

Don Carlo

Italian opera in five acts

Music by Giuseppe Verdi

**Libretto: François-Joseph Méry
and Camille Du Locle
after the tragedy
Don Carlos, Infant von Spanien,
by Friedrich Schiller**

Premiere: Paris Opera in March 1867

**(The title for the original French libretto is
Don Carlos; the Italian is *Don Carlo*.)**

**Adapted from the
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by
Burton D. Fisher**

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Brief Story Synopsis

Don Carlo, son of Spain's King Philip II, was engaged to marry Elisabeth de Valois of France, but in the greater interests of peace between Spain and France, King Philip decided to marry the young Elisabeth: Carlo's ex-fiance became Queen of Spain and his stepmother. Carlo becomes tormented, unable to cope with his rejection.

Carlo is persuaded by his friend Rodrigo, the Marquis of Posa, to support the struggle of the Flemish territories against Spain. Carlo demands that King Philip name him Governor of Flanders. But in an act of treachery, he confronts the King with drawn sword. His friend Rodrigo disarms him.

The Grand Inquisitor demands that the King punish Rodrigo as well as his son as traitors to Spain; the King accedes and has Rodrigo slain.

Carlo has decided to go to Flanders and help Spain's oppressed subjects. Before departing he meets Elisabeth near the tomb of his grandfather, Emperor Charles V. They embrace in a last farewell, which is witnessed by the jealous King Philip. As the King advances to apprehend Carlo, the ghost of Charles V appears and leads Carlo into the tomb. .

Principal Characters in DonCarlo

Philip II, King of Spain	Bass
Don Carlo, Infante of Spain	Tenor
Rodrigo, Marquis of Posa	Baritone
The Grand Inquisitor	Bass
Elisabeth of Valois, Queen of Spain	Soprano
Princess Eboli, Lady-in-waiting	Soprano

Tebaldo (a page), Countess of Aremborg, Count of Lerma, old monk, voice from heaven, royal herald, Flemish deputies, Inquisitors, lords and ladies of the French and Spanish court, soldiers.

TIME: Middle of the 16th century (1558)

PLACE: France and Spain

*Story Narrative with Music Highlights**ACT I - Scene 1:**The Forest at Fontainebleau, France*

In the interests of peace between Spain and France, a marriage was arranged between their royal families: Don Carlo, the Infante of Spain, was engaged to marry the beautiful Elisabeth de Valois, the fifteen year-old princess of France. Anxious to catch a glimpse of his future bride, Don Carlo secretly visits France, traveling as a Spaniard, but incognito.

In the Fontainebleau forest, Elisabeth and her page, Tebaldo, participate in a hunt. A forest mist impedes their way, and Elisabeth and Tebaldo become lost in the forest. After Tebaldo leaves to seek assistance from a nearby Chateau, the disguised Carlo appears before Elisabeth and offers her protection.

As night falls Carlo builds a fire. Elisabeth eagerly questions the Spanish stranger for information about the Infante whom she is about to marry. Carlo unveils a locket with a miniature portrait of her betrothed, and Elisabeth immediately recognizes the stranger as the Infante. The lovers ecstatically celebrate the joy of their newfound love for each other.

But their love is fleeting. A distant canon signals the signing of a peace treaty between France and Spain. Tebaldo returns to announce that Elisabeth's father, Henry II, has decided that in the greater interests of peace between Spain and France, Elisabeth shall marry King Philip instead of the Infante. Carlo and Elisabeth express horror at the news.

The Spanish ambassador, Count Lerma, confirms the news, and request formal approval of the marriage from Elisabeth. Elisabeth's momentary joy and happiness must now be sacrificed to an obligation to duty. With sorrow and regret, she reluctantly yields to the wishes of the French court and agrees to marry King Philip II. Carlo, heartbroken and distraught, laments his horrible fate.

