

IL TROVATORE HAS IT ALL—A BRAVE HERO, A SELFLESS HEROINE, A sinister villain, skeletons in the family closet, and four acts brimming with gloriously passionate music. It's true that the story has been called absurd and impossibly confusing. It is the one work most often sent up whenever people are trying to make fun of opera. But Verdi's score also contains some of the best-loved arias ever written.

Il Trovatore is an opera of extremes. It plunges listeners into a world turned upside down by jealousy and rage, love and war. Concerns about a confusing plot crumble in the face of David McVicar's acclaimed Metropolitan Opera production, a staging that the *New York Times* called "clear-headed, psychologically insightful and fluid." The extraordinary cast of the production's 2009 premiere run reunites for this *Live in HD* presentation: Marcelo Álvarez stars in the title role of the troubadour Manrico, opposite Sondra Radvanovsky as his beloved Leonora. Dmitri Hvorostovsky sings the evil Count di Luna, and Dolora Zajick is the mysterious Azucena. The Met's Music Director James Levine is on the podium.

This guide is designed to support students' appreciation of *Il Trovatore*—to familiarize them with its subject and music, and to direct them toward the subtleties of a work that embodies the genre of opera like few others. The activities offer a detailed look both at *Il Trovatore* itself and at the artistic choices shaping this Metropolitan Opera *Live in HD* production.

THE WORK:

IL TROVATORE

Music by Giuseppe Verdi
(1813–1901)

An opera in four acts, sung in Italian

Libretto by Salvatore Cammarano,
based on the play *El Trovador* by
Antonio García Gutiérrez

First performed on January 19, 1853
at the Teatro Apollo, Rome, Italy

PRODUCTION

James Levine, Conductor

David McVicar, Production

Charles Edwards, Set Designer

Brigitte Reiffenstuel,
Costume Designer

Lighting Designed by
Jennifer Tipton

Leah Hausman, Choreographer

STARRING

Sondra Radvanovsky (Leonora)

Dolora Zajick (Azucena)

Marcelo Álvarez (Manrico)

Dmitri Hvorostovsky (Count di Luna)

Stefan Kocán (Ferrando)



Sondra Radvanovsky



Dolora Zajick



Marcelo Álvarez



Dmitri Hvorostovsky



Stefan Kocán

The guide includes four types of activities. Reproducible student resources for the activities are available at the back of this guide.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:

a full-length activity, designed to support your ongoing curriculum

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS:

opportunities to focus on excerpts from *Il Trovatore* to enhance familiarity with the work

PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES:

to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, calling attention to specific aspects of this production

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION:

a wrap-up activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into students' views of the performing arts and humanities

The activities in this guide address several aspects of *Il Trovatore*:

- the opera's narrative structure
- the traditional musical forms Verdi uses and develops in the score
- the close integration of the music with Cammarano's libretto
- the longstanding popularity of *Il Trovatore*'s melodies
- the opera's history, reputation, and cultural influence
- the production as a unified work of art, involving creative decisions by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera

The guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Il Trovatore* whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, seeking to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts in general—as a medium of entertainment and as creative expression.



Act I: The Duel *Scene 1: Outside the palace of Count di Luna.* Ferrando, an officer in Count di Luna’s army, is on night duty outside the Count’s apartments. He tells his men that the Count is in love with a noblewoman, Leonora, and fears his rival for her affections, a troubadour who sings nightly in the palace gardens.

At the soldiers’ request, Ferrando then relates a kind of ghost story—the sad tale of the Count’s younger brother. As an infant, the boy was believed to have been cursed by a gypsy witch (see the sidebar on page 4: The Romani People). The woman was pursued and burned at the stake. In retaliation, her daughter kidnapped the baby. Shortly thereafter, a child’s burnt body was found at the site where the witch had burned to death. The Count’s brother was never seen again. Di Luna has sworn to bring the gypsy’s daughter to justice (**Tracks 31–35**).

Scene 2: In the palace gardens. Leonora, together with her confidante Ines, is waiting for the troubadour to appear. She tells Ines the story of her previous meeting, long ago, with the mysterious man. After civil war broke out between the kingdom and rebel forces, she never saw him again—until one day his voice rang out from the garden below her balcony (**Tracks 1–3**).

The story disturbs Ines, who begs Leonora to forget the man (**Track 4**). Leonora replies that she is unable to. If she can’t live for him, she will die for him (**Tracks 5–7**). They return to Leonora’s chambers.

Count di Luna appears, intending to visit Leonora in her apartment. He hesitates when he hears the troubadour’s song in the distance. Leonora has heard it, too, and rushes in. In the dark, she mistakes the Count for the troubadour and greets him affectionately. When she realizes her mistake, the enraged Count demands that the troubadour identify himself. He is Manrico, commander of the rebel army. The Count challenges him to a duel, in spite of Leonora’s pleadings.

Act II: The Gypsy *Scene 1: In the mountains of Biscay.* Several weeks have passed. At dawn, a band of gypsies work at their anvils (**Tracks 28–30**). Among them are Manrico and his mother, Azucena. Azucena tells of a woman who was burned at the stake (**Track 19**). She cries out, “Avenge me! Avenge me!”—a phrase Manrico has heard before, but never understood (**Track 20**).

When the rest of the group head off, Manrico insists that Azucena at last tell him her story (**Tracks 21–26**). It is the story we heard from Ferrando in Act I, but now we learn that the woman burned at the stake was Manrico’s grandmother, Azucena’s mother. Azucena herself was the daughter who kidnapped the count’s baby brother. In the confusion of the moment, Azucena now reveals, she threw her own baby into the flames by mistake. So the count’s younger brother survived.

Manrico is confused. Is it possible he is not Azucena’s son? She replies that he is her son. She claims to have misspoken, overwhelmed by the horrible memory. She reminds him that she has always cared for him and loved him as a mother (**Track 27**).

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Manrico: “mahn-REE-ko”

Azucena: “ah-dzoo-CHAY-nah”

Leonora: “lay-oh-NO-rah”

Ferrando: “feh-RAHN-do”

Ines: “ee-NESS”

Ruiz: “roo-EASE”

Aliaferia: “ahl-ya-FAIR-ee-a”

Il Trovatore: “eel troh-vah-TOH-ray”—Italian for “the troubadour”

Manrico recalls his fierce duel with Count di Luna. On the verge of victory, he could not bring himself to deal the fatal blow.

A messenger arrives, bearing two reports. The rebels have captured the stronghold of Castellor; Manrico is to hurry there and take charge. And Leonora, believing Manrico killed in battle, has decided to enter a convent. In spite of his mother's pleas, Manrico rushes off to find Leonora.

Scene 2: At the convent. Count di Luna, Ferrando, and their soldiers quietly enter the convent. Believing Manrico dead, the count, too, intends to stop Leonora from taking her vows. Not even God, he vows, can steal his beloved from him (**Tracks 8–12**).

Leonora enters and the Count emerges from hiding. Manrico appears. "Have you come down from heaven?" Leonora asks, "or am I in heaven with you?" Again the Count challenges Manrico, but his own soldiers convince him to stand down. Manrico and Leonora depart, leaving the Count and his men behind.

