 1525a. The only event was a dinner hosted by Schirach for participating artists, who had to bring their own food-ration cards.

¹⁴⁹ See Rauscher, *Hitler und Mussolini*, 509–11.

¹⁵⁰ Reports in *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (5 April 1943) and *Wiener Kronen-Zeitung* (5 April 1943). See also Friedrich Bayer, 'Verdi und die deutsche Musik', *VB* (Wiener Ausgabe, 13 April 1943).

¹⁵¹ Hans Jenkner, 'Ehrenrettung für einen verkannten Verdi', *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte* 15 (1944), 260–2. The Royal Opera House had cancelled all performances beginning in 1940.

Not so in West Germany. The 1951 commemorations did bring forth a number of articles, including a survey by the new-music journal *Melos* on Verdi's impact on contemporary European composers.³⁴ However, these tended to hark back to the Weimar era (some were by authors who had been silenced during the intervening years). The 'Verdi renaissance' and Werfel's novel thus re-entered a picture that was already framed with a retrospective gesture. One critic, who had completed a dissertation on the composer in 1935, argued that the Verdi revival had aimed to promote new forms of music theatre while also satisfying audiences. This purpose having been fulfilled, he proclaimed, Verdi in 1951 no longer signalled a goal but simply nostalgia. What continued to fascinate was not his operatic concept but his capacity for hard work:³⁵ a Teutonic trait now associated also with the spirit of the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music that had started in 1946. West German critical interest in the composer accordingly declined by 1963, the next milestone in Verdi reception.

This is not to deny that continuities of discourse existed also with the immediate past. Some authors of the 1930s remained active; Karl Holl's biography was reissued in 1947; Herbert Gerigk's 1932 volume reaped scholarly praise in the 1970s and was reprinted as late as 1980 (without mention of Gerigk's active participation in Nazi politics).³⁶ But the continuing circulation of these monographs was symptomatic of the dearth of fresh Verdi scholarship, a dearth that was also evinced at university level. By contrast to ten German-language dissertations on Verdi completed between 1927 and 1944, the quarter-century after the war brought only half as many. Of these, three emanated from Austria and one from the GDR; the lone West German thesis arrived as late as 1966.³⁷ Such scholarly disinterest in turn favoured the revival of anecdotes and the Verdi–Wagner dichotomy in popular accounts.³⁸

What is more, Verdi's comparative neglect in early West German criticism resonated with the wider musical climate. Partly financed by the United States

³⁴ 'Eine Melos-Rundfrage: Europäische Komponisten über Verdi', *Melos* 18 (1951), 35–41.

³⁵ Gerth-Wolfgang Baruch, 'Verdi und wir', *Melos* 18 (1951), 33–4. (Baruch's 1935 Prague dissertation, 'Verdi and Schiller: Quellenkundliche Studien zum Librettoproblem', did not survive.) Similar arguments were made by Klaus Pringsheim, an earlier Verdi critic who had been exiled during the Third Reich, in his programmatic essay 'Glück und Ende der Verdi-Renaissance', *Melos* 18 (1951), 46–8.

³⁶ On Gerigk's volume, see Dietrich Kämper, 'Das deutsche Verdi-Schrifttum. Hauptlinien der Interpretation', *Analecta musicologica* 11 (1972), 195. Holl's *Giuseppe Verdi* was reissued in Lindau (1947) and Zurich (1948).

³⁷ This was Leo Karl Gerhardt's 'Die Auseinandersetzungen des jungen Giuseppe Verdi mit dem literarischen Drama: Ein Beitrag zur szenischen Strukturbestimmung der Oper', published in Berlin (West) in 1968; Richard Schaal, *Verzeichnis deutschsprachiger musikwissenschaftlicher Dissertationen . . . , 2 vols.* (Kassel, 1963–74).