ACT I - Scene 2: The Monastery of San Giusto

Monks pray for the soul of the dead Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, father of Philip II, and grandfather of the infante Don Carlo. A solitary monk condemns Charles's guilt of vanity, pride, and power.

Monk's chorus:

Andante Sostenuto Assai

MONKS



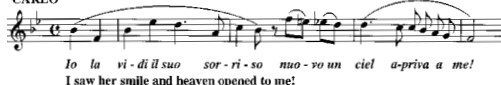
Seeking solace and consolation, Carlo visits the Monastery of San Giusto; he even contemplates a monastic life. There have been rumors that the tomb of Charles V is empty; that he is not dead but has become a monk.

Since the marriage of Elisabeth to his father, Carlo has been devastated, unable to reconcile himself to the turn of events: he has lost Elisabeth, and she has now become his stepmother and the Queen of Spain.

“To la vidi il suo sorriso”

Andante

CARLO



At the Monastery, Carlo meets his close friend, Rodrigo, the Marquis of Posa. Posa reveals that he has just returned from Spain's territory of Flanders, and describes the injustices of Spain's oppression, persecution and tyranny.

Carlo confides to his friend that he is lovesick, obsessed by his secret love for Elisabeth, even though she is now Spain's Queen. Posa advises him to ignore his sorrows and devote himself to the noble cause of freedom and liberty for Flanders. Posa succeeds in convincing Carlo. Both vow eternal friendship and loyalty, affirming their dedication to the Flemish cause, and praying for divine guidance to lead them in their noble adventure:

“Dio che nell'alma infondere amor”

Allegro assai moderato

CARLO and POSA

Don Carlos



King Philip, his new bride Elisabeth, and a procession of the court arrive at the Monastery to pray at the tomb of Charles V. Upon seeing Elisabeth for the first time since her marriage, Carlo becomes distraught. When their eyes meet, they express obvious agitation, their distress noticed by King Philip, and arousing his suspicion.

Carlo and Rodrigo depart, encouraged by the success of their noble cause for the liberation of Flanders.

Act II - Scene 1: A terrace in the palace

Ladies of the court and Princess Eboli, a lady-in-waiting to Elisabeth, await the arrival of the Queen. Eboli entertains the court with the *Veil Song*, a legendary story about a Moorish king, whose infidelity was discovered when he mistakenly wooed his own wife in the palace gardens.

Eboli: The Veil Song

Allegro brillante
EBOLI



Nel giardin del bel-lo sa - racin o - stèl-lo,
In the beautiful garden of the Saracin's abode,

Elisabeth appears, melancholy and disconsolate. Posa appears, after his request for an audience with the Queen was honored. Posa delivers a letter to Elisabeth from her mother; when he hands it to her, he also delivers a note from Carlo that begs the Queen to take Posa into her confidence and trust him implicitly.

Posa converses with Elisabeth and reveals that Carlo has become tormented because he feels that he has been rejected by his father. He also requests a meeting for Carlo with his “new mother.” Princess Eboli, overhearing their conversation, interprets Carlo’s unhappiness as love-sickness, a yearning for Elisabeth’s love.

“Carlo ch’è sol il nostro amore vive nel duol su questo suol”

Andante Mosso
POSA



Carlo ch’è sol il nostro a-more vi - ve nel duol su quest - o suol,
Our beloved Charles, who lives in grief,

Elisabeth trembles in fear and confusion at the thought of meeting with Carlo. But she also realizes that she must talk to Carlo and explain and justify her decision to marry his father; it was her profound duty.

Carlo and Elisabeth meet for the first time since her marriage to his father. At first, their meeting is formal and dignified. Carlo requests that the Queen intercede on his behalf and persuade the King to honor his request to go to Flanders to help the oppressed Flemish. Elisabeth agrees to his request.

But Carlo is unable to restrain his inner torment, and their dignified exchange transforms into an emotionally charged confrontation. Carlo is unable to control himself, and pours out his love for Elisabeth. He faints, regains consciousness, and then he tries to embrace her. Elisabeth becomes alarmed and fearful. She succeeds in dissuading him, but also admits that her love for him endures.