Act III: The Gypsy's Son *Scene 1: The camp of the Count's army.* Ferrando and his soldiers prepare for battle. The Count is still obsessed with Leonora. Ferrando brings news that their scouts have captured a gypsy woman—Azucena. The Count interrogates her, asking whether she knows of a child kidnapped years before. He reveals himself as the kidnapped child's brother and realizes that Azucena was the kidnapper—and killer. His men prepare to burn her at the stake.

Scene 2: In the fortress of Castellor. Manrico assures Leonora that the rebels will hold off the Count's army and that they can get married at last (**Tracks 13–14**). Ruiz,

THE ROMANI PEOPLE *Il Trovatore*, like many other musical and literary works of the 19th century, describes a fantastic, even dangerous band of wanderers known as "gypsies." In the Act I aria "Abbieta zingara" for instance, a gypsy woman is accused of witchcraft and blamed for causing a child's illness. These fictional gypsies perpetuate an unfortunate stereotype of the real-life gypsies, also known as the Romani people, or Roma—a nomadic ethnic minority living primarily in the nations of Europe.

In part, some people have been suspicious of the Roma because they maintain their own distinct language and culture. Because Romani culture includes fortune telling, Tarot-card reading, and small-scale commerce, and because Romani communities move from place to place, prejudice against the Roma has persisted for many centuries. They were targeted for extermination by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party during the Second World War. Yet over the years, Roma culture has also had a strong influence on European fashion, art, and especially music, inspiring both classical composers like Johannes Brahms and jazz greats like Django Reinhardt.

More information about the Roma and their lives in contemporary European society can be found at the Web site of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)'s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.



Manrico's aide-de-camp, appears with news that an old gypsy woman has been captured by the Count's men and is about to be burned. Manrico tells Leonora that the gypsy is his mother. He leads his men to rescue her (**Tracks 15–18**).

Count di Luna (left) and Manrico (right)
in Act II, scene 2

PHOTO: KEN HOWARD/METROPOLITAN OPERA

Act IV: The Execution *Scene 1: The Count's palace.* Manrico has been captured by di Luna's forces. Leonora and Ruiz arrive, hoping to rescue him. Ruiz departs. Leonora, alone, hears Manrico singing her a farewell from his cell in the tower. She vows to save his life or die (**Tracks 37–42**).

The Count enters and finds Leonora. She pleads for mercy, but the Count's anger is inflamed by her love for the troubadour. He seeks vengeance. Leonora offers herself in exchange for Manrico's life. When di Luna accepts, she secretly swallows poison. They head off toward the tower prison.

Scene 2: The prison. Manrico and Azucena share a cell. Fearing that she will be burned at the stake as well, Azucena again recounts her mother's death. Manrico convinces her to rest. Leonora arrives, announcing that she has come to save Manrico, but he won't flee without her. He believes she has betrayed him by giving herself to the Count—until he realizes what she really has done and that she is dying. The Count enters and, finding Leonora at death's door, sends Manrico off to be executed. Azucena reveals to the horrified Count that Manrico was his missing brother. Her mother is avenged.

WHO'S WHO IN IL TROVATORE

CHARACTER		VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Count di Luna	a nobleman in the service of the Prince of Aragon	baritone	Di Luna is in love with Leonora. He realizes too late that Manrico is in fact his younger brother.
Manrico	a troubadour and an officer in the rebel army of the Prince of Urgel	tenor	Manrico is also in love with Leonora. He was raised as the son of Azucena, but is actually the Count's younger brother.
Azucena	an old gypsy woman	mezzo-soprano	Azucena is Manrico's mother—but not his biological mother! Azucena's mother was burned at the stake years ago.
Leonora	a noblewoman	soprano	Leonora loves Manrico, but di Luna is also courting her.
Ferrando	an officer serving under di Luna	bass	Ferrando begins the opera by telling the all-important backstory.
Ines	Leonora's confidante	soprano	
Ruiz	Manrico's aide	tenor	
An old gypsy man		bass	
A messenger		tenor	

Backlit: A Close Look at Plot and Back Story in *Il Trovatore*

Verdi's *Il Trovatore* has been both acclaimed as one of the most gripping operas in the repertoire and derided as ridiculous. The playwright George Bernard Shaw celebrated its "tragic power, poignant melancholy, impetuous vigor, and...sweet and intense pathos," yet warned that "if it allowed you to think for a moment, it would crumble into absurdity." To a great extent, the controversy is rooted in a deceptively simple narrative involving characters blessed—or burdened—with an intricate back story.

This two-part classroom activity takes students on a journey through several key moments in *Il Trovatore*. In Part I, they will learn the basic structure and characteristics of the double-aria form while collecting evidence about the personalities and backgrounds of three main characters from their arias. Part I ends with a cliffhanger: the second part of Manrico's aria (the so-called *cabaletta*) is held back until Part II.

In Part II, students will listen to the second half of Manrico's aria, together with Azucena's aria. This will prompt a re-examination of the story by introducing an element of back story which affects characters' behavior and motivation. Students will:

- analyze the core plot of the opera
- listen critically to arias sung by each of the four main characters
- examine Verdi and Cammarano's use of the double-aria form to establish and enrich their narrative
- formulate their own interpretations of events represented in key solos
- assess the effect a back story can have on the trajectory of a foreground plot
- create their own "double aria" presentations of elements of back story from familiar, contemporary tales

STEPS

Trying to summarize the tale of *Il Trovatore* can be daunting. From one perspective, audiences are launched into the middle of a story that has been literally going on for generations: The opera's inciting incident was perpetrated offstage and long ago by the grandmother of the title character. From another point of view, Verdi and Cammarano use the simplest of love triangles as a vehicle for two hours of unforgettable melody and thrilling performance—and they do it by relying on time-tested operatic conventions. This activity will help even students with no opera experience develop an analytic approach to the uses of form in *Il Trovatore*, grounded in their own experience with well-known stories from popular culture.

INSTRUCTIONAL SUMMARY

PART I: RECOGNIZING THE DOUBLE ARIA

Step 1. Activate prior knowledge in identifying the core plot of three familiar contemporary narratives: *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, and *Spider-Man*.

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide.

You will also need the audio selections from *Il Trovatore* available online or on the accompanying CD.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Language Arts (Literature)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- to recognize distinctions and connections between core plot and back story in a complex narrative
- to consider the use of musical forms for enriching a simple narrative
- to analyze Verdi's use of the double-aria form in *Il Trovatore*
- to interpret the narrative structure of *Il Trovatore* in the context of familiar, contemporary stories

VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO

the highest-pitched general type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian “mezzo” = middle, medium)

CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS

the lowest sounding male voice

Step 2. Introduce the similarly simple core plot of *Il Trovatore*, identifying representative moments in the opera.

Step 3. Introduce the use of arias to amplify characterizations and enrich narrative.

Step 4. Introduce specific characteristics of the double-aria form.

Step 5. Listen critically to Leonora’s, Count di Luna’s, and Manrico’s arias. Detailed Listening Guides are provided to help you prepare, but you needn’t point out every detail if that is not appropriate for your students. Key takeaways are:

- Leonora has a traditional double aria providing back story about her love for Manrico.
- Count di Luna has a traditional double aria offering no back story, but considerable information about his personality.
- Manrico’s double aria has a traditional structure, with an important difference between the first part (*cavatina*), included in Part I, and the second (*cabaletta*), which is held back until Part II.

PART II: TWEAKING THE DOUBLE ARIA

Step 6. Review concepts from Part I.