³⁸ See for instance Fritz Grüninger's anecdotic *Giuseppe Verdi. Ein Lebens- und Schaffensbild* (Munich, 1953).

as a bulwark against socialist realism and a showcase of the liberal spirit fostered by the Western Allies, an international new-music scene quickly set up headquarters in West Germany, particularly at Darmstadt as well as the Donaueschingen Festival for New Music. In reaction to the preceding twelve years – to simplify complex matters greatly – it embraced abstract, self-sufficient, ‘progressive’ art: (mostly) instrumental, electronic and aleatoric music, experimentalism and above all integral serialism – everything that would have been rejected as ‘degenerate’ under Nazi rule or as ‘formalist’ under Soviet doctrines.³⁹ Not that vocal music was entirely excluded; but if texts entered, they tended to be used in phonetic, fragmented and non-semantic ways.⁴⁰ *Opera aroused* less interest, in part precisely for the reasons it was fostered by the SED. *Nothing was more telling* of this antipathy than Pierre Boulez’s infamous suggestion in 1967 ‘to blow the opera houses up’ in order to make room for new music-theatrical experiences in experimental spaces. Worse, Boulez’s *bête noire* of opera’s deceased bourgeois form was none other than Verdi: ‘stupid, stupid, stupid’.⁴¹

Germany’s most prolific new voice on the post-war operatic scene, Hans Werner Henze, fared hardly better. He was sufficiently influenced by nineteenth-century Italian opera for Boulez to dismiss him as no more than Verdi’s latter-day incarnation – some pseudo-modern necromancer of opera. Henze, in turn, became estranged from his erstwhile Darmstadt colleagues over what he perceived to be their regime of technocratic abstraction, depoliticisation and lack of engagement with the public. It seems scarcely coincidental in this context that, by the mid-1950s, he settled in Italy.⁴²

³⁹ See esp. Beal, *New Music*, 36–41; Thacker, *Music*, 75–85; and Gianmario Borio and Hermann Danuser (eds.), *Im Zenit der Moderne. Die Internationalen Ferienkurse für Neue Musik Darmstadt 1946–1966. Geschichte und Dokumentation*, 4 vols. (Freiburg, 1997).

⁴⁰ Iconic instances are Pierre Boulez’s song-cycle *Le Marteau sans maître* (1955) and Karlheinz Stockhausen’s electronic *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1956).

⁴¹ Pierre Boulez, ‘Sprengt die Opernhäuser in die Luft!’, *Der Spiegel* (25 September 1967), 166–74; translated as “‘Opera Houses? – Blow them up!’ Pierre Boulez versus Rolf Liebermann” in *Opera* 19 (1968), 445–6. The triple defamation of Verdi is reported in Joan Peyser, *Boulez* (New York, 1976), 206, 208.

⁴² See Boulez, “‘Opera Houses’”, 440; and Hans Werner Henze, *Music and Politics: Collected Writings, 1953–81*, trans. Peter Labanyi (Ithaca, 1982), esp. 37–52; on the influence of Italian opera, see Henze, *Music and Politics*, 101, 150; for a nuanced perspective on Henze’s complex relationship with Darmstadt and his emigration, see Inge Kovács, ‘Neue Musik abseits der Avantgarde? Zwei Fallbeispiele’ in Borio and Danuser (eds.), *Im Zenit*, II: 13–48. Apart from Henze’s, most operas that premiered in German-language countries between 1945 and 1960 were by composers who had already been active during the Third Reich, including Werner Egk, Carl Orff, Hermann Reutter and Heinrich Sutermeister; Nigel Simeone, ‘A Chronology of Twentieth-Century Operatic Premieres’ in Mervyn Cooke (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera* (Cambridge, 2005), xxxi–xxxix. On Verdi as compositional model, however, see also Giselher Klebe, ‘Verdi als Maß’, *Opernwelt* 4/10 (1951), 25.

Perhaps equally tellingly, the other Darmstadt composer committed to politically relevant vocal music, Luigi Nono, was Italian. Frequently referencing Verdi, he landed what was arguably the most important international music-theatrical success before the mid-1960s.⁴³ But Nono, an active communist, refused – in the words of his former student Helmut Lachenmann – ‘to separate his aesthetic from his political credo’: he, too, would turn his back on the quixotic German new-music establishment.⁴⁴ When, finally, a fourth Darmstadt paragon began to work on a gargantuan seven-opera cycle in 1977, he lived out a different operatic trajectory: Karlheinz Stockhausen transmogrified Wagnerian idealism into a pseudo-religious, futuristic vision (allegedly) shorn of concrete political referents.⁴⁵