“O Carlo, addio, su questa terra vivendo accanto a te”



Elisabeth tries to reason with Carlo, explaining that her marriage to his father was her solemn duty. But Carlo is inconsolable and explodes into a fit of uncontrollable emotion and rage. Again, he passionately attempts to embrace Elisabeth, but she rejects his assault, sarcastically advising him that in order to possess her he must kill his father. Carlo is unable to cope with her rejection and leaves in despair and outrage.

After Carlo departs, Elisabeth is left alone and laments that her sacrifice has brought so much sorrow to her — as well as to Carlo.

King Philip arrives and becomes furious after he notices that the Queen has been left alone and unattended. Angrily, he blames her lady-in-waiting, Countess Aremburg; in punishment, he banishes her back to France. Elisabeth bids a compassionate farewell to the Countess.

“Non pianger, mia compagna”

After Elisabeth departs, King Philip gestures that Posa remain with him. In their dialogue, Philip convincingly portrays his divine and awesome power. Posa reveals his youthful and fiery enthusiasm for the noble and idealistic cause for the liberation of Flanders from Spain's oppression. He tells the King of his recent visit to war-torn Flanders, and pleads passionately for the King to cease his persecution of them. The King argues that Flanders is a Spanish territory, and severe political control, rather than freedom and political idealism, will bring peace and calm. He confirms dispassionately that peace in Flanders can only be assured through the strong arm of his soldiers and the power of the Inquisition.

Then the King confides in Posa and expresses his more pressing personal concerns. He takes Posa into his trust and confidence and reveals his fears, patently admitting that he has misgivings and suspicions about the relationship between Elisabeth and Carlo. The King orders Posa to spy on Elisabeth and Carlo; it is his patriotic duty and obligation to King and country.

Posa bows before the King. The King forgives him for his rashness but threateningly warns him to beware of the power of the Inquisitor.

ACT III - Scene 1: The palace garden at night

Carlo received an unsigned letter requesting a secret rendezvous in the palace gardens. He became elated, disingenuously believing that the letter was from Elisabeth.

In the dark obscurity of the gardens, Carlo meets a masked woman. Immediately, he explodes into passionate declarations of his love for the woman he believes is Elisabeth.

“Sei tu, sei tu, bell’adorata”Allegro agitato assai
CARLO

However, the disguised woman is not Elisabeth, but rather, the cunning Princess Eboli; she had masterminded the rendezvous with Carlo to declare her secret love for him. But Eboli realizes that Carlo’s passionate words of love were meant for Elisabeth, and consequently explodes into a fit of jealousy. Ultimately, Eboli accuses Carlo of having an adulterous affair with his stepmother: the Queen.

Posa arrives. He tries to assuage Eboli; he even threatens to kill her. However, Eboli is implacable, a spurned lover whose vengeance against Carlo has been transformed into curses against him. Eboli rushes off, determined to expose the presumed affair between Carlo and Elisabeth.

Posa persuades Carlo to give him secret documents that he possesses, fearing that they might incriminate him in their cause for Flanders. Both reiterate their loyal friendship.

ACT III - Scene 2:***A public square in front of the Valladolid Cathedral in Madrid***

The Inquisition has condemned Flemish prisoners as heretics. Protestants are to be burned at the stake in an *auto da fê*. (Literally, “protestation of faith.”) Monks escort the victims to the stakes, promising salvation to those who repent.

King Philip appears before the cathedral; all kneel in homage to their King. Carlo escorts six Flemish burghers who kneel before the King and then offer a solemn prayer for their country. Carlo pleads for clemency for the Flemish, but King Philip and the monks stubbornly refuse.

Carlo demands that he be appointed governor of Flanders. Philip refuses emphatically, intransigent and indifferent to the Flemish cause, as well as his son’s entreaties.

