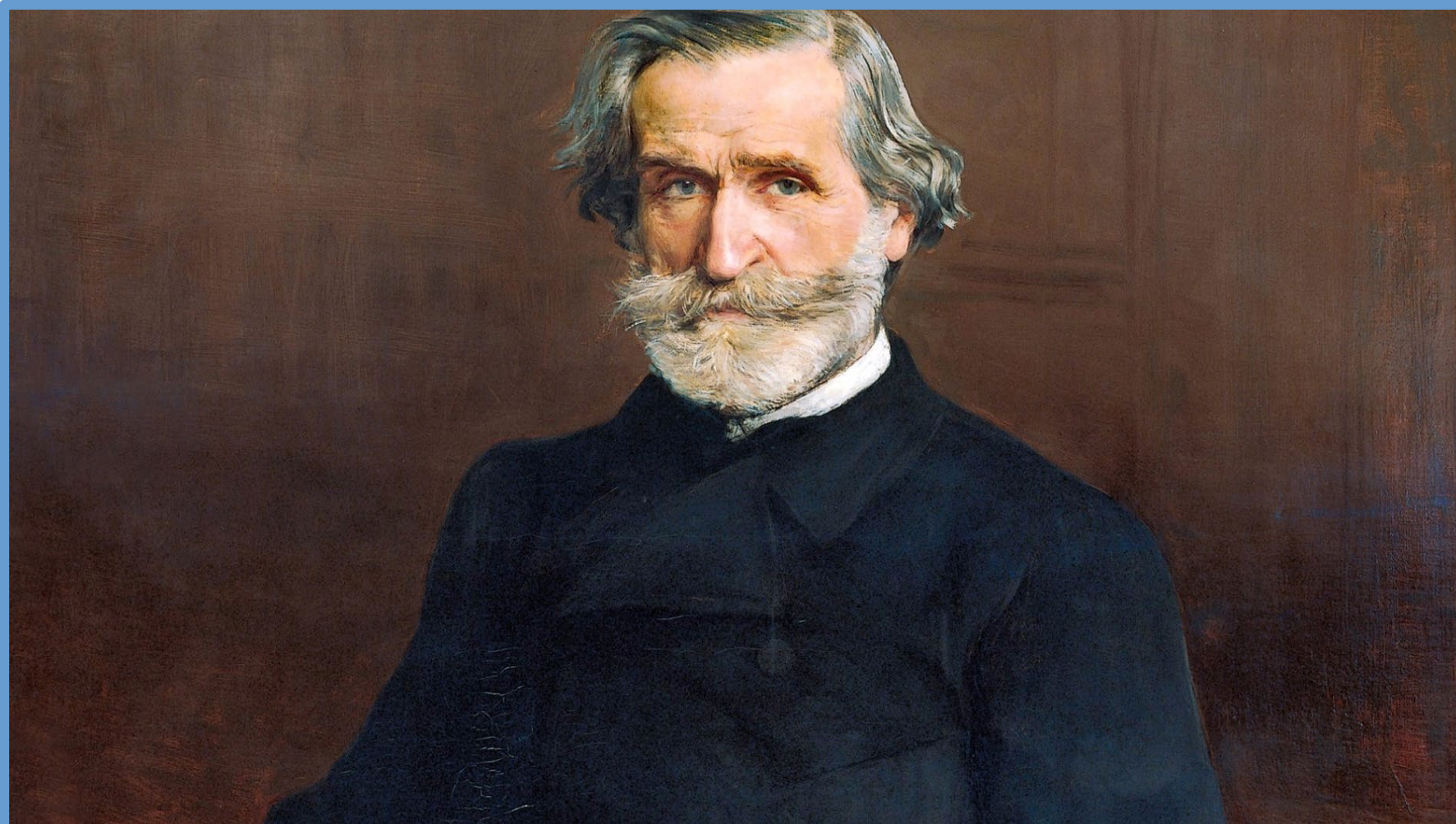




Giuseppe Verdi

Composer of the Week



Giuseppe Verdi
(1813-1901)