Step 7. Activate prior knowledge by considering the effects of back story on *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, and *Spider-Man*.

Steps 8–10. Listen critically to Manrico’s and Azucena’s arias. Key takeaways are:

- The conclusion of Manrico’s double aria (a so-called *cabaletta*) reveals the conflict between his love for his mother and his love for Leonora.
- Though Azucena’s aria shares a structure with the others, its musical styles are different. The first part of her aria is referred to as a *canzone* and the second as a *narrative aria*.
- Azucena’s aria, including several moments of dialogue with Manrico, introduces an important element of back story. This information, delivered in Act II, affects the meaning of events later in the opera.

Steps 11–12. Compare *Il Trovatore* with the contemporary narratives to reinforce the concept of a relationship between core plot and back story.

PART I: RECOGNIZING THE DOUBLE ARIA

Step 1: Distribute the reproducible “Good Guys and Bad Guys.” To your students, this activity may seem both easy and unconnected to 19th-century opera. Nevertheless, it will help them construct a frame with which to make sense of *Il Trovatore*.

All they need to do is look down the list of names on the lower part of the reproducible and use them to fill in the chart above—correctly associating the good guys and bad guys in three famous narratives (*Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, and the first *Spider-Man* film). Then, in as few words as possible, they should jot down the basic plot of each of these narratives under the heading “What happens?” For example:

- Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia defeat Darth Vader to save the Republic.
 - Harry Potter fights Lord Voldemort to the death to protect the world.
 - Spider-Man ends a crime wave by vanquishing the Green Goblin.
- Point out that there are more rows and columns on the chart than they need right now: They will be filling these in later.

TIP It's possible that a student might at this point refer to Darth Vader as Luke and Leia's father, to the fact that Voldemort killed Harry Potter's parents, or to the Green Goblin's uncostumed identity as the father of Peter Parker/Spider-Man's best friend, Harry Osborn. If so, acknowledge that they're correct and ask them to hold onto that thought. It will become important information in Part II.

Step 2: Have a few students present their simple plot descriptions. These will serve as examples of the observation that many complicated tales have an essentially simple core plot. Point out that *Il Trovatore* is such a work, and that, as a group, the class will examine why so many people nonetheless find it complicated.

Step 3: Lay out the core plot of *Il Trovatore*, much the way the character Ferrando does in the opera's very first scene. **Five big ideas** drive the plot, of which Ferrando states four (See Musical Highlight: Ghost Story):

1. **Count di Luna loves Leonora.**
2. **Manrico loves Leonora.**
3. **Leonora loves Manrico.**
4. **The Count hates and fears Manrico—and wants him dead.**

Almost all the action of *Il Trovatore* is explained by these four ideas. But the implications of that action are substantially explained by a fifth big idea, which will emerge at the end of Part I.

5. **Manrico loves his mother.**

The first four main ideas underlie the second scenes in each of the opera's four acts.

IL TROVATORE PARODIES The plot of *Il Trovatore* has inspired both parodies and other works based on a similar premise. The opera sparked a spate of switched-at-a-young-age stories during the late 19th century, ranging from Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* to several comic operas by Gilbert and Sullivan. In *The Pirates of Penzance*, Gilbert and Sullivan not only borrowed the lifelong-mistaken-identity theme, but also adapted the melody of Verdi's Anvil Chorus in the pirates' chorus "With Catlike Tread."

One of the most famous spoofs didn't change a note of *Il Trovatore*. In the climactic scene of their 1935 film *A Night at the Opera*, the Marx Brothers run wild and wisecracking through an opening night performance of Verdi's work. It begins with the overture, continues through the Anvil Chorus (see Musical Highlight: Hail Hail the Gypsy Band), and concludes with the first part of the Miserere (see Musical Highlight: Merciful Hit).

- In Act I, Scene 2, the Count and Manrico both show up at Leonora’s home at the same time, and the Count challenges Manrico to a duel.
- In Act II, Scene 2, believing her beloved Manrico dead, Leonora has decided to enter a convent. Again, the Count and Manrico show up. Again the Count challenges Manrico to a duel. This time, his own soldiers dissuade him.
- In Act III, Scene 2, Count di Luna doesn’t appear, but as the scene ends, Manrico leaves Leonora... to go fight the Count.
- In Act IV, Scene 2, infuriated that Leonora still loves Manrico, the Count has him beheaded.

Step 4: Obviously there’s a lot more to *Il Trovatore* than this. As students might guess, much of it emerges in the first scenes of each of the acts.

Most of the opera’s major arias, however, are placed in the second scenes. Arias are the self-contained solo numbers of the main characters that reveal their thoughts, their feelings, and especially in *Il Trovatore*, their memories.

In *Il Trovatore*, Verdi and Cammarano continued a tradition of “double arias,” a form whose two main parts are known as the *cavatina* (“cah-vah-TEEN-ah”) and the *cabaletta* (“cah-bah-LET-tah”).

- **The double-aria form begins with a brief introductory passage, sometimes involving more than one character.**
- **Next, the key character sings a cavatina—a moderately paced, simple song, often pensive, generally expressing deep internal feeling.**
- **A brief tempo di mezzo (“TEM-po dee MET-zo”), or middle section, follows, during which some event or comment affects the mood of the scene.**
- **The key character then sings his or her cabaletta—a rhythmically animated section, often in faster tempo, with internal reprises and more vocal ornamentation.**
- **Often, toward the end of the cabaletta, another character or the chorus joins in, sometimes expressing a contradictory thought or feeling.**

This double-aria form appears again and again in *Il Trovatore*. Some examples involve notable variation—a change in the pattern that conveys meaning. In the next step, students will listen closely to double arias sung by Leonora, Count di Luna, and Manrico in the second scenes of Acts I, II, and III, respectively. They’ll become familiar with the double-aria form, they’ll learn to recognize ways in which Verdi plays with the pattern to enrich the musical language—and they’ll figure out the fifth big idea.

Step 5: Here, students will listen critically to arias sung by Leonora and the Count and to the first half of an aria sung by Manrico. Listening Guides follow.

In each case, distribute the appropriate reproducible found at the back of this guide and have students follow along as they listen to the track. Invite them to listen for clues in the track, musical effects that might carry information. (Many of these are noted in the Listening Guides.) They can take notes in the space provided on the reproducible.

LISTENING GUIDE FOR THE REPRODUCIBLE "LEONORA'S ARIA"

Introduction This double aria provides a classic example of the form. The introductory section, **Track 1**, sets up the story Leonora will tell in her cavatina. Strings throb as she recalls a mysterious warrior, dramatically accent her reference to his victory, then gently underscore her lasting memory. When her confidante, Ines, asks "Che avvenne?" (KAY ah-VEN-neh: "What happened?"), Verdi's music blends the question dreamily into Leonora's recollection, indicating that Ines is caught up in the tale. Verdi and Cammarano also use the question, together with Leonora's response, "Ascolta." (ah-SCOL-ta: "Listen"), to lead into the cavatina itself, **Tracks 2 and 3**.

Leonora's cavatina, "Tacea la notte placida," Act I, Scene 2 "Tacea la notte placida" (ta-CHAY-a lah NOT-teh PLA-chee-da: "It was silent in the peaceful night"), has become a standard in the concert repertoire. Leonora paints a typically romantic scene in the first stanza, **Track 2**. But notice how the track begins with dark, foreboding sounds in the orchestra. An ominous rhythm continues beneath luxuriously long lines of song, then transmutes into the gentle pulse of a waltz as Leonora describes the sweet, far-off strings of the troubadour's lute. The simple rising melody carries listeners right into her recollection, culminating in an ecstatic memory of the troubadour.