In a fit of impetuous anger, Carlo threateningly draws his sword against his father. The King immediately orders that his son be disarmed, but no one dares intervene. However, Posa steps forward and demands Carlo's sword. Carlo relinquishes his sword to his friend, who then presents it to the King. The King rewards Posa and elevates his rank to a Duke.

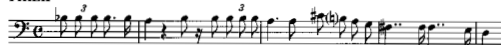
Attention now turns to the waiting victims of the Inquisition. Fires are lit, and the heretics go their death. A "Celestial voice" is heard pleading for comfort for the souls of the dying.

ACT IV - Scene 1: King Philip's study in the palace

Alone, the King expresses the agony and sadness of a loveless man: *Ella giammai m'amò! Quel cor chiuso m'è, amor per me non ha, per me non ha!* ("She never loved me, her heart is closed to me, I have no love!") The King possesses awesome power, but he is impotent to command Elisabeth's love. He suffers from his personal dilemma, his mood alternating between self-pity, his emotional isolation because Elisabeth is indifferent to him, and somber meditations on his mortality.

"Ella giammai m'amò!"

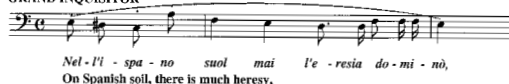
Andante sostenuto
PHILIP



Ella giammai m'amò! no! quel cor chiuso m'è, amor per me non ha, per me non ha!
She never loved me, her heart is closed to me, I have no love!

Philip summons the Grand Inquisitor, a stern old man, who is also blind. Their ensuing confrontation becomes a power struggle between church and state. Philip discusses his dilemma with his errant son. He inquires of the Inquisitor: If he decided to have his son executed for treason, would the Church support him? The accommodating Inquisitor provides the King with justification, reminding him that God had sacrificed his own Son for the good of mankind.

But the Inquisitor considers Posa a more serious threat, a foe of the church and a traitor to his country; he demands that Philip turn Posa over to the Inquisition.

“Nell’ispano suol mai l’eresia dominò”Allegro moderato
GRAND INQUISITOR

Philip resists the Inquisitor's request, claiming that Posa is his only honest friend, the only person in his court whom he can trust. Imposingly, the Inquisitor warns the King to assess his own patriotism: even kings can be brought before the Inquisition. Although Philip has been attempting to restore peace to Spain, the Inquisitor remains indifferent, a subtle reminder to the King that he too must bend to the will of the Inquisition.

Elisabeth arrives, agitated and anxious because her jewel case was stolen; the jewel case sits on Philip's table. The suspicious and jealous King demands that she open it in his presence and reveal its contents. Elisabeth refuses. Philip breaks the lock and finds a locket containing a picture of Don Carlo inside, the locket given to Elisabeth by Carlo when they first met in the forest of Fontainebleau. In spite of her protestations, the King concludes that Elisabeth has betrayed him. He condemns Elisabeth for infidelity and threatens her with death. Elisabeth vehemently denies his accusations and then faints. The King calls for help. Eboli and Posa arrive, and both try in vain to convince the King of Elisabeth's innocence.

After Philip and Posa depart, Eboli admits that it was she who contributed to Elisabeth's dilemma. She becomes remorseful, repentant, and confesses her malice. She first admits that she loves Carlo, and that she was jealous of his love for Elisabeth. She admits that she stole the jewel case and gave it to the King. Becoming even more penitent, she further admits to Elisabeth that she is the King's mistress.

Elisabeth demands that Eboli be punished by either going into exile or entering a convent. Eboli curses the fatal gift of her beauty as the cause of her dilemma and ruinous intrigues: *O don fatale*, "Oh fatal gift," Suddenly, Eboli decides to vindicate herself through deed: she knows that Carlo is in danger, and she vows to save him.

“O don fatale, o don crudel”

Allegro
EBOLI

Ah! più non vedrò ah più mai non vedrò la Re-gi-na!
Ah! I will never see the Queen again!