Born in Busseto,
Italy on 9th or 10th
October, 1813



Died in Milan,
Italy on 27th
January 1901

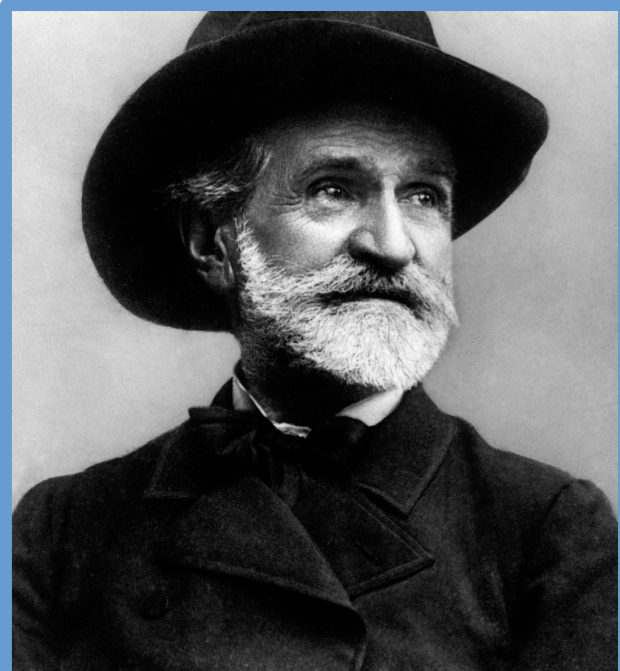
Giuseppe Verdi was born in the village of Le Roncole near Busseto in Northern Italy.



His birth was registered on 11th October as “born yesterday”, but as, at that time, the day was considered to begin at sunset, that could mean either 9th or 10th. However, Verdi always celebrated his birthday on 9th October.

Verdi is possibly the most famous **Opera** composer of all time.

His operas are still performed more often than any other composer.



Three of Verdi's operas, **La Traviata**, **Rigoletto**, and **Aida** are constantly among the most performed operas, each accumulating 300 to 400 performances a year worldwide.

What is an **Opera**?
Can you remember?



Opera is a form of theatre where all the drama is conveyed through music. The dramatic roles are all taken by singers who are accompanied by an orchestra who play throughout. Usually there is a chorus and, sometimes, some dancers too. There is often dramatic scenery and lavish costumes.

Do you remember
the name of
another famous
Italian opera
composer?

Rossini



Verdi was a great admirer of Rossini, and when Rossini died, he arranged for several famous Italian composers of the time to write a **Requiem Mass** for him.

They would write a movement (section) each. A **Requiem Mass** is a special Mass for the dead and Verdi wrote the **Libera Me** - the last movement.

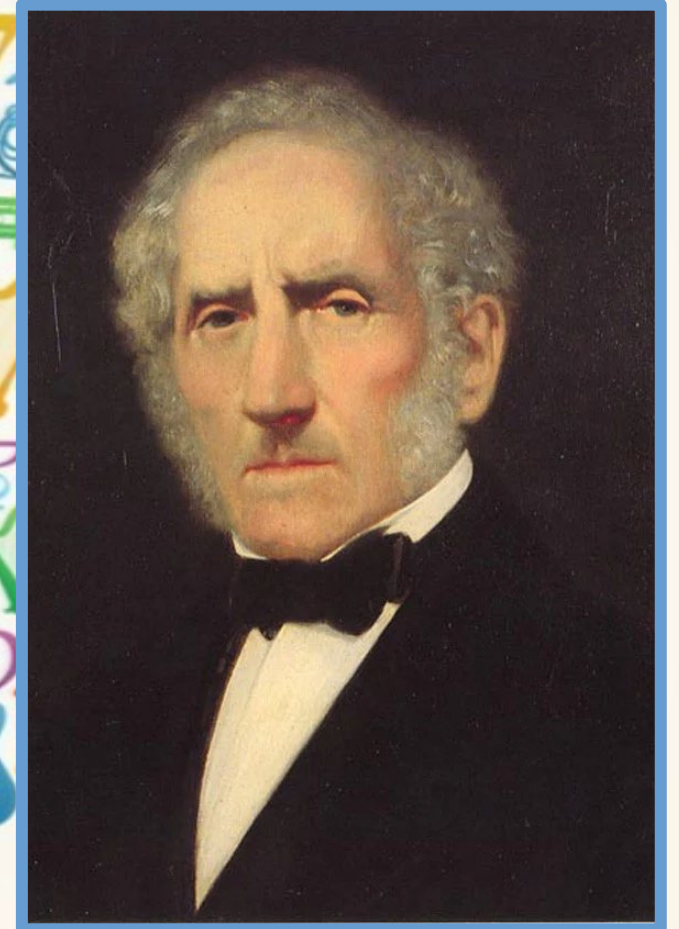
It was never performed however as there was a disagreement between the musicians a few days before the first scheduled performance.