In heralding the second stanza, Verdi brings back the same foreboding orchestral line, momentarily sweeping away the pleasant memory (**Track 3**). Again, Leonora's voice rises in an animated waltz, although darkness intrudes, the briefest of warnings, at "Al core" (ahl KOH-reh—"To my heart"), before she gives in with full voice to her dream. Your students may want to offer their thoughts on the decision to run a stream of darkness through so happy, hopeful a song. What might Verdi have had in mind?

Tempo di mezzo, Act I, Scene 2 Usually, in the tempo di mezzo, or middle section of a double aria, something happens that affects the mood of the scene. In this case, it's Ines's forceful response to Leonora's reverie, underscored by frantic, worried strings (beginning of **Track 4**). Ines changes the subject from the unknown troubadour to Leonora herself. But Leonora won't listen—"Obliarlo?" (oh-blee-ARE-lo: "Forget him?"). Impossible! Ines just doesn't understand. With the lively cabaletta "Di tale amor" Leonora intends to explain.



Sondra Radvanovsky as Leonora
PHOTO KEN HOWARD/METROPOLITAN OPERA

Leonora’s cabaletta, “Di tale amor,” Act I, Scene 2 “Di tale amor” (dee TAH-leh ah-MORE; “With such love,” **Tracks 5, 6 and 7**) is a traditionally upbeat, well-ornamented cabaletta. Ines interrupts briefly in the middle (**Track 6**) to protest, which sets the stage for Leonora to repeat the stanza (**Track 7**), trilling and leaping to ever higher notes.

It’s common for cabalettas to be forward-looking, and Leonora ends this one with two future-tense verbs, “vivrò” (veev-RO) and “morirò” (mow-ree-RO): She will either live for the troubadour or die for him. Students should listen closely to these lines at the ends of both **Track 5** and **Track 7**. The melody with which Leonora mentions dying is as proud and joyful as that with which she sings of love. Some critics hear this as Verdi commenting with irony on Leonora’s unqualified declaration. Ask students what they think. Then have them take notes at the bottom of the worksheet:

What have they learned about Leonora from this double aria?

What kind of person is she?

How might her memories of the troubadour—her back story—affect her future?

LISTENING GUIDE FOR THE REPRODUCIBLE “COUNT DI LUNA’S ARIA”

Introduction Leonora’s Act I aria leaves no doubt about the “Leonora loves Manrico” aspect of *Il Trovatore*. The Count’s aria in Act II does the same for “Count di Luna loves Leonora.” In fact, it reveals that there’s little else on his mind. He believes Manrico has died in battle, so there’s no need to reflect on idea #4: “The Count hates and fears Manrico—and wants him dead.”

The sequence begins as the Count and Ferrando slip into the convent, hoping to snag Leonora before she can take religious vows. The sneaky plucked strings that open the introductory section, **Track 8**, depict their stealth. Ferrando, perhaps as uncertain about the plan as Ines was in the case of Leonora, tentatively characterizes his superior as “bold,” and the Count runs with it, whipping himself into a frenzy, almost proud of his obsession. The cavatina, **Track 9**, reveals that within that obsession lies gentler emotion.

Count di Luna’s cavatina, “Il balen del suo sorriso,” Act II, Scene 2 Woodwinds play softly as *Il balen del suo sorriso* (eel bah-LEN del SUE-oh so-REE-zo: “The flash of her smile”) begins, consistent with the romance in the Count’s thoughts. He sings of love that inflames him, of a storm in his heart. These images of power, prefigured in the introductory section, swell here. But now he credits Leonora’s smile with calming the storm. By the end of the cavatina, Verdi’s music demonstrates that the Count can, indeed, find a calm within himself (**Track 9**).



Dmitri Hvorostovsky as Count di Luna
PHOTO KEN HOWARD/METROPOLITAN OPERA

Tempo di mezzo, Act II, Scene 2 Ultimately, however, the Count is a man of action, not romance. The middle section (**Track 10**) sets his plan into action. The ceremony is about to begin. The pace quickens. The Count gives orders. His soldiers obey.

Count di Luna's cabaletta, "Per me ora fatale," Act II, Scene 2 Like Leonora's, Count di Luna's cabaletta (**Track 11**) looks to the future. Yet "Per me ora fatale" (pare meh OH-rah fa-TA-leh: "Speed up time for me") sounds more like a battle march than an ecstatic vision, and battles need enemies. The Count pits himself against God for Leonora's hand. He almost seems to have forgotten the need for stealth in the convent—until his men join in whispering (**Track 12**). The Count takes their cue, toning his blasphemous challenge down to a similar whisper, but keeps repeating it with barely managed excitement until the double aria concludes where it began, with soldiers psyching themselves up: Be bold!

As with Leonora's aria, students should take a moment here to record their thoughts about the Count.

What has this double aria revealed?

Does Count di Luna seem to be concerned with the past?

How might the sentiments expressed here affect his future behavior?

LISTENING GUIDE FOR THE REPRODUCIBLE "MANRICO'S ARIA"

Introduction Manrico, the troubadour, is the third leg of the central love triangle. As Leonora did in Act I, Scene 2, and the Count in Act II, Scene 2, he begins his solo by expressing one of the five big ideas: "Manrico loves Leonora." Here, however, Verdi and Cammarano vary the double-aria pattern. The big change comes where it usually does: in the tempo di mezzo, the middle section.

The sequence also brings a small change. Both Leonora and the Count sang about absent loves. Here, Leonora is present and, as heard in the introductory section (**Track 13**), quite worried. Manrico tries to cheer her, virtually without orchestral accompaniment. This seems not to work. The orchestral section that follows conveys Leonora's unconvinced silence. Manrico needs to do more.

Manrico's cavatina, "Ah sì, ben mio," Act III, Scene 2 In "Ah sì, ben mio" (ah see ben MEE-oh: "Ah yes, my love"), **Track 14**, Manrico does his best to raise Leonora's spirits. He expresses both his confidence and his love. But once more, a troubling accompaniment underlies the brave song. Manrico knows he is singing against the odds. As the cavatina's last lines recur several times, Manrico ends up singing more about love after death than love in real life. It's hard to imagine how he could follow up with a bouncy cabaletta.



Marcelo Álvarez as Manrico
PHOTO KEN HOWARD/METROPOLITAN OPERA

FUN FACT: Tenor Enrico Caruso, one of the first superstars of classical music, reportedly said it was easy to mount a production of *Il Trovatore*: all you needed were the four greatest singers in the world.

Tempo di mezzo, Act III, Scene 2 As noted above, the middle section of a double aria often involves information that changes the emotional tone of the scene. This time, it's an important piece of news that also provides a big clue to the fifth big idea in the core plot of *Il Trovatore*.