ACT IV - Scene 2: A prison

Carlo has been arrested and imprisoned, and awaits his father's judgment. Posa arrives at the prison to advise him that he has diverted the King's anger onto himself so that Carlo may live and save Flanders. Posa has come to bid farewell to his friend, but he also warns him that his secret papers have been discovered. As they talk, a shot rings out: Posa has been shot in the back, and falls to the ground mortally wounded. With his last breath, Posa tells Carlo that the Queen awaits him at the Monastery of San Giusto to say a last farewell before he leaves Spain for Flanders. Posa reveals that he is happy that he can die for Carlo's sake, and that the Infante must go immediately to Flanders and champion their cause.

Rodrigo's Death: "Io morro, ma lieto in core"

POSA

Io mor - rò, ma lie - to in co - re,
I die with my heart gladdened,

Eboli appears at the head of a crowd determined to liberate Carlo from prison. Philip then appears and becomes profoundly moved by the death of his trusted friend, Posa. In a moment of grace, the King offers to release Carlo and return his sword, but Carlo spurns the man whom he believes is responsible for the murder of his friend Posa.

As the angry crowd demands the release of Carlo, a possible insurrection is avoided when the Grand Inquisitor arrives. His presence, the symbol of power and authority, pacifies and silences the crowd. The Inquisitor orders all to kneel before their King.

In the confusion, Eboli sneaks Carlo away to safety.

ACT V: The Monastery of San Giusto

Elisabeth awaits Carlo at the Monastery, her thoughts turning to reminiscences of the past, her yearning for France, and death.

“S’ancor si piange in cielo”

Carlo appears and announces that he is no longer tormented by his thwarted love for her, but he has become transformed by his noble purpose to liberate Flanders. Elisabeth urges him to be courageous and follow his destiny. The couple bid each other a tender and delicate farewell.

Philip and the Inquisitor burst upon them. Philip sees Carlo and Elisabeth embracing and demands the immediate death of his son. With drawn sword, Carlo retreats towards the tomb of Charles V. The tomb opens and a mysterious old monk appears, an apparition of Charles V wearing the emperor's crown and mantle. Carlo is spirited into the tomb. The King is struck with awe at this vision of a power beyond his own.

Verdi and Don Carlo

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Italian opera was dominated by the *bel canto* operas of Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini. The focus of *bel canto* operas was vocal virtuosity and melody, which generally took precedence over dramatic integrity; the operas were generally showcases for virtuoso singers. Giuseppe Verdi dominated most of the latter part of the century, composing 28 operas beginning with *Oberto* (1839), and culminating in the comedy *Falstaff* (1893). Verdi's art form was constantly in transition; he began composing by following the traditions of *bel canto*, but as his art form evolved, he would introduce unprecedented musical passion to the lyric theater. Toward the close of the nineteenth century Italian composers introduced *verismo*, a genre in which realism rather than sentiment and romanticism was stressed: Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890), and Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci* (1892).

Scholars and musicologists divide Verdi's considerable operatic achievements into 3 distinct creative periods. The first period—from 1839 to 1850—was his nationalist period; all of his operas were embedded with symbolism, metaphor, and allegory that represented Italy's plight under foreign domination: *Nabucco* (1842), *Giovanna d'Arco* (1845), and *La Battaglia di Legnano* (1849). In Verdi's second, or middle period, he expressed bolder, more impassioned portrayals of humanity that were combined with an exceptional lyricism and profound dramatic qualities: *Rigoletto* (1851), *Il Trovatore* (1853), *La Traviata* (1853), *Simon Boccanegra* (1857), *Un Ballo in Maschera* (1859), *La Forza del Destino* (1862), *Don Carlo* (1867), and *Aida* (1871). In Verdi's final creative period, he continued his crusade toward more profound musico-dramatic integrity and produced two of his greatest triumphs: *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff* (1893).

