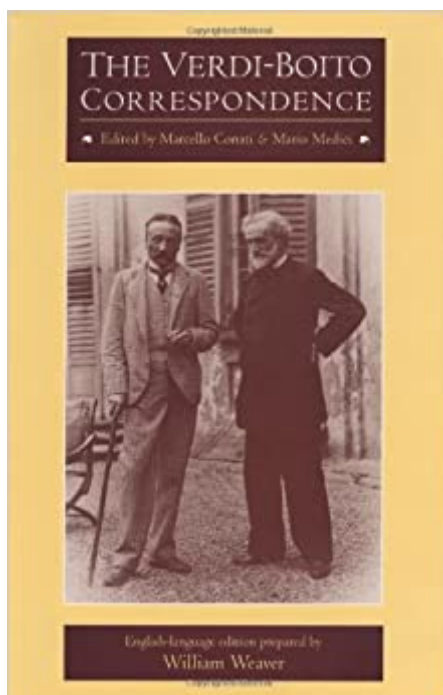


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The Verdi-Boito Correspondence



Synopsis

These 301 letters between Giuseppe Verdi and his last, most gifted librettist, Arrigo Boito, document an extraordinary chapter in musical history. Now available for the first time in English, this correspondence records both a unique friendship and its creative legacy. This new edition of the landmark Carteggio Verdi/Boito is at once a valuable resource for all students, teachers, and scholars of opera and a fascinating glimpse of the daily life of European art and artists during the fertile last decades of the 19th century. Embarking on a 20-year collaboration, Verdi and Boito produced a successful revision of Simon Boccanegra, and two new operas, Otello and Falstaff. They created what many consider to be Verdi's greatest operas, thanks both to Boito's poetry and to his handling of the composer. Here are the day-to-day tasks of creation: poet and composer debating problems of dramatic structure, words, phrases, and meters; altering dialogue as, at the same time, they converse about the wider worlds of art and music. The give and take of artistic creation is rendered fascinatingly. This edition features a new introduction by Marcello Conati, improvements and updates to the original edition, and an appendix of undated correspondence. William Weaver's translation is characteristically pitch-perfect; he also provides a short closing sketch of Boito's life after the death of his beloved maestro. Explanatory "linking texts" between the letters create a narrative.

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Customer Reviews

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) had reason to dislike librettist-composer Arrigo Boito (1842-1918), who

had scoffed at him in print. But when Verdi's librettist Francesco Maria Piave died in 1876 and a replacement was needed, Verdi's publisher lobbied hard to bring about a rapprochement between them. And as their correspondence shows, working together on Verdi's last two operas, *Otello* and *Falstaff*, as well as revising *Simon Boccanegra*, forged a bond between them that ended only with Verdi's death. Verdi, who virtually wrote his own librettos, allowed his librettists to function basically as versifiers, yet on reading Boito's final third of *Otello*, he pronounced it "divinely good." When Boito's own opera *Mefistofele* was revived successfully, Verdi was delighted; responding to Boito's enthusiasm for the *Falstaff* project, Verdi sensitively urged him to complete his opera *Nerone* first (Boito never did). Opera lovers will be pleased that their correspondence, edited by Verdi scholars Conti and Medici and published in Italy in 1978, is now available in Weaver's (*Verdi, A Documentary Study*) smooth translation and with his commentary. This collection of 301 letters is an important supplement to Mary Jane Phillips-Matz's biography *Verdi*. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Gifted Italian poet/composer Boito was the librettist for Verdi's last and perhaps greatest operas, *Otello* and *Falstaff*. He shared a deep artistic sympathy with Verdi in their finely matched duet, and his delicate tuning adjustments to Verdi's work are evident throughout this vivid translation of their 20-year correspondence. Weaver deftly condenses notes from the original edition (published in Italy as *Carteggio Verdi/Boito* in 1978) and creates helpful explanations connecting the letters. Even if many other books document Verdi's operas, few of his letters are available in English. This collection is important for its size (301 letters) and themes, not the least of which is the greatness possible (in art and friendship) when two talented men collaborate with mutual loving respect. For most serious music collections. Bonnie Jo Dopp, formerly with Dist. of Columbia P.L. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This was a gift to an opera singer. And the DIVA went nuts for it and learned a lot from it, so I am glad I bought it for her. The perfect gift for an opera singer who LOVES Verdi.

Particularly useful for MFA thesis project and Informance on INTERPRETING DESDEMONA FROM SHAKESPEAREAN TEXT TO VERDI'S OTELLO - Applying the theory of Spousal Abuse in developing the characterization of the role

This superbly-annotated collection of more than 300 letters between Verdi and his librettist Arrigo

Boito shows not only an insight into musical creativeness but also the workings of generous and selfless friendship. Boito invested an immense amount of time and effort in his own opera *Mefistofele*; as those who witnessed its revival at the English National Opera a few years ago will attest, it is a hack work that can only successfully be portrayed as parody. In these letters, Verdi is ceaselessly encouraging and interested in the work, though he must have known that it was not a work of art. For his part, Boito is touchingly appreciative of his colleague's talent - he habitually addresses Verdi as 'Dearest Maestro' - and in their exchanges the reader can gain a glimpse into the creative workings that, Wagner notwithstanding, produced the finest body of 19th-century opera. There is real spine to the work of Verdi and Boito: it encompasses politics, religion, pathos and tragedy. These letters are testament to the men's friendship and genius; it is a moving and important work, and I strongly recommend it.

Perhaps the most delightful surprise in reading this book is the number of deep-down belly-laughs experienced in reading the letters of Verdi and Boito. The text between the letters often creates suspense even for those moments when we know the outcome. This is a book to own.

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