Verdi however used this movement as part of a Requiem Mass he wrote for the Italian writer **Alessandro Manzoni**.

It has become one of his most famous works. The music you heard at the opening of this presentation is the **Dies Irae** (day of wrath).

Listen to the **Libera Me** – it is for Soprano soloist and chorus, and it is unaccompanied.

This makes it very beautiful and also very difficult.



Verdi's early education was in Busseto with Antonio Barezzi. Barezzi asked his young student to teach his daughter, Margherita, the piano and soon they were in love and married. They had two children, both of whom died when they were infants and soon after Margherita herself died.

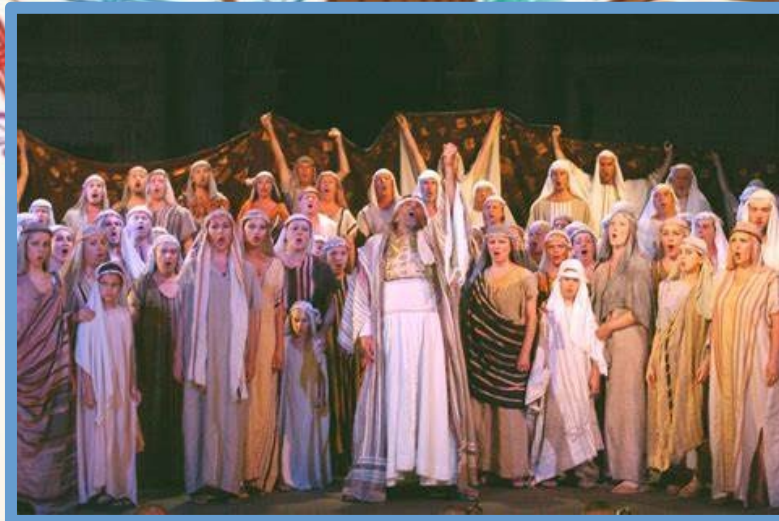
Verdi was devastated.



Verdi's first opera **Oberto** was a success in Milan, and as a result, he was asked to write three further works. One of these (written shortly after his wife's death), **Nabucco**, is still very popular.

In this opera the Hebrew slaves sing a chorus **Va Pensiero** about their homeland.

This immediately became a popular anthem with Italians who wanted their country to be unified.

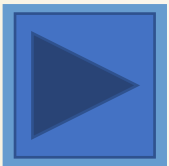




Verdi became so popular that his name was used as a political tool by the people wanting a unified Italy.

VIVA VERDI meant Viva **V**ittorio **E**manuele **R**e **D**'Italia (Long Live Victor Emmanuel King of Italy).

Verdi's operas are famous for their use of the chorus. One of his most famous operas is **Il Trovatore**, (The Trubadour). Here the chorus of Spanish Gypsies sing while striking their anvils at dawn.





This is the instrument used in the orchestra



This is a modern version. Which do you prefer?

Verdi became very successful as a composer and he used some of the money he made to buy land in his home town of Busseto. In fact, he bought the land which his family had once owned and built his own house, the **Villa Verdi**, where he lived from 1850 until his death.