Verdi's 25th opera, *Don Carlo*, deals with the sixteenth century Spanish King Philip II, his marriage to Elisabeth de Valois of France, and his son, the Infante Don Carlo. The story boldly portrays the

wrenching dilemmas of its principal characters, all caught in the turmoil of history; it is a music drama portraying passionate human conflicts of love, duty, and idealism.

Historical truth is the coefficient of power. The authoritarian powers of the Spanish Empire documented the “official” history of the period for posterity; for the skeptic, their chronicles tend to be fiction, leading to subsequent speculation, reinterpretation, myth, and legend.

Verdi’s opera is based on Friedrich Schiller’s play, *Don Carlos, Infant von Spanien* (1787) (“Don Carlos, Infante of Spain”); Schiller’s primary story source was Vischard de Saint-Réal, revisionist theories that were written a century after the historical facts, and based on rumor, speculation, and a penchant for scandal. History, play, and opera, agree that to promote peace between their two countries, Spain’s King Philip II married the teenage French princess, Elisabeth de Valois, daughter of the Queen, Catherine de Medici and Henry II.

However, the Schiller-Verdi interpretation introduce two plot twists to their story that are unsubstantiated and do not appear in the historical chronicles. First, they present Don Carlo and Elisabeth deeply in love and engaged to be married. However, the Infante is preempted by his father, and results in impassioned father-son hatred and conflict. Second, they present Don Carlo as obsessed with becoming the liberator of the rebellious Spanish territory of Flanders. Neither Philip’s appropriation of Elisabeth, nor Don Carlo’s advocacy of the Flemish cause, nor any mention of any relationship between Queen and stepson exist in historical documentation; it was the deaths of Carlo and Elisabeth only a few months of each other, that fed rumors and scandal, and ultimately, reinterpretations of the history by later writers such as Saint-Réal and Schiller.

The sixteenth century Spanish monarchy was part of the Hapsburg Empire, an empire that began in the twelfth century and stretched across almost all of Europe as well as the new world. The greater part of the Empire was Spain and the Duchy of Burgundy, the latter representing parts of Friesland, Holland, Flanders, and the upper Rhone that separated France from Germany.

The Empire was built on the dynasty's talent for marriage and inbreeding. The Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, Philip II's father, inherited Austria and Burgundy from his grandmother, and Spain from his presumably mad mother Juana, *Juana di Loca*, the only surviving child of Ferdinand and Isabella who earlier united Spain, sent Columbus to America, and began Spain's vast accumulation of wealth and power in the New World.

Charles V was presumably unstable, suffering from alternations of elation and depression. At 55, he abdicated and retired to the monastery at St. Juste, dividing his vast Empire between his brother, Ferdinand, who inherited central Europe and the Holy Roman Empire, and his son Philip, who received Spain, Burgundy, Italy, and the New World.

Philip first married his cousin, Maria of Portugal, but she died in 1543, two days after the birth of their son, Carlos. Carlos never knew his mother, and his father had become a distant stranger, constantly away in Flanders or England; Carlos was placed in the care of Philip's sister, the regent Juana.

Philip's second wife was Mary Tudor, a marriage intended to return England to Catholicism and the true faith, and establish another powerful country in the Hapsburg hegemony. When Philip started his reign, diplomats proposed a marriage between France's Elisabeth de Valois and the Infante, Don Carlos, a marriage that would be the core of a peace treaty between France and Spain. However, negotiations were suspended with the death of Philip's wife, Mary.

Don Carlos was a frail and feeble-minded prince, yet the son and heir of a powerful monarchy and massive empire. Like his grandfather, Charles V, he was considered unstable, his childishness and backwardness deemed a typical family malady, but he would not, had he succeeded, be the first or last psychopath to sit on a European throne. Physically, Carlos was weak, suffering from quartan fever, a form of malaria. During his upbringing his unsympathetic father rejected him often and seemed incapable of showing him love; as a result, Carlos grew up harboring a bitter hatred and resentment toward his father and craved affection and pampering. Philip found Carlos difficult to cope with and humiliated him

in public, which further served to incite his young son to aggressive and despicable behavior. Carlos was eccentric and violent in his behavior and exploded at the slightest whim; he vented his frustrations in spectacular fits. Also, Carlos was arrogant, disrespectful of others, insulted citizens, rampaged through the streets molesting women, and was totally undisciplined.