Track 15 begins with the sounds of an organ, reminiscent of a wedding ceremony. Manrico's cavatina has worked; Leonora has taken heart. The lovers are singing a brief duet about their nuptial dreams, when all of a sudden Ruiz runs in (**Track 16**). He need say only one word to shatter this fragile moment: "zingara" (TZIN-gah-rah: "the gypsy woman"). The pace accelerates. In the rush and tumble, Verdi punctuates more words with orchestral reinforcement: "la pira" (la PEE-rah: "the pyre"), "oscillano" (oh-SHEEL-la-no: "shaking"), and finally—as Manrico reveals his past to Leonora—"suo figlio" (SUE-oh FEEL-yo: "her son").

All thoughts of marriage have fled Manrico's brain. He can barely sputter out orders to muster his troops. In this flood of feeling, the tempo di mezzo points to the aforementioned fifth big idea. It's the only one that involves a character outside the love triangle. Ruiz's report has turned Manrico's thoughts to an entirely different kind of love: that for his mother.

FOLLOW-UP TO PART I

"Manrico loves his mother." This fifth big idea is the element that raises *Il Trovatore* from a standard love triangle to a fatefully entangled tragedy. It's also at the heart of the second part of Manrico's aria, his cabaletta. This will be the starting point for Part II of this Classroom Activity.

Interested students may want to preview Manrico's cabaletta, "Di quella pira" ("From the Pyre") before the next session, either by listening to **Track 17** or by searching out one of the many performances available on YouTube.

All students should refer to the "Good Guys and Bad Guys" reproducible they worked with in Step 1—the one that refers to *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, and *Spider-Man*. Treating Manrico's concern for his mother as a clue, they should answer the following question for homework:

What do we know about these characters' relationships—Luke, Leia, Harry, Spider-Man, Darth Vader, Voldemort, and the Green Goblin—that affects the simple plot descriptions from Step 1?

TIP You may choose to present this as a short writing assignment or simply as a thought question.



PART II: TWEAKING THE DOUBLE ARIA

Step 6: Begin the session with a review of basic ideas from Part I.

- the double-aria form
- introductory section
- cavatina
- tempo di mezzo
- cabaletta
- the core plot of *Il Trovatore*: the love triangle of Manrico, Leonora, and the Count, plus Manrico's love for his mother
- the dramatic change in the tempo di mezzo of Manrico's Act III double aria

Step 7: Have students take out their "Good Guys and Bad Guys" reproducibles.

Ask whether anyone has heard the term "back story." Either generate or present a definition of the term: Back story describes experiences and relationships in the lives of characters that took place before the present story began.

Solicit students' responses to the question raised at the end of Part I: What do we know about these characters' relationships that affects the simple plot descriptions from Step 1?

Dolora Zajick (Azucena) and Marcelo Álvarez as Manrico in Act III

PHOTO KEN HOWARD/METROPOLITAN OPERA

As mentioned above, students might note that Darth Vader is Luke and Leia's father, that Voldemort killed Harry Potter's parents, or that the Green Goblin was really the father of Peter Parker/Spider-Man's best friend, Harry Osborn.

All these are elements of back story. Invite students to comment on the ways these relationships affect *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, or *Spider-Man*. The back story doesn't necessarily change the plot, but it can change the implications of events.

- It can turn a happy event—the defeat of a bad guy—into tragedy—the death of a father or the father of a friend.
- It can heighten motivation: Harry Potter might have felt the need to fight Voldemort anyway, but his mission took on a different weight because Voldemort killed his parents.
- It can turn a friend into an enemy: Peter Parker's friend Harry Osborn comes to hate Spider-Man when he believes the superhero has killed his father.

Back story hovers throughout *Il Trovatore*. In fact, one crucial bit of back story changes the implications of the opera's ending.

To consolidate students' thinking, have them fill in the "Back Story" and "Implications of Back Story" columns of the "Good Guys and Bad Guys" reproducible for each of the three contemporary stories, before returning to *Il Trovatore*.

Step 8: During the remainder of the lesson, students will study the following arias that reveal back story in *Il Trovatore*: Manrico's Act III cabaletta and Azucena's double aria from Act II, Scene 1.

In each case, distribute the appropriate reproducible found at the back of this guide and have students follow along as they listen to the track. Invite them to look for clues in the track, taking notes in the space provided on the reproducible.

IL TROVATORE

OPERA DEL MAESTRO

G. VERDI

Cavaliere della Legion d'onore

LISTENING GUIDE FOR THE REPRODUCIBLE “MANRICO’S ARIA, CONCLUSION”

Manrico’s cabaletta, “Di quella pira,” Act III, Scene 2 Like all cabalettas, “Di quella pira” (dee KWEL-la PEE-ra: “From the pyre”), **Track 17**, is a dynamic piece of music—in this case, a sliver of rhythm repeated over and over, generating force. But this cabaletta is neither euphoric (like Leonora’s) nor lustful (like Count di Luna’s). It is a song of anxiety and imperative.

Clearly, the fifth big idea drives this aria: Manrico loves his mother. When he imagines the fire Ruiz has seen lit, he imagines her death. Halfway through, he turns to his beloved Leonora to explain, “Era già figlio prima d’amarti” (AIR-ah jah FEEL-yo PRE-ma dah-MAR-tee: “I was already a son before I fell in love with you”). Then, in an echo of Leonora’s vow to live for Manrico or die for him, he sings to his mother, swearing to save her or die.

In Cammarano’s libretto, Leonora responds to Manrico, returning to unbearable gloom, then he repeats the cabaletta, solo. That response and solo reprise are frequently deleted in performance, so the momentum of “Di quella pira” floods straight into a reprise entwined with the militant, rhythmically irregular response of Ruiz and Manrico’s soldiers: To arms! (**Track 18**).

Students should consider the ways in which Manrico’s aria differs from those of Leonora and Count di Luna. In the latter two, the cabaletta and its preceding cavatina plainly present different perspectives, but a single theme.

- Does that rule hold for Manrico?
- Do the cavatina (Track 14), expressing his love for Leonora, and the cabaletta (Track 17), expressing love (or maybe duty) to his mother, share a theme (e.g., love, Manrico’s split loyalties, the goodness of his heart)?

This is a matter of interpretation. Critical exploration can strengthen students’ appreciation of *Il Trovatore*.

Explain to students that by the time the opera audience hears “Di quella pira,” they already know something that hasn’t been discussed yet. It’s time to go back and look at the scene where we meet Manrico’s mother.

LISTENING GUIDE FOR THE REPRODUCIBLE “AZUCENA’S ARIA”

Who is Manrico’s mother, anyway? She stands outside the love triangle and, for the most part, the action of *Il Trovatore*. Mostly she tells her story, cryptically or clearly, in whole or part, to whomever she believes needs to hear it.

Yet Azucena’s presence dominates the work, because her story—the back story of the opera—turns the love triangle into a tragedy. It’s a story audiences hear at the very beginning of the opera (see Musical Highlight: Ghost Story). It adds chilling resonance to Manrico’s words “Di quella pira.” It is the critical context for understanding both *Il Trovatore* and the troubadour himself. And it, too, is revealed by

FUN FACT: On January 19, 1853, the day *Il Trovatore* premiered in Rome, it rained so hard that the Tiber River flooded the streets. Nevertheless, Verdi fans lined up at 8 am, sloshing through mud and ankle-deep water to buy tickets. The premiere sold out by noon.

means of a double aria, one heard in Act II, Scene 1, Azucena's first appearance on stage—long before it has its impact on "Di quella pira."

