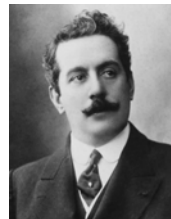
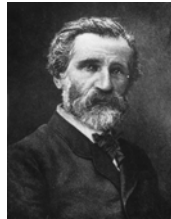


Verdi and Puccini **The Consummate Voices** **of Italian Opera**



Art Axelrod



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Consummate Voices

- ◆ Italian Opera may be thought to start with Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643).
 - *L'Orfeo*, 1607
- ◆ A continuous development, through the 17th and 18th centuries, and then through Bellini (1801-1835), Donizetti (1797-1848), and Rossini(1792-1868) in the 19th century
- ◆ Then Verdi (1813-1901) and Puccini (1858-1924)
- ◆ When Puccini died in 1924, that continuum came to an end.
 - In 20th century, all music changed, including Italian Opera.
 - There are still Italian composers writing operas in Italian, but the Monteverdi-Puccini continuum not longer applies.

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Verdi and Puccini Compared

- ◆ Verdi:
 - Born 1813; Died 1901
 - An archetypical 19th Century voice
 - ◆ Early operas patterned after Rossini and Donizetti
 - ◆ Later operas developed and refined that style
 - ◆ Only Falstaff (last opera) breaks with the tradition
 - Traditional 19th Century Romantic plots:
 - ◆ Characters larger than life
 - ◆ Extravagant melodramas

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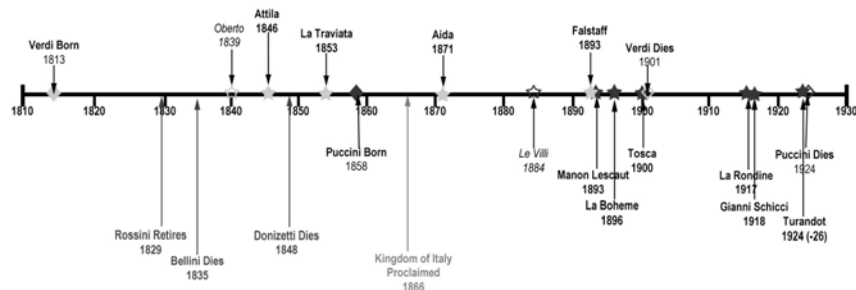
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Verdi and Puccini Compared -2

◆Puccini:

- Born 1858; Died 1924
- A generation after Verdi
- Influenced by northern European music styles.
 - ◆ Lush harmonies
- Plots tend toward “verismo” – everyday characters in mundane (but emotionally wrought) situations.

VERDI AND PUCCINI



Compare and Contrast

	Verdi	Puccini
Patriotism & Nationalism	A major theme. Often overshadow individual stories	Mostly absent. When present, only to show character.
Parent-Child Relationship	Very important. Often drive plot.	Rarely presented.
Plot Structure	Epic and larger than life.	Everyday situations. "Versimo".

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Compare and Contrast (cont.)

	Verdi	Puccini
Moral & Ethical Dilemmas	Central to plot.	Largely absent. Dilemmas are personal.
Love Relationships	Heroic.	Ordinary (though intense).
Fate	Often unpredicable and "cosmic". Almost an Entity itself	Dramatic conclusions are emotionally driven.
Number of Operas	30 (counting major rewrites)	10 (not counting minor revisions)

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Our Examples

1. Parent and Child
 - ◆ Verdi: "Di Provenza il mar" from *La traviata*
 - ◆ Puccini: "O mi babbino caro" from *Gianni Schicchi*
2. Patriotism
 - ◆ Verdi: "We Italian women" from *Attila*
 - ◆ Puccini: "Vittoria! Vittoria!" from *Tosca*
3. The Heroine's Lament
 - ◆ Verdi: "O patria mia" from *Aida*
 - ◆ Puccini: "Vissi d'arte" from *Tosca*
4. The Tenor's Love Song
 - ◆ Verdi: "Celeste Aida" from *Aida*
 - ◆ Puccini: "Che gelida manina!" from *La Boheme*
5. The Party
 - ◆ Verdi: "Libiam!" from *La traviata*
 - ◆ Puccini: "Doretta's Dream" from *La rondine*
6. The Maestro's Last Words
 - ◆ Verdi: "Tutto nel mondo è burla" from *Falstaff*
 - ◆ Puccini: "Tu che di gel sei cinta" from *Turandot*

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Parent and Child

"O mio babbino caro" from Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*

Cecilia Gasdia, (s), Laretta – 1983

Orchestra of La Scala, Milan, Gianandrea
Gavazzeni, cond.

