

## MUSIC APPRECIATION SECTION

### GREAT COMPOSERS OF MUSIC

SECOND SERIES

By BERT PAUL OSBON \*

#### III. VERDI



*Verdi, Writer of Operas*

PERHAPS the only violent act of Giuseppe Verdi's serene life was to smash the old spinet (forerunner of the piano) which his father had bought for him and on which the village priest was teaching him to play, when it failed to reproduce the chord he wanted.

That was when he was a very small boy in Italy, where he was born October 13, 1813. He was an acolyte in the village church when the smashing of the spinet took place. A few years later this boy was playing flute and clarinet in the cathedral, and at the age of eleven he became organist. He received never more than one peso monthly for these services, which he performed carefully, although he had daily to walk three miles each way to do this service.

Oftentimes while young Verdi (pronounced vair-dee) was playing the organ, he improvised melodies, and it soon became apparent to everyone that the boy had musical talent.

When he was seventeen he set out for Milan, a large city in Italy, in order to enter the Conservatory, which is another

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name for a large music school. To his great disappointment, he was refused admission to the Conservatory, because the director thought he had no musical talent.

Verdi found other teachers, however, and studied diligently for two years. Then he returned to his home town to become the village organist, and to marry the daughter of his former employer.

A few years later he decided to write operas, and removed with his wife and children to the city of Milan. But his first operas were failures. To add to his misfortune, his wife and two children suddenly died. This very sad event, together with the failure of his operas, utterly discouraged him. It was several very unhappy years before his close friends could persuade him to try writing an opera again.

Finally he was persuaded to try again, and he wrote several which were very successful. These works established his Italian reputation, and from time to time he wrote others—ten in all.

In 1850 he married the woman who was the leading singer in his operas. This marriage was a very happy one.

Up to this time his operas were all written in the prevalent Italian style. He wrote such famous operas as *Ernani*, *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, *Il Trovatore* and others.

When he was nearly 60 years old, he was commissioned by the Khedive of Egypt to write the opera *Aida*. This he did. The opera was produced on a grand scale with live elephants and great

magnificence. In this opera he revealed new effects in orchestra and chorus.

The grand old man of Italian opera, like fine wine, mellowed as he became more aged. In his later works—the stately *Requiem Mass* and the operas *Aida*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*—his flowing melodies are enriched by an increased command of the resources of the orchestra, possibly in response to Wagner's influence. (Wagner, you may remember, was the great writer of music-dramas.) Verdi was eighty years old when he produced his last opera.

In all, he wrote more than 30 operas, most of them serious. He did not write much music besides operas.

Personally, his was a character of rugged independence and noble purpose. His simplicity of life, warm-heartedness, generosity, pa-

On January 27, 1901, Verdi died peacefully in his Italian villa. He left much of his wealth to charity.

Verdi is sometimes called the "king of Italian opera," and no other person ever wrote as many excellent operas as did this composer. You should hear some of his operas whenever you have an opportunity of so doing.

REVIEW

1. What is a grand opera? (See the dictionary.)

2. What is Verdi sometimes called? Why?

3. Name some of his well-known operas.

4. When was Verdi born and when did he die?

5. Tell of his life as a boy.

6. Why was he re-

fused permission to study music in the Conservatory at Milan? Do you think



Scene from Verdi's Opera, "Rigoletto"



## VERDI

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How was it first produced?

15. How many operas did Verdi write?

16. Have you ever heard a grand opera?

17. Have you heard songs from any of Verdi's operas?

18. Tell of Verdi's character.

19. Read this article again, and then answer these questions.

## WHERE THERE'S A WILL

*(Continued from page 94)*

tested it and found that it is true. WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY.

## SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

1. Do you think Juanito was right when he said, "An education in the elementary school is good as far as it goes, but it's not enough"? Why do you think so?

2. Why do you think Juanito was determined to have an education?

3. Why was Juanito willing to shine shoes and be a houseboy? Would you be willing to do that if necessary to get an education?

## DRAGONS

*(Continued from page 104)*

The family history of the lizard is interesting because of its many relationships with birds and mammals. At about the same time the lizards were appearing, nature was also producing from the much the same type of primitive reptiles, the first birds and the early mammals.

## REVIEW

1. How many species of lizards are there?

2. What can you say of the sizes of lizards?

3. Describe some species.

4. Where are lizards found?

5. What is the food of lizards?

6. What can you say of the tail of some species of lizards?

7. How do some lizards run?

8. Tell of the "flying" lizard.

9. The frilled lizard.

10. How are some lizards useful?

11. Why is the family history of the lizard interesting to scientists?

12. How many different kinds of lizards have you seen in the Philippines?

## MORO MARRIAGES

*(Continue from page 98)*

charges a fee—usually five pesos or more. If the groom is rich, he may have some ten *panditas* to solemnize his marriage.

If either of the contracting parties lives near a river, gaily decorated launches with flags and streamers of many colors may be hired for the occasion. On top of the launches grotesque animal heads sway in the air. Bands of musicians are always aboard the launches to furnish the music.

During the marriage celebration fire-crackers are lighted, guns are fired, and men and women shout at the top of their voices.

A Moro *datu* or *kagui* can have as many wives as he wishes, provided he can pay the dowries asked. An ordinary Moro is limited to four wives. A Moro who has many wives is considered rich. A Moro who has many daughters will become rich, because of the dowries that are sure to come for his daughters.

Such are some of the Moro marriage customs—commonplace to Moros, but strange to Filipinos who are not accustomed to them.