Azucena's first aria, "Stride la vampa," Act II, Scene 1 Azucena's double aria begins without introduction. After luring the audience into jollity with the famous Anvil Chorus (see Musical Highlight: Hail, Hail the Gypsy Band), Verdi and Cammarano drop a bombshell: "Stride la vampa!" (STREE-deh la VAM-pa: "The blaze roars!" **Track 19**). Of course, a listener who doesn't understand the words would be forgiven for thinking this is a folk dance.

Azucena's first aria is technically not a cavatina, but a *canzone* (cahn-TSO-neh)—a solo that is a song from the point of view of the characters as well as the audience. It certainly doesn't have the pensive lyricism of the usual cavatina. It's as lilting as any cabaletta. As in "Di quella pira", Verdi repeats a simple rhythmic pattern, here to almost hypnotic effect, and the mezzo-soprano's vocal line is full of eerie grace.

When students read the lyrics, they may be startled by the contrast between the catchy melody and the grisly story this woman tells. Is she mad? Inured to the horror? Is this just another ghost story for her? Why does she tell it in the present tense? Students might enjoy developing their own theories about the juxtaposition of sound and sense in "Stride la vampa."

In any event, the tempo di mezzo demonstrates that this canzone is even more mysterious to Azucena's son than it is to the audience—since they heard the same tale from a different perspective early in Act I (see Musical Highlight: Ghost Story).

Tempo di mezzo, Act II, Scene 1 As direct as "Stride la vampa" may be, both the tempo di mezzo and the second half of the aria that follow are sinuous and complex. Now that we've met Azucena, the tempo di mezzo introduces her relationship with her son, Manrico.

In **Track 20**, Azucena and Manrico are together in public. Cammarano and Verdi tuck a critical exchange into a snippet of conversation with other gypsies. First, Azucena wails, "Mi vendica!" (me VEN-dee-ka: "Avenge me!"). Then Manrico mutters, in effect, "There's that mysterious phrase yet again."

The gypsy band marches off, so that Manrico can have a private conversation with his mother (**Track 21**). He begs her to fill in the gaps of her cryptic tale, and she does, concisely, right away. But that isn't enough for Azucena. In the second half of her aria, she tells the tale a third time.

Azucena's second aria, "Condotta ell'era in ceppi," Act II, Scene 1 As her first aria is no cavatina, the second part of Azucena's double aria, "Condotta ell'era in ceppi" (cone-DOE-ta el-AIR-ah een CHEP-pea: "She was led in chains"), is not generally referred to as a cabaletta but as a "narrative aria."

It is neither merry nor lustful nor pointedly energetic. For the third time in a row, Azucena tells the story of her mother's burning—in greater detail than "Stride la



Dolora Zajick as Azucena singing her Act II aria "Stride la vampa"

PHOTO KEN HOWARD/METROPOLITAN OPERA

vampa" or the tempo di mezzo, and now distinctly a memory, in the past tense. She drops her moody persona. Vulnerability alternates with compassion. She even reveals the origin of her chilling "Mi vendica!"

Her telling (**Tracks 22, 24, and 26**) is twice interrupted by Manrico (**Tracks 23 and 25**). The first of these breaks (**Tracks 22 and 23**) divides her mother's story from her own. The second (**Tracks 25 and 26**) separates the story proper from one of Azucena's most personal, human, and mournful admissions: how it feels to remember that day. All together, the structure highlights two key points:

- it explains Azucena's cry of "Mi vendica!" (**Track 23**)
- it comes to a climax by adding a crucial bit of information to the back story as audiences know it so far: when Azucena threw the baby into the fire, "Mio figlio avea bruciato!"—"I had burned my own son!" (**Track 25**)

Step 9: Before listening to **Track 27** (the end of Azucena's aria), pause to review Azucena's story. Make sure students can distinguish the roles played by:

FUN FACT: Although she does little in *Il Trovatore* but tell her story again and again, the character of Azucena seemed so important to Verdi that, at one point, he considered calling the opera *La Zingara*, “The Gypsy Woman.”

- Azucena’s mother (accused of bewitching the Count’s baby brother; burned at the stake)
- Azucena (kidnapped the Count’s baby brother; burned a child to death—presumably the Count’s baby brother; raised Manrico; herself threatened with burning according to Ruiz’s report in Act III, Scene 2)

Make sure, too, that they recognize the added bit of back story: Azucena’s declaration that it was her own son whom she burned by mistake.

Step 10: **Track 27** contains one of the most important moments in *Il Trovatore*, and one of the strangest moments in any opera. It directly addresses the implications of the new information Azucena has presented. Have students follow along as they listen, then probe their understandings:

- **Why does Manrico ask, “E chi son io?”**
(eh key sown EE-oh: “Who am I, then?”)
- **What does Azucena mean when she replies, “Tu sei mio figlio”**
(too SEH-ee MEE-oh FEEL-yo: “You are my son”)?
- **Does Manrico believe her?**
(Think of “Di quella pira,” which he sings later in the opera.)
- **Should he believe her? Why?**

Step 11: Returning to the “Good Guys and Bad Guys” reproducible, students can now fill in the section for *Il Trovatore*—the four main characters (Manrico, Leonora, Count di Luna, Azucena), the basic plot, the back story, and the implications of the back story. Questions to consider include:

- What would be the implication if Manrico were not Azucena’s biological son? (He would be someone else’s son. In fact, the Count’s younger brother.)
- How might the truth about the relationship of Azucena and Manrico affect the story? (It’s possible that Manrico and the Count are not only enemies, but brothers and in love with the same woman.)
- How might it affect Manrico’s actions?
- How might it affect the Count’s actions?
- How might it affect Leonora’s actions?

Recall that, in Step 3, it was mentioned that the Count orders Manrico beheaded at the end of the opera. If the Count should learn this new information (as in fact he does at the very, very end), how would it change the meaning of his having Manrico killed?

Step 12: Conclude the lesson by comparing *Il Trovatore* to the contemporary narratives.

- How is it similar?
- How is it different?
- Can students imagine operas based on *Star Wars*, *Spider-Man*, or *Harry Potter*?
- How might those operas be structured?

FOLLOW-UP This Classroom Activity is designed not only to familiarize students with the characters and events of *Il Trovatore*, but also to point them to the relationship between visible, active plot and back story in a narrative and to introduce them to the double aria as a means of enriching character and conveying back story.

As a follow-up, students can start sketching operas based on *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, and *Spider-Man*. They should pick a character, then write the text for a moderately paced cavatina and a briskly paced cabaletta. These can be hip-hop style, spoken-word pieces, or set to the melodies of familiar songs. The cavatina and cabaletta should address elements of back story as well as personality, just like those in *Il Trovatore*.

Hail, Hail the Gypsy Band: A Close Look at the Anvil Chorus

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS ARE BRIEF OPPORTUNITIES TO

- help students make sense of opera
- whet their interest in upcoming transmissions of *The Met: Live in HD*

Each focuses on audio selections from *Il Trovatore* available online at metopera.org/education or on the accompanying CD. Reproducibles providing texts and translations for all the selections can be found at the back of this guide.

These “mini-lessons” will in practice take up no more than a few minutes of class time. They’re designed to help you bring opera into your classroom while minimizing interruption of your ongoing curriculum. Feel free to use as many as you like.

