



# The Verdi Baritone: Studies in the Development of Dramatic Character

*Geoffrey Edwards*

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One of the most significant innovations in the development of dramatic characterization in nineteenth-century Italian opera was the genesis of the Verdi baritone. As Geoffrey Edwards and Ryan Edwards argue, the composer's baritone characters embody "a quintessential humanity, expressing needs and temptations, confusions and understandings, griefs and joys that transcend the particulars of time and place." Often far removed from ordinary life in either the nineteenth century or today, these roles provide insight into the "struggle of the individual in a universe that is often beyond control and even comprehension." The authors provide an unprecedented and probing discussion of the way Verdi's baritone roles were conceived and executed. They analyze the composer's use of "the unique potential of the baritone voice to create a gallery of subtly nuanced characters that are among the most complex and challenging in the operatic repertory." This eloquent volume explores the unfolding of the baritone roles in seven operas, starting with Verdi's early triumph, Nabucco; proceeding with Ernani, Macbeth, Rigoletto, La Traviata, and Simon Boccanegra, and concluding with the composer's final great tragedy of Otello. As a further aid to understanding these operas, plot synopses are given in the Appendix. Voice students, professional performers, and their teachers and coaches, as well as opera lovers, will gain a greater appreciation of Verdi, whose masterful use of text, music, and staging so precisely portrays each character's inner self.

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