At this time, he fell in love with a famous singer – the soprano, **Giuseppina Strepponi**, and they were later married.



On a trip to Paris they went to a performance of a play ***La Dame aux camélias – the Lady of the Camellias*** by Alexander Dumas (the man who wrote *The Three Musketeers*). This became the opera ***La Traviata***. Here the heroine, Violetta, who knows she is ill, is hosting a party. She toasts life, knowing that she will die at the end of the opera.

Look out for the champagne bottle



Do you think it was a good party?



At this time, the censors held much power in Italy. When Verdi wrote his opera **Rigoletto**, he had great problems.

Rigoletto is a hunch-back and the jester to the King. Rigoletto's daughter falls in love with the King who is disguised as a travelling musician.

The censors did not think a hunch-back was a suitable hero for an opera and they did not like the fact that the King was portrayed as a bad person. Verdi was upset about this and refused to change the character of Rigoletto. He did however, change the King into the Duke of Mantua.

The background features a collage of colorful musical notes, clefs, and instruments like a harp and a trumpet. A large tree trunk is visible at the bottom center. A blue-bordered box contains the text.

Verdi said...

"I see the hero has been made no longer ugly and hunchbacked!! Why? A singing hunchback...why not?...I think it splendid to show this character as outwardly deformed and ridiculous, and inwardly passionate and full of love. I chose the subject for these very qualities...if they are removed I can no longer set it to music."

Verdi wrote a famous **aria** (song) for the Duke to sing - **La donna é mobile**. He realised that it would be popular so he did not rehearse it with the orchestra and it was not heard properly until the first performance.



This is the famous **Tenor** – **Luciano Pavarotti**

Verdi was so famous that he could afford to only work on subjects that really interested him and for people who paid him handsomely.

When he was asked to write an opera for the Imperial Theatre in St Petersburg, Russia, for a vast amount of money, he agreed and wrote the opera **La Forza del Destino** – the Force of Destiny.

It has one of Verdi's most famous **overtures**.

An **overture** is played by the orchestra at the beginning of an opera. It sets the scene for the drama. Sometimes it uses melodies which are about to be sung but at other times it just sets the mood.