The odds are good that your students will recognize this famous melody from *Il Trovatore*. The Anvil Chorus, sung by the gypsy band as they make, then head off to sell their wares, has over the years been borrowed by Gilbert and Sullivan for *The Pirates of Penzance*, turned into “Hail, Hail The Gang’s All Here,” and refreshed with new lyrics by countless sports teams, camp counselors, and advertisers.

The Chorus opens Act II—a rare bit of sunshine in a story full of woe. An all-male chorus, spry and ready for a new day, sings a melody that rises as surely and powerfully as the dawn it describes (**Track 28**). When the time comes—“All’opra!” (“To work!”)—they call for their tools, and up swells the sort of rhythmically unforgettable jingle that has eased laborers’ toil since time began (**Track 29**). The lyric may be a bit bawdy, as workers’ songs can be, but it suits the happy-go-lucky spirit, and even the women sing along.

After an appropriately enthusiastic orchestral break, first the men, then the whole gypsy camp, join in a second verse. The subject shifts to that other perennial topic of song, drinking, before it’s time to get back to banging hammers on anvils and singing of zingarellas (gypsy girls)—**Track 30**.

But the Anvil Chorus scene is more than a rousing crowd-pleaser. It also lures audiences into a sense of joyful calm, to be smashed by the horror of Azucena’s aria, “Stride la vampa” (see Classroom Activity, Part II, Step 8).

TIP The orchestral introduction to the Anvil Chorus can be heard in **Track 36** and is referenced on page 24.

FUN FACTS In 1869, a brand new coliseum in Boston was inaugurated with a concert to benefit orphans and widows of the Civil War, attended by 30,000 people. At this National Peace Jubilee, a hundred firemen accompanied the Anvil Chorus from *Il Trovatore* playing real anvils with real sledge hammers.

Ghost Story: A Close Look at Ferrando's Story

One tale in particular hovers over the plot of *Il Trovatore*, the story of a child's disappearance. It's told from one perspective seconds after the curtain goes up, then from another near the start of Act II (see Classroom Activity, Part II, Step 8, pages 16–19).

Ferrando, an officer in the army of Count di Luna, tells the story first in Act I, Scene 1. Even though it revolves around the brother of his superior, Ferrando's "Abbieta zingara" (ah-BYET-ah DZING-ah-rah: "A miserable gypsy woman"), is presented as a kind of ghost story, entertainment for his troops as they pass a night watch (**Tracks 31 and 32**).

The piece starts straightforwardly enough, in a kind of "once upon a time" spirit, right up until Ferrando asks the rhetorical question "e chi trova d'accanto a quel bambino?" (eh key TROE-vah dah-CON-toe ah kwell bum-BEE-no: "and whom did she find next to that baby?") His men, in rapt attention, call back "Chi? Chi mai?" (key MAH-ee: "Who? Who was it?")

Ferrando takes their interest as an opportunity to launch into a prancing, repetitive melody, at once cheery and banal, though his words tell of a notorious witch and the jeering mob that chased her. It's as if he wants to thrill the men while showing how little the story affects him (**Track 32**).

Verdi uses the musical phrase heard at the beginning of **Track 32** to represent the idea of fire or a burning flame, which becomes a binding element of the plot. This flame becomes a musical element in the drama and is the only theme that recurs several times in the opera. As Ferrando launches into the tale of the gypsy, note the 16th-note phrase, which occurs no less than 22 times in the first stanza.



The soldiers' impassioned response suggests that Ferrando succeeded in engaging them (end of **Track 32**).

Ferrando continues in the same tone, until he comes to the point where the child gets sick (**Track 33**). He picks up the pace, reeling his listeners in until, in **Track 34**, he rams the punch line home—the boy had been bewitched!

Point made, Ferrando returns to the prancing, 16th-note phrase in **Track 35**—never mind that he's telling of a woman and a child being burned alive.



He finishes by insistently repeating "bruciato a mezzo" (bru-CHA-toe a MEH-dzo: "half burned") a macabre image that riles the soldiers up even more.

FUN FACT: The design of the Met production of *Il Trovatore* is inspired by *The Disasters of War*, Francisco Goya's engravings of the Spanish war of independence from Napoleonic France. These images were so politically charged that no one dared publish them until 1863, when Goya had been dead for 35 years.

Ferrando’s ghost story provides an interesting opportunity for students to practice critical thinking. The above discussion provides clues to his use of rhetoric to manipulate his audience.

- What vocabulary does Ferrando use to encourage a particular point of view on the story?
- What other words might he have used to tell the story in a more neutral tone?
- How does Ferrando’s version of that terrible night differ from the one told by Azucena in Act II, Scene 1 (see Classroom Activity, Part II, Step 8, pages 18 and 19)?
- Which version do students believe is more accurate? What do they think actually happened?

FURTHER LISTENING:

If time permits, listen to the following three tracks with your students. Can they hear the “fire” phrase in each track?

1. The orchestral introduction to the Anvil Chorus in Act II: includes a phrase similar to the one Ferrando used in his Act I ghost story. There is a fire present as the gypsies gather round. Note the opening turn and the 16th-note run at the end of the second complete measure (**Track 36**).



2. The first part of Azucena’s double aria, the canzone: Azucena stares fixedly into the flames, imagining the fire that killed her mother many years ago. Note once again the phrase that occurs at the beginning of the canzone (**Track 19**—see Classroom Activity Part II, Step 8, page 18). It is in the same key (E minor) and same meter (3/4) as Ferrando’s narrative in Act I.



3. Manrico's cabaletta in Act III, Scene 2: Manrico is about to marry Leonora when he receives word that Azucena (whom he still believes to be his mother) has been caught by the Count's men and is about to be burned at the stake. He can see the flames of the funeral pyre burning in the distance. He vows vengeance in his fiery solo, "Di quella pira." Note once again the four 16th notes at the beginning of nearly every other measure (Track 17—see Classroom Activity, Part II, Step 8, page 17).



The image shows a single staff of music with a treble clef. The melody begins with a series of accented notes: a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on A4, and a quarter note on B4. This is followed by a measure containing four sixteenth notes: G4, A4, B4, and C5, all beamed together. The next measure has a quarter note on B4, followed by a quarter note on A4, and a quarter note on G4. The final measure shown has a quarter note on F4, a quarter note on E4, and a quarter note on D4. The lyrics "Di quel-la pi - ra l'or - ren - do fo - co" are written below the staff, with hyphens under the syllables "pi - ra" and "fo - co".

Merciful Hit: A Close Look at the Miserere

In the late 1800s, when the pianos in the parlors of middle-class homes were centers of entertainment, the Miserere (mee-zeh-REH-reh) section of *Il Trovatore* was a giant hit. Franz Liszt composed a piano transcription within a year of the opera's premiere. The melody may be less familiar today, but its surprising mix of musical styles is as emotionally wrenching as ever.