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Gianni Schicchi

Puccini

Libretto by Giovacchini Forzano after
Canto XXX, Dante's *Inferno*

First Performance, 1918, Metropolitan
Opera, NYC

A Notary, Gianni Schicchi, commits
perjury to confound a dead man's
avaricious relatives and advance his
daughter's love affair.

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"O mio babbino caro"

Gianni Schicchi

Schicchi's daughter, Lauretta, pleads with
her daddy to please let her marry her
beloved Rinuccio.

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Parent and Child

**“Di Provenza il mar”
from Verdi’s *La Traviata***

Renato Bruson, (b), M. Germont– 2006
(Rolando Villazon (t), Alfredo)

Los Angeles Orchestra, James Conlon,
cond. Director, dir.

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La Traviata

Verdi

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave after *La
dame aux camélias* by Alexandre
Dumas, *fils*, 1852

First Performance, 1853, Venice

Love between middle-class Alfredo and
the doomed courtesan, Violetta

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"Di Provenza il mar "

La Traviata

Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont, tries to convince his son to come home to their estate in Provence

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Patriotism

"Vittoria! Vittoria!" from Puccini's Tosca

Marcello Álvarez (t), Cavaradossi;
Fiorenza Cedolins (s), Tosca; Ruggero
Raimondi (br), Scarpia

2006

Orchestra of the Arena di Verona, Daniel
Oren, cond.

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Tosca

Puccini

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica after *La Tosca* by Victorien Sardou (1887)

First Performance, 1900, Rome

The struggle between the lovers, Mario Cavaradossi, painter and Italian Patriot, and Floria Tosca, Opera singer, against the evil Chief of Police, Baron Scarpia

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"Vittoria! Vittoria! "

Tosca

Mario Cavaradossi is tortured by Scarpia's minions while Tosca listens helplessly.

He is dragged out to Scarpia's office, but the action is interrupted by an announcement that Napoleon has defeated the Austrians at Marengo.

Mario defiantly rejoices.

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Patriotism

“We Italian Women...” from Verdi’s *Attila*

Cheryl Studer (s), Odabella; Samuel
Ramey (b), Attila
1991

Orchestra of Teatro alla Scala, Milan,
Ricardo Muti, cond.

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Attila

Verdi

Libretto by Temistocle Solera and
Francesco Maria Piave after *Attila, König
der Hunnen* by Zacharias Werner
(1808)

First Performance, 1846, Venice

Semi-mythical account of the invasion of
Attila the Hun into Italy, 452 CE.

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“We Italian Women...”

Attila

Attila has captured a group of Italian women during his invasion into the Italian Peninsula. Their leader, Odabella, defies him.

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The Heroine’s Lament

**“Vissi d’arte”
from Puccini’s *Tosca***

Raina Kabaivanska (s), *Tosca* – 1976

New Philharmonia Orchestra, Bruno
Bartoletti, cond.

(Movie Version, Gianfranco De Blasio,
dir.)

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Tosca

Verdi

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica after La Tosca by Victorien Sardou (1887)

First Performance, 1900, Rome

The struggle between the lovers, Mario Cavaradossi, painter and Italian Patriot, and Floria Tosca, Opera singer, against the evil Chief of Police, Baron Scarpia

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"Vissi d'arte"

Tosca

Evil police chief, Baron Scarpia, has captured Cavaradossi and has ordered him executed.

However, he has offered Tosca, Cavaradossi's lover, to free him in return for her sexual favors.

Tosca, in this soliloquy, laments her situation.

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The Heroine's Lament

"O patria mia"
from Verdi's *Aida*

Aprile Millo (s), *Aida* – 1989

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, James
Levine, cond.

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Aida

Verdi

Libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni after a
scenario by Auguste Mariette and
Camille du Locle (date)

First Performance, 1871, Cairo

Egypt is at war with Ethiopia. Aida,
Ethiopian princess, has been captured
as a slave in Egypt, but falls in love with
Radames, Egyptian general.

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"O patria mia"

Aida

Aida is torn between her love for her country and her love for the Egyptian general, Radames.

Seated by the banks of the Nile, she laments that she will never see her homeland again.

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The Tenor's Love Song

"Che gelida manina! "
from Puccini's *La Bohème*

Ramón Vargas (t), Rodolfo; Angela
Gheorgiu (s), Mimi
2008

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Nicola
Luisotti, cond.

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La Bohème

Puccini

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica after *Scènes de la vie bohème* by Henry Murger (1845)

First Performance, 1896, Turin

Doomed love affair between the poet Rodolfo and the consumptive working girl, Mimi.

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“Che gelida manina! ”

La Bohème

Mimi, Rodolfo's upstairs neighbor, has dropped her key and she and Rodolfo crawl around in the darkness, looking for it.

Their hands touch and (since this is opera), they instantly fall in love.