As these last examples show, the anti-operatism among the post-war European avant-garde active in West Germany was neither absolute nor long-lived. In 1965, the success of Bernd Alois Zimmermann’s *Die Soldaten* broached a way for post-Bergian opera away from Darmstadt’s partisan quibbles.⁴⁶ By 1978, amidst a renewed operatic bustle in West Germany, György Ligeti declared the time of ‘anti-operas’ to be over; he confessed instead that – as his recent, self-described ‘anti-anti-opera’ *Le Grand Macabre* revealed – he was quite simply ‘a Verdi fan’, with ‘Verdi of the middle period [being] built into’ him.⁴⁷ Much more could of course be said about this post-war opera world. But a rift in attitudes towards Verdi is clearly more apparent in West than in East German writings. It was in the West that, together with opera in general, intellectuals and musicians pushed him into temporary obscurity. Thus the old divide between the specialists’ repression of Verdi and his unfailing popularity among opera-goers reopened. As my book has shown, this gulf had been ideologically imbued in the nineteenth century; and indeed, the West German avant-garde’s predominant concern with integral serialism in the early post-war years was hardly less political than the GDR’s

⁴³ Nono’s ‘azione scenica’ *Intolleranza 1960* caused a notorious scandal when it premiered in Venice in 1961. For references to Verdi, see his *Scritti e colloqui*, 2 vols., ed. Angela Ida De Benedictis and Veniero Rizzardi (Milan and Lucca, 2001).

⁴⁴ Helmut Lachenmann, ‘Touched by Nono’, *Contemporary Music Review* 18 (1999), 19. On Nono’s outsider position within the European avant-garde, see Christopher Fox, ‘Luigi Nono and the Darmstadt School: Form and Meaning in the Early Works (1950–1959)’, *Contemporary Music Review* 18 (1999), 111–30; on his grappling with Darmstadt, see esp. Nono’s 1959 lecture ‘Presenza storica nella musica d’oggi’ in *Scritti*, I: 46–56.

⁴⁵ See esp. Karlheinz Stockhausen, ‘Every Day Brings New Discoveries’ in Anders Beyer (ed.), *The Voice of Music: Conversations with Composers of our Time* (Aldershot, 2000), 145–89.

⁴⁶ See Ulrich Dibelius, ‘Formen des musikalischen Theaters – Kommentare’ in Dibelius and Frank Schneider (eds.), *Neue Musik im geteilten Deutschland*, 4 vols., III: *Dokumente aus den siebziger Jahren* (Berlin, 1997), 358–9.

⁴⁷ György Ligeti in *Conversation with Peter Várnai, Josef Häusler, Claude Samuel and Himself* (London, 1983), 68, 79, 26–7.

call for a national opera. Retreating into a ‘purely artistic’ realm obviated the distressing queries which acknowledgement of music’s socio-political implications would have triggered.⁴⁸ The same attitude also gave rise, in the West, to a scholarly focus on musical analysis and source studies, in a departure from the more contextualised perspectives that had been advocated during the early twentieth century.⁴⁹

Yet arguably the most fundamental transformation in post-war German Verdi reception concerned both East and West: the fact that the composer’s Italian identity receded into the background. To be sure, Verdi might not have dominated the immediate post-war repertory had he been German. Moreover, as we have seen, his operas continued to be used as politically potent symbols on stage and – in the GDR – in cultural discourse. I would suggest, however, that the precise nature of his foreignness ceased to matter. Unlike with earlier rediscoveries, for instance, the hype around West Berlin’s *Nabucco* did not spring from a larger project to revive Verdi, whether as quintessentially Italian compositional model, moral icon or national foil. Nor was his temporary abandonment by West German composers and scholars related to the old anti-Italian bias: too international was the musical scene (including Italian and French musicians); too eager for absorption into the emerging European network were West German politicians; too compromised, perhaps, was any sense of cultural jingoism. By the same token, Verdi was enlisted in East Germany irrespective of his nationality: in light of the international socialist agenda, his Italianness was neither a hindrance nor a motivation. In short, overt or covert politicisations were no longer conditioned by Verdi’s special position vis-à-vis German musical identity, or by his being the flagship composer of Italian opera, or even by his alleged antagonism to Wagner. Under the pressure of more powerful geopolitical constellations, the erstwhile antagonism between Italian and German music had crumbled; in the face of global tensions between the West and the Eastern Bloc, it seems as if national colours finally faded from Verdi’s image.