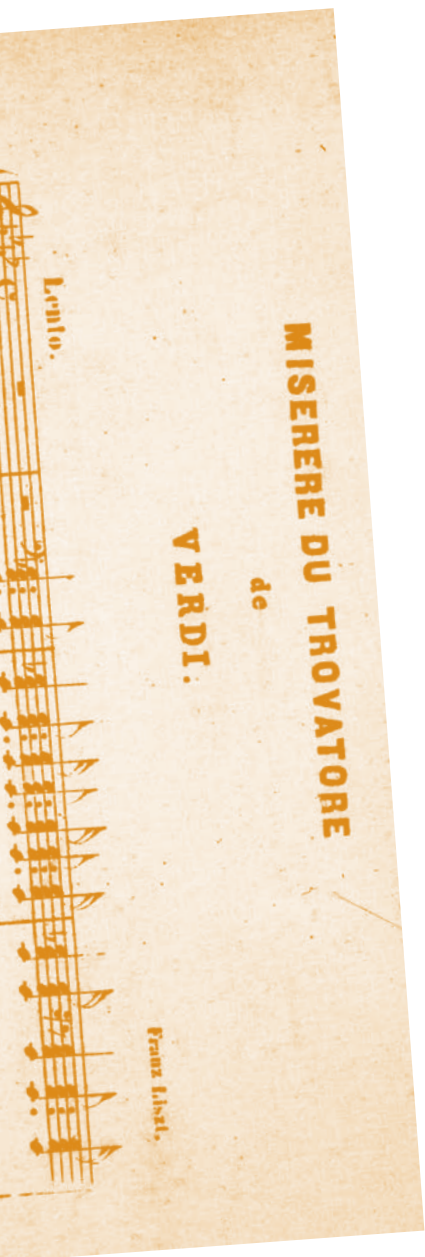
The set of pieces known collectively in this opera as the Miserere is actually a tempo di mezzo, the middle section of a double aria sung by Leonora in Act IV, Scene 1 (see the Classroom Activity for more on the double aria structure). It follows the self-soothing cavatina "D'amor sull'ali rosee" (dah-MOR soo-LAH-lee RO-zeh) and precedes the hot-blooded cabaletta "Tu vedrai che amore" (too veh-DRAH-ee keh ah-MOR-eh). The section depicts the experience that moves Leonora from sorrow over Manrico's fate to the steely resolution that she will save him or die trying.

The Miserere takes its name from its first section, a prayer for mercy for those who are about to die, sung in the style of Gregorian chant by a chorus of monks (**Track 37**). Leonora, overhearing them, knows they are praying for the soul of her beloved. She comments on the prayer with her own heartfelt, more typically operatic expression of grief (**Track 38**).

Barely has she finished, though, than she hears, from afar, a voice and the strumming of a lute. It's Manrico singing his troubadour's farewell to Leonora from his prison cell in the palace tower (**Track 39**). The austerity of this humble folk-style song could not contrast more vividly with *Il Trovatore*'s generally opulent orchestration. This is the tune that captured the 19th-century imagination, an eight-note melody so guileless, so lucid, that Leonora all but faints in response (**Track 40**). She weeps as the monks continue their prayer of mercy, until at last, her deepest fear wells up, alternating line for line at first, then word for word, with the sacred choir (**Track 41**).

Again Manrico's unadorned folk tune cuts through. He pleads with Leonora, wherever she might be, never to forget him (**Track 42**). Leonora weeps and finally exclaims, "You? Forget you?" in an uncontrollable surge of fury, grief, and a kind of intimate irony. The monks pray. Manrico, unable to hear Leonora, continues to sing. These three parts—frenzy, prayer, and bare acceptance, each sung as if alone in the world—coalesce in **Track 43**, bringing the Miserere to its astonishing finish.

The Miserere also had a life outside the world of classical music. The legendary jazz pianist and innovator Jelly Roll Morton recalled learning the melody as a boy, and he played both traditional and "swing" versions as late as the 1930s. It was in the standard repertoire for pianists and organists who accompanied silent movies.



Supporting Students During *The Met: Live in HD* Transmission

Thanks to print and audio recording, much about opera can be enjoyed long before a performance. But performance itself brings vital layers of sound and color, pageantry and technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities are designed to help students tease apart different aspects of the experience, consider creative choices that have been made, and sharpen their own critical faculties.

Each activity incorporates a reproducible activity sheet. Students bring the activity sheets to the transmission to fill out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to characteristics of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed. Ratings matrices invite students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that call upon careful, critical thinking.

The basic activity sheet is called My Highs & Lows. Meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season, this sheet points students toward a consistent set of objects of observation. Its purposes are not only to help students articulate and express their opinions, but to support comparison and contrast, enriching understanding of the art form as a whole.

For *Il Trovatore*, the other activity sheet, The Disasters of War, directs students' attention to the extraordinary stagecraft of this *Live in HD* production.

The Performance Activity reproducibles can be found in the back of this guide. Either activity can provide the basis for class discussion after the transmission. On the next page, you'll find an activity created specifically for follow-up after the *Live in HD* transmission.

In on the Joke: A Discussion of Cultural Criticism

IN PREPARATION

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at *The Met: Live in HD* transmission of *Il Trovatore*.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

English/Language Arts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- to discuss and reflect upon students' experience watching *The Met: Live in HD* transmission of *Il Trovatore*
- to generate critical thinking about the production and the opera in context of a long history of cultural criticism
- to express critical understandings about the opera creatively by designing a parody of *Il Trovatore*

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? This discussion will offer students an opportunity to review the notes on their My Highs & Lows sheets, as well as their thoughts about the Goya-inspired imagery in this Met production—in short, to see themselves as *Il Trovatore* experts.

As discussed in the Classroom Activity, *Il Trovatore* combines a relatively simple core plot with a rich back story. The result has prompted many to describe the story as confusing or improbable.

TIP Examples can be found on the reproducible, “In on the Joke.” Make sure students can identify David McVicar, director of this production of *Il Trovatore*, who provides the last quotation on the sheet.

Now that students have seen *Il Trovatore*, they are, so to speak, in on the joke. They can apply their own expertise to the question: Does this opera make sense? Is it moving? Ridiculous? Neither? Perhaps both? In this discussion, be sure to prompt students to address specific aspects of Verdi's opera and the *Live in HD* production, including:

- characters
- character relationships
- relationship of on-stage action to off-stage action and back story
- alignment of the score with the emotional tone of the libretto
- the orchestra's contribution
- the performances
- the staging, including the performers' physical locations on stage and with respect to one another
- the camera work in the HD transmission

The sidebar “*Il Trovatore* Parodies” on page 9 mentions some famous parodies of *Il Trovatore*. Students might enjoy participating in this tradition by creating their own *Il Trovatore* graphic novels or comic books.

Successful parody involves exaggeration, allusion, and the setting of plot and characters in a new context sufficiently similar for a viewer or reader to recognize. By providing practice in the identification and development of narrative structure, this follow-up activity offers another route to examining the problematic storyline of *Il Trovatore*.

Here you'll find reproducibles of the resource and activity sheets for each *Il Trovatore* activity. Feel free to print these out and distribute them in your classroom.

My Highs & Lows and The Disasters of War are activity sheets to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission. The latter is designed to focus student attention during the transmission and to support your post-transmission classroom work. My Highs & Lows is a collectible prompting closer attention to specific aspects of the opera. You may want to provide copies of My Highs & Lows not only to students, but to friends, family and other members of the community attending the transmission.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY SHEET

Backlit:

Good Guys and Bad Guys

	GOOD GUY(S)	BAD GUY(S)	WHAT HAPPENS?	BACK STORY	IMPLICATIONS OF BACK STORY
<i>Star Wars</i>					
<i>Harry Potter</i>					
<i>Spider-Man</i>					
<i>Il Trovatore</i>					

Characters: Princess Leia, Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, Harry Potter, Lord Voldemort, Spider-Man, Green Goblin