Rodolfo remarks on how cold her hand is, and then sings of his love.

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The Tenor's Love Song

**"Celeste Aida"
from Verdi's *Aida***

Plácido Domingo (t), Radamès – 1991

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, James
Levine, cond.

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Aida

Verdi

Libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni after a
scenario by Auguste Mariette and
Camille du Locle (date)

First Performance, 1871, Cairo

Egypt is at war with Ethiopia. Aida,
Ethiopian princess has been captured as
a slave in Egypt, but falls in love with
Radames, Egyptian general.

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“Celeste Aida”

Aida

Aspiring Egyptian army officer, Radamès, and the Ethiopian slave girl, Aida, are deeply in love. But they can't marry because she is an Ethiopian, therefore an enemy.

Ramfis, the High Priest has informed Radamès that a general has been selected to lead the next campaign against Ethiopia.

Radamès wishes that he were that warrior so that he could be glorious in victory and thus have the power to marry his beloved.

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The Party

“Doretta's Dream” from Puccini's *La Rondine*

Ainhoa Arteta (s), Magda; Richard Troxell (t),
M. Prunier

1998

Washington National Opera Orchestra,
Emmanuel Villaume, cond.

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La Rondine

Puccini

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami after German libretto by Willner and Reichert

First Performance, 1917, Monte Carlo

Puccini's "Viennese Operetta": Love affairs between Magda, a courtesan, and a naïve young man, and between Prunier, a poet and Magda's maid.

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"Doretta's Dream"

La Rondine

A small, intimate and very elegant party at Magda's home:

One of the guests, M. Prunier, a poet, reads his latest poem about a beautiful young woman, Doretta, who is courted by a king. But he stops before it's over. He confesses that he can't find an ending.

Magda completes the poem in the aria, "Doretta's Beautiful Dream".

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The Party

“Libiam!”

from Verdi's *La Traviata*

Roland Villazón (t), Alfredo; Renée
Fleming (s), Violetta
2006

Los Angeles Opera Orchestra, James
Conlon, cond.

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La Traviata

Verdi

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave after *La
dame aux camélias* by Alexandre
Dumas, *fils*, 1852

First Performance, 1853, Venice

Love between middle-class Alfredo and
the doomed courtesan, Violetta

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“Libiam!”

La Traviata

The beautiful courtesan, Violetta, our tragic heroine, had been ill, but has recovered. Her friends hold a gala ball in her honor. Alfredo Germont, who has been in love with her for a year, is called upon to offer a toast. (Baron Douphol, Violetta’s current lover, is not pleased.)

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The Maestro’s Last Words

**“Tu che di gel sei cinta”
from Puccini’s *Turandot***

Leona Mitchell (s), Liù; Plácido Domingo
(t), Calaf; Paul Plishka (b), Timur
1988

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and
Chorus, James Levine, cond.

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Turandot

Puccini

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni
after the play by Carlo Gozzi (1762)

First Performance, 1926, Milan
completed by Franco Alfani

A metaphoric fairy tale: Prince Calàf risks his life to win beautiful, cold Princess Turandot, while his blind father, deposed King Timur and his faithful slave girl, Liù look on.

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“Tu che di gel sei cinta ”

Turandot

Prince Calàf has answered the riddles thus winning Turandot's hand. But he offers to release her and forfeit his life if she can discover his name.

Faithful Liù is suspected of knowing the name and is threatened with torture if she does not divulge it.

Rather than yield, after reproaching Turandot's coldness, “you who are girdled in ice”, she snatches a knife from a guard and kills herself, as the crowd looks on in horror.

Timur, the blind King, follows as her body is borne away, to “that night that knows no dawn”.

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The Maestro's Last Words

**"Tutto nel mundo è burla"
from Verdi's *Falstaff***

Paul Plishka (b), Falstaff; et al, – 1993

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and
Chorus, James Levine, cond.

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Falstaff

Verdi

Libretto by Arrigo Boito after *The Merry Wives
of Windsor* and *Henry IV, Parts I and II* by
Shakespeare (1597-8)

First Performance, 1893, Milan

The reprobate Knight, Sir John Falstaff, clumsily
attempts to seduce Mistresses Ford and Page.
Mr. Ford tries to prevent his daughter,
Nanetta, from marrying her beloved. All ends
happily.

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“Tutto nel mundo è burla”

Falstaff

After a hilarious comedy of errors, all the plots are unraveled. Mrs. Ford and Page expose Falstaff, and Nanetta and her beloved Fenton are married, despite Ford's objections.

The all agree they had all been fooled and Falstaff leads the company in a dance in the form of a fugue, singing “everything in the world is a joke”, everyone is a clown, and he who laughs last, laughs best.

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Thank You



And Good Night!

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