⁴⁸ See Gesa Kordes, ‘Darmstadt, Postwar Experimentation, and the West German Search for a New Musical Identity’ in Applegate and Potter (eds.), *Music and German National Identity*, 205–17; also Hanns-Werner Heister, ‘Sprachlosigkeit, Moderne, Musiksprache’ in Heister (ed.), *Geschichte der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert: 1945–1975* (Laaber, 2005), 53–67. On the renewed interest in vocal composition from the mid-1950s (including the debate between Nono and Stockhausen), see Grant, *Serial Music*, 193–211.

⁴⁹ See esp. Michael Walter, ‘Thesen zur Auswirkung der dreißiger Jahre auf die bundesdeutsche Nachkriegs-Musikwissenschaft’ in Isolde von Foerster et al. (eds.), *Musikforschung – Faschismus – Nationalsozialismus. Referate der Tagung Schloss Engers, 8. bis 11. März 2000* (Mainz, 2001), 495–9.

Post-war Verdi: gaps and links

So how did we get from the softening Italian–German musical dichotomy of the 1950s and 1960s to the idea of a lingering German bias against Verdi in the early twenty-first century? In search of preliminary answers, we might very rapidly flick through further chapters in our imagined volume. One place to start would be the development of opera studies internationally. For, West German academics' slackening interest in Verdi after the war was countered by a rise of scholarly concern with Italian opera elsewhere. In 1959 a Verdi Research Institute was founded in Parma, followed by one in New York in 1976. In the late 1970s Italian and Anglophone musicologists (assisted by one German colleague) initiated the critical edition of Verdi's works; and Italians dominated the first international Verdi conferences from 1966 on. It is not without reason, then, that scholars of Italian opera today hold that '[t]he 1960s saw the beginning of a new age for Verdi in both musicological studies and performance'.⁵⁰ The sense of a recommencement was endorsed even by contemporary West German authors. In 1963, several heralded a new Verdi image; and when a younger generation of German musicologists (both East and West) eventually turned to Verdi, they based their efforts on broader examinations of nineteenth-century Italian opera than did their forebears.⁵¹

In all this, earlier German strivings seemed to be accorded at most a minor influence – something which reinforced the notion of a traditional German apathy regarding Verdi. The rhetoric of a new scholarly phase, though, reveals only one side of the coin. Like all historical periodisations, it resulted partly from negotiations over collective self-conceptions, in this case of the musicological discipline. Post-war German scholars had little reason to connect with pre-1945 trends in the academy; and those outside Germany also benefited from this hiatus: it helped free themselves (as much as Verdi's operas) from the Germanic grip on the field. What

⁵⁰ Gregory W. Harwood, 'Verdi Criticism' in Scott L. Balthazar (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Verdi* (Cambridge, 2004), 273; in a similar vein is Roberta Montemorra Marvin, 'Verdi Scholarship at the Beginning of the Twenty-first Century', *Nineteenth-Century Studies* 15 (2001), 89. For a more nuanced view, see Fabrizio Della Seta, 'Verdi, Giuseppe' in Ludwig Finscher (ed.), *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd edn, Personenteil, 17 vols., XVI (Kassel, 2006), 1472–3.

⁵¹ This attitude is paradigmatically documented in Karl H. Ruppel, 'Die Phasen von Verdis Ruhm', *Opernwelt* 4/10 (October 1963), 8–9. Wolfgang Osthoff critiqued the lack of music-analytical (as opposed to biographical) Verdi scholarship in 'Die beiden "Boccanegra"-Fassungen und der Beginn von Verdis Spätwerk', *Analecta Musicologica* 1 (1963), 70. Together with Friedrich Lippmann, he contributed much to the revival of Italian opera studies in West Germany, joined a little later by Ursula Günther.

is more, the ‘new beginning’ idea – like similar, earlier claims we have examined – concealed ties with the composer’s earlier reception history. Anselm Gerhard has recently argued that the concept of the ‘hegemony of German music’ held sway over international musicology even after 1945, not least because of the diaspora of German scholars.⁵² By 1980, the idea was still so deeply ingrained that (as Chapter 1 has shown) Carl Dahlhaus, West Germany’s then-leading musicologist, seemed to elevate Italian opera to unforeseen heights when adopting the Beethoven–Rossini dualism Raphael Georg Kiesewetter had posited in 1834.⁵³ Accordingly, a prime task of ‘new’ Verdi scholars has been to continue what late nineteenth-century German-language writers began: to rid Italian opera of German preconceptions, both historically and analytically; to find critical paths towards ‘Verdiness’ away from Wagnerian ideals; to inspect Verdi’s oeuvre not from the perspective of ethnographers studying ‘other’ musical cultures, but from that of cultural critics cognisant of contemporary social conditions, theatrical conventions and aesthetic forms.⁵⁴ It is only natural that an awareness of these tasks would have made the old German–Italian antagonism appear temporarily more acute.

