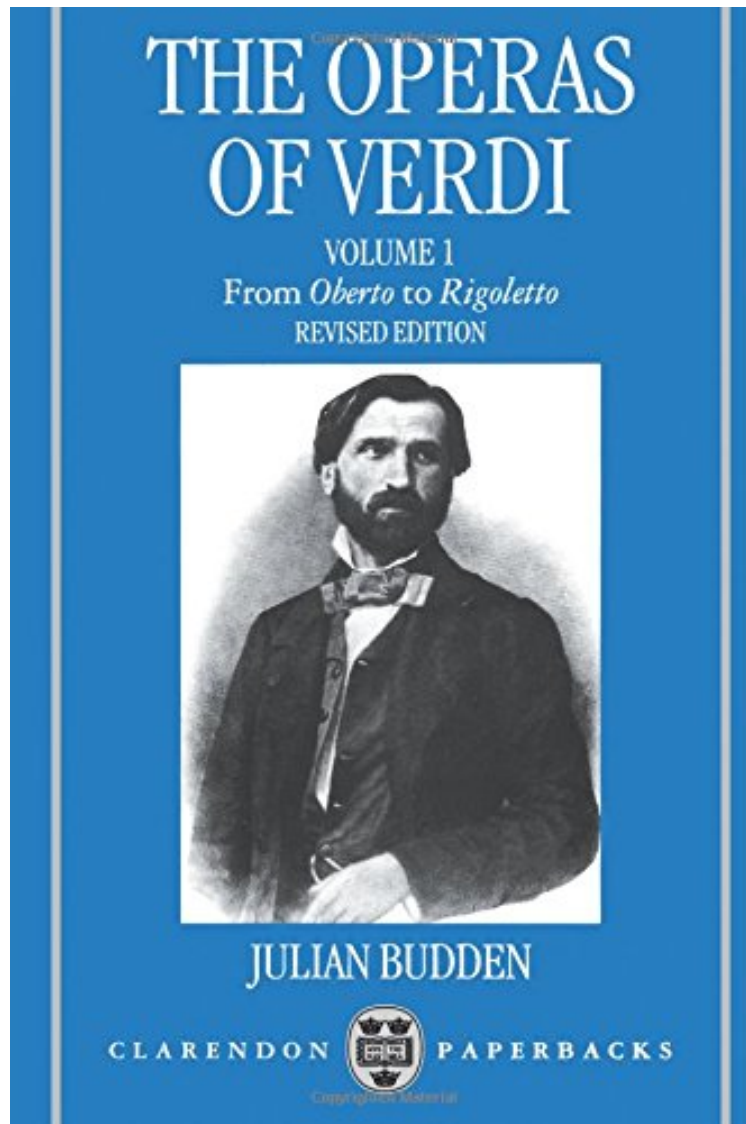


# The Operas of Verdi: Volume 1: From Oberto to Rigoletto

Julian Budden

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**Julian Budden : The Operas of Verdi: Volume 1: From Oberto to Rigoletto** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Operas of Verdi: Volume 1: From Oberto to Rigoletto:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A must for Verdi fansBy Brian LoweryI finally ordered this book, and I love it. I wish I had got it years ago. Covers the history, the music, and story of each Verdi opera up to Rigoletto. After reading about one of the operas, you will find that you enjoy it more the next time you hear it. If you like Verdi, you should have this book in your library!3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. indispensable for

Verdians; a major and accessible work of scholarship

By Stanley Crowe

Like another review here, this one really relates to all three volumes of Budden's traversal of Verdi's operas. I can't think of many books in which works of art (whether literature, painting, drama, or music) are as effectively contextualized as they are here. The context is historical in several senses: it is attentive to the particular political and social circumstances in which Verdi's operas were created, but it's attentive too to the "politics" of the Italian (and at times Parisian) opera world in which Verdi, Donizetti, Bellini, Rossini, and a host of minor figures belonged. We hear about managers, impresarios, singers, opera houses, and of course librettists, and Budden quotes tellingly from Verdi's ample correspondence with all these groups. We get a sense, therefore, of Verdi, not only as composer, but as businessman and collaborator, and we get a sense of his energy and personality and decisiveness. It's an attractive portrait: a touchy, principled, ambitious, and, of course, highly gifted man. But Budden gives us more: the musical context is also made clear in excellent general essays at the beginnings of the first two volumes, before Budden embarks on individual chapters on every opera. In the individual chapters, we get accounts of the genesis of the operas, plenty of information on their sources (often with ample quotation), including descriptions of how the opera plots modify the plots of the originals, and some account of the early reception and early performance history of each opera. Then there's the musical analysis itself, and the text is replete with musical examples. Budden has a fine sense of where Verdi's originality is in evidence, even in the early operas, and while these early operas get extensive treatment in their individual chapters, the "great" operas get correspondingly fuller treatment and analysis. Even if your musical knowledge is limited (as mine is), you will find Budden's three volumes fascinating and instructive -- and, as important as anything, written with clarity, grace, and humor. This is a major work of criticism and scholarship.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Terrific Achievement

