



Experiencing Verdi: A Listener's Companion

Donald Sanders

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Titles in **The Listener's Companion: A Scarecrow Press Music Series** provide readers with a deeper understanding of key musical genres and the work of major artists and composers. Aimed at nonspecialists, each volume explains in clear and accessible language how to *listen* to works from particular artists, composers, and genres. Looking at the context in which the music appeared as well as its form, authors explore with readers the environments in which key musical works were written and performed—from a 1950s bebop concert at the Village Vanguard to a performance of Handel's *Messiah* in eighteenth-century Germany.

Along with his contemporaries Chopin and Wagner, Verdi is among the few composers whose place in the musical pantheon is based almost entirely upon the mastery of a single genre. This is largely owing to his staggering output in a career that lasted over fifty years. Several of his operas occupy the nucleus of the modern repertoire, and Verdi almost single-handedly maintained the Italian lyric tradition against the tide of Wagnerian music drama. In his final years, he virtually reinvented Italian opera. Indeed, Verdi's life and music came to be so intimately associated with the Italian unification movement known as the Risorgimento that he is still revered as a great national figure in his homeland.

In *Experiencing Verdi: A Listener's Companion*, Donald Sanders combines biography with simple, concise musical analysis. Summarizing the evolution of Italian opera and the bel canto tradition that prevailed at the beginning of Verdi's career, Sanders takes readers on a leisurely tour of eleven of Verdi's most important operas and of the *Manzoni Requiem* and concludes with a look at Verdi's influence on later composers like Giacomo Puccini, his place in the modern repertoire, and his role as an Italian patriot.

With a timeline, glossary of basic musical terms, and selected reading and listening recommendations, *Experiencing Verdi* will engage opera lovers at all levels, from those just starting to listen, learn, and enjoy to musical devotees.

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