Similarly complex legacies haunt the realm of opera production (another topic of our imaginary book). The rise of *Regietheater*, or interpretative staging based on a strong directorial concept, is usually thought to have transformed the German operatic scene beginning in the 1970s, and to have crystallised first around Wagner’s works. That is, another rift with earlier practices is posited, and in this new development Verdi is once more assumed ‘to lag behind’.⁵⁵ Yet Verdi stagings were seminal for such leading East German directors as Walter Felsenstein and Herz, as well as for Neuenfels and Peter Konwitschny, arguably the most provocative figures in the opera

⁵² Anselm Gerhard, ‘Die “Vorherrschaft der deutschen Musik” nach 1945 – eine Ironie der Geschichte’ in Albrecht Riethmüller (ed.), *Deutsche Leitkultur Musik? Zur Musikgeschichte nach dem Holocaust* (Stuttgart, 2006), 13–27. See also David Josephson, ‘The German Musical Exile and the Course of American Musicology’, *Current Musicology* 79–80 (2005), 9–53.

⁵³ Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, 1989), 8–10; on Kiesewetter, see Chapter 1.

⁵⁴ See Fabrizio Della Seta, ‘Some Difficulties in the Historiography of Italian Opera’, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 10 (1998), 3–13, esp. 4; and Anselm Gerhard, ‘Konventionen der musikalischen Gestaltung’ in Gerhard and Uwe Schweikert (eds.), *Verdi Handbuch* (Stuttgart and Weimar, 2001), 185–6. Della Seta has outlined further desirable research trajectories in his ‘Verdi’ entry.

⁵⁵ Mike Ashman, ‘Misinterpreting Verdian Dramaturgy: History and Grand Opera’ in Alison Latham and Roger Parker (eds.), *Verdi in Performance* (Oxford, 2001), 43; also Philip Gossett, *Divas and Scholars: Performing Italian Opera* (Chicago and London, 2006), 453, 481; and, critically, David Levin, *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky* (Chicago and London, 2007), 164–5. For explicit associations of the rise of *Regietheater* with the 1970s, and with Chéreau’s centennial *Ring* in particular, see Levin, *Unsettling Opera*, 5.

houses of West, East and reunified Germany. Neuenfels's Frankfurt *Aida* of 1981 in fact blazed the trail for *Regietheater*, alongside Patrice Chéreau's 1976 Bayreuth *Ring*.⁵⁶ What is more, my brief discussion of Neuenfels's 2000 *Nabucco* has shown that modern-day productions are removed from the historical ones we encountered only by degree, not in kind, and this notwithstanding obvious changes in visual aesthetics and the current obsession with 'original' versions. The conceptual backbones of stagings seem to age more slowly than their visible surfaces, evolving around persistent interpretative themes.

These connections are strikingly exposed – lo and behold – by *Don Carlos*. As happened sixty years previously, this opera received myriad productions around the time of Verdi's centennial in 2001. In Hamburg, for instance, Konwitschny mounted what was billed as the most complete-ever rendition of the opera's earliest French version. Yet the most exciting part of the five-hour production, all critics agreed, was its auto-da-fé: a multimedia event that spilled all over the theatre during the interval, with a TV presenter announcing the Spanish royal couple, the chorus in evening dress enjoying a champagne party, terrorists chased through the aisles, anti-war pamphlets distributed and, finally, some comfort dispensed by the Voice from Above, in the guise of a glittering concert diva on stage.⁵⁷ By blurring the boundaries between stage and audience, art and life, Konwitschny had – like Heckroth and others before him – modernised the auto-da-fé scene by means of topical allusions and state-of-the-art spectacle: he had turned a Verdi production into an avant-garde theatrical event. Comparable analogies with earlier productions can be found in other stagings. At Berlin's Komische Oper, the friars still chant Swarowsky's Latin text; here and elsewhere, the Monk is cleansed of imperial vestiges and Don Carlos is either suicidal or murdered; and the disembodied heavenly Voice is frequently forced down to earth: whether personified as a concert soloist or as the page Thibault coerced to sing at