By New Yorker

I'm reviewing the first volume, but this is really about all three volumes. After a general introduction situating Verdi in the Italian opera structure of his time, the author presents a separate chapter on each title, first giving the background of the project and then analyzing the action scene by scene, with plenty of musical examples. Instead of following a recording with the libretto, you can follow it using Budden's précis, for much enlightenment on how Verdi created music drama. It's really an amazingly detailed excursion. Had you heard about Budden's plans before he actually started writing, you might guess that no one life is long enough to allow an author to lay out so much detail, so much thought and insight. There are many great books. But this one is astonishing.

Marked by extraordinary research and enhanced by hundreds of musical illustrations, this monumental study follows the development of Verdi's oeuvre from his earliest opera *Oberto* to his final work, *Falstaff*. In writing the first edition of this classic work--which appeared to great acclaim in 1973--Julian Budden mined the vast resources of European archives to provide a groundbreaking interpretation of Verdi's work, and along the way discovered much new material, including an unpublished additional aria for *I Due Foscari*. Now available in a revised edition, *The Operas of Verdi* is now brought up to date in light of the most recent scholarship, making it more useful and entertaining than ever. Volume 1 traces the organic growth and development of the composer's style from 1839 to 1851--from *Oberto* to *Rigoletto*--and examines each opera in detail, offering a full account of its dramatic and historical origins as well as a brief critical evaluation. More than 350 musical examples make the significance of these early operas to Verdi's developing style especially clear. In the second volume, Budden covers those operas written during the decadence of the post-Rossini period. During this time Verdi, having exhausted the simple lyricism found in such works as *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata*, found new life as he directly confronted the masters of the Paris opera with his *Les Vpres Siciliennes*. The new scale and variety of musical thought that can be sensed in the Italian operas which followed is shown here to culminate in *La Forza del Destino*. The third and final volume of the study covers the quarter century which saw grand opera on the Parisian model established throughout Italy, and the spread of cosmopolitan influences that convinced many that Italian music was losing its identity. Verdi produced his four last and greatest operas during this time--*Don Carlos*, *Aida*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*--operas which helped inaugurate "verismo," in which a new, recognizably Italian idiom was realized. These three volumes cover every aspect of Verdi's rich and varied operatic achievement. Every lover of opera in particular and music in general will want a set in their library.

.com The three volumes of studies of Verdi's operas by Julian Budden are rightly classics of the genre. This is owing to their scope of information on the genesis, circumstances, variants, and specifics of the operas themselves--certainly the fullest description these works have ever been given--as well as to the wealth of surrounding information about the composer, his life, his friends, and his times. It is a measure of the excellence of Budden's achievement that this cornucopia of information is surveyed in very readable prose--readers get a picture of each work within its context. Budden's knowledge of 19th-century opera--both in Italy and in France--is wide-ranging, and he is able to place Verdi and his works in comparison with those of Donizetti, Pacini, Mercadante, and Meyerbeer. He discusses how the great operatic genius emerged from the background of early-19th-century opera and how Verdi's own early, uneven works blossomed into the glory of his later ones. Budden, thankfully, is not a hagiographer, and he recognizes Verdi's faults as well as his strengths, but few--if any--writers have managed to demonstrate how Verdi both blended in with his musical surroundings and stood out from them. These studies, with all their richness, are a good source of information

about a host of lesser composers of the time. Budden includes many musical examples to highlight his writing in this, a work of scholarship of the highest order. --Patrick J. Smith 'Where on earth did Verdians turn before Budden? When the first volume of his chronological study of the complete 31 operas appeared in 1973, it was already clear this could prove the standard work...With Verdi productions proliferating in the run-up to the centenary of his death in 2001, this great study grows ever more necessary.' BBC Music Magazine

About the Author Julian Budden was for seven years External Services Music Organizer in the B.B.C. For five years previously he was Chief Producer, Opera, for radio. He is a member of the editorial board for the projected critical edition of all Verdi's works undertaken by the house of Ricordi in collaboration with the University of Chicago Press.