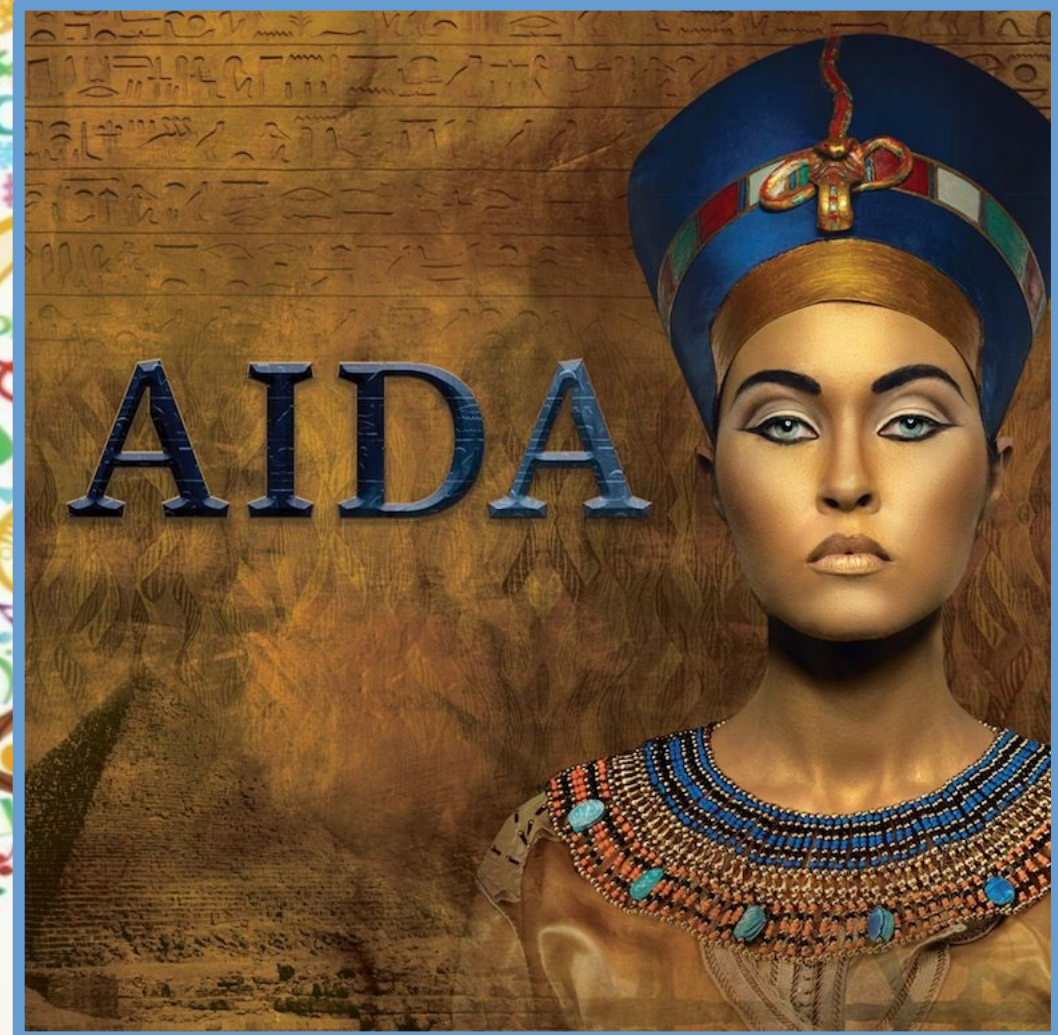
Likewise, in 1869, the Egyptian Government commissioned the opera **Aida** for the Opera House built by **Isma'il Pasha** to commemorate the opening of the Suez Canal.

This canal, still in use today, is important as it links Europe with Asia and Africa. It means that ships bringing cargoes to Europe have a much shorter route to travel and the goods arrive more quickly.



Aida is an Ethiopian Princess who has been captured by the Egyptians.

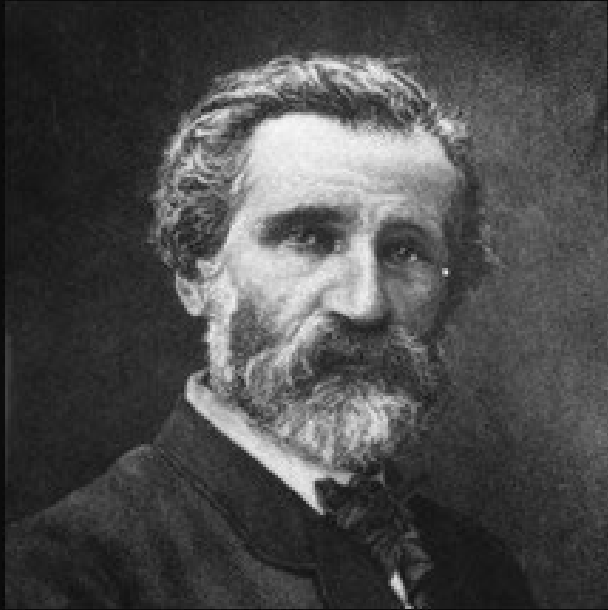
The opera was very lavish, the sets and costumes were made in France and transported to Egypt. Watch this scene when the warrior Radames, who has fallen in love with Aida returns in triumph from his battle with the Ethiopians.



When Verdi died in January 1901 all the shops in Milan closed for three days. The theatres and opera houses too.

He was given a state funeral and over 300,000 people watched as the funeral carriage, drawn by 6 horses, moved slowly through the streets. It was followed by six carriages containing flowers and wreaths and a choir of 820 singers sang **Va Pensiero**. To date, it remains the largest public assembly of any event in the history of Italy.





You may have the universe if I
may have Italy.

~ Giuseppe Verdi

AZ QUOTES