⁵⁶ See Clemens Risi, 'Shedding Light on the Audience: Hans Neuenfels and Peter Konwitschny Stage Verdi (and Verdians)', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 14 (2002), 201; also the interview with Neuenfels in Barbara Beyer (ed.), *Warum Oper? Gespräche mit Opernregisseuren*, 2nd edn (Berlin, 2007), 84–90; the relevant portions on Verdi in Walter Felsenstein and Joachim Herz, *Musiktheater. Beiträge zur Methodik und zu Inszenierungskonzeptionen*, 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1976); and Hans-Jochen Irmer and Wolfgang Stein, *Joachim Herz – Regisseur im Musiktheater. Beiträge zur Theorie und Praxis des Musiktheaters* (Berlin [East], 1977), 51–66.

⁵⁷ See Werner Burkhardt, 'Don Carlos in Hamburg: Das Chaos kehrt wieder', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (6 November 2001); Gerhard R. Koch, 'Der Gärtner ist immer der Retter. Verdi vollständig, aktuell und authentisch', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (6 November 2001); and, for more on this production, Risi, 'Shedding Light', 204–7; and Kreuzer, 'Voices', 151–2, 176–8. In its 2004 reincarnation at the Vienna Staatsoper, conducted by Bertrand de Billy, it is available on DVD (TDK, 2007).

gunpoint, Verdi's transcendental sphere collapses no less than in the stagings of the 1930s and 1940s.⁵⁸ If Neuenfels's *Nabucco* confronted us with the most gruesome episode of modern German history, recent renderings of *Don Carlos* have alluded to the post 9/11 revival of religious fundamentalism and global terrorism. In both cases, though, the concepts behind such updated readings have remained remarkably constant over the last century.

Such a synoptic perspective on twentieth- and twenty-first century practices, including those of the Nazi era, can doubtless be unsettling to some: it contests myopic post-war positions whose immediate past begins in 1945. Yet acknowledging deeper roots is key to understanding the appeal of Verdi's operas today and, hence, our own cultural needs and desires (not just in German lands). More important, it challenges commonly held ideas of radical historical breaks, of focusing on one's 'own' repertoires when looking at music's involvement with nationalism, and of relying on seemingly dominant trends from which to assess the development of musical cultures. History does not, after all, proceed in single file, driven by central forces. It takes shape at multiple speeds and levels, feeding on diverse sources. The history of reception, for instance, may unfold more slowly than that of composition; but it engages wide – possibly wider – socio-political fields. Similarly, music's role in the formation of national consciousness engages a host of transnational factors.

Tracing Verdi's reception through the vicissitudes of German identity-formation, then, provides a case study of the construction of musical nationalism from below – which is to say, from the perspective of its less glamorous and often concealed underbelly. Verdi, it has turned out, became a flexible metaphor that German intellectuals kept ignoring or forgetting only to rediscover (and reinterpret) it under altered circumstances. Unlike Austro-German composers, he did not necessarily carry fixed signifiers regarding German culture. The vessels of his life and works could be endlessly refilled, each time according to changed needs and adorned with the rhetoric of innovation. In the realm of music, Verdi was thus an important board on which notions of the collective Self (and Other) could be drawn and redrawn at will.

What is more, by looking at Verdi I have focused on the 'underside' of precisely that musical nation which has most influenced the historiography of European music since the late eighteenth century. My perspective may therefore impact the ways in which this history can be viewed. However narrow and hidden from the main avenues of compositional or political

⁵⁸ For more details, see Kreuzer, 'Voices', 178–9. In David McVicar's Frankfurt production (premiered 30 September 2007), *Don Carlos* was stabbed by soldiers and no Monk appeared.

histories, I have tried to cut a new path through the thicket of German-language musical culture from Unification to the Third Reich: one which provides a counter-narrative to many prevalent paradigms of music history. Treading this path yields both complementary and more fragmented pictures of the surrounding musical landscapes. Perhaps it will accord Verdi a more central place in the historiography of Western music. Eventually, that transformation may itself become a highway-ofsorts of European music historiography. But by then it will be time to tackle another set of preconceptions, among them – perhaps – the fascination, in the early twenty-first century, with transnational musical reception. However, and for now, Verdi's immensely complicated presence in German lands from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries has provided us with a powerful lens through which we can (re)examine paradigmatic relations between opera and society, culture and politics, identity and historiography, Self and Other, permanence and change, past and present.