With her marriage to Philip II in 1560, Elisabeth de Valois became the Queen of a great and powerful country, a glorious achievement which she accepted without question; she displayed courage and intelligence in performing her duties, and wherever possible, used her influence to benefit her native France. Elisabeth willingly assimilated into the Spanish culture, refusing to speak French, adopting Spanish fashions, and endearing herself to the court. In documented history, as well as the play and opera on the subject, Elisabeth is depicted as determined to reconcile and heal the rift between Philip and Carlos: in her new role, “Elizabeth de la Paix” became “Isabella de la Paz.”

Contrary to the opera’s portrayal of Philip’s ageing and self-pity, the historical record claims that he truly loved Elisabeth, and that their love was reciprocal. When she became ill with smallpox immediately after their wedding, Philip became emotionally distraught and he stood a vigil at her bedside. Ultimately, Elisabeth bore him two daughters; both of them became the King’s favorite children.

Initially Carlos did not welcome Elisabeth with open arms, envisioning his new Queen and stepmother as a threat to his inheritance: he feared that his security as heir apparent would be undermined if the King and his new Queen bore a more engaging son. However, after Carlos returned from university studies at Alcalá and resumed his life at the court, he began to know Elisabeth better and soon lost his mistrust for her. Elisabeth was the only member of the court who offered Carlos sympathy and friendship, and did not patronize him, intrigue behind his back, or belittle him.

Elisabeth and Carlos became close friends and conversation partners: Carlos became devoted and intimate with her, wrote sonnets to her in French, and even admitted publicly that he regretted that his father had robbed him of such a wife, no doubt a complement

to Elisabeth rather than a reflection of his amorous desires. So Philip and the court had no anxieties about Elisabeth's relationship with Carlos because Elisabeth was trusted, and openly expressed her deep love and devotion to Philip. In this rigid court in which royals could only be familiar with other royals, it seemed acceptable that Carlos and Elisabeth, both the same age, would and should become playmates. Ultimately, Elisabeth exerted a miraculous influence on Carlos, advising and calming him, and generating model behavior from him while he was in her presence.

Carlos could not cope with the complexity and diversity of state responsibilities and sought an escape from the court. Initially, he had hoped he would be assigned a role in the struggle for Flanders, but Philip entrusted the Duke of Alba instead, causing Carlos to openly explode in rage and vilify the King; it was perhaps this behavior that fueled subsequent rumors that the young Infante favored the Flemish cause. Carlos, sensing that he had become alienated, considered escaping to Austria to nurture a relationship with Anne of Austria, a royal marriage that had already been discussed as providing diplomatic benefits.

Ultimately, Philip became pathologically suspicious of his son, his anxieties prompting him to take the prince into custody. Carlos was apprehended and consigned to oblivion as a virtual prisoner in the court, guarded constantly, and forbidden to possess dangerous implements, or contact with the outside world. Philip explained that his son's detention and indefinite custody was related to his unstable condition.

Philip convened a secret trial of Carlos *in absentia*, a justification for disinheriting his son. Nevertheless, Carlos obliged his father's fears and anxieties about his aberrant son; in 1568 he died while in prison. There were rumors of scandal and foul play, and naturally, the King was suspected of murder. However, Carlos died from reckless self-abuse and self-neglect resulting from his erratic eating habits, his alternating binges of fasting and gluttony.

Elisabeth died three months after Carlos. Her death occurred at the age of twenty-two and during her fourth childbirth, reportedly a miscarriage aggravated by debilitation and exhaustion. During her illness Philip never left her side, and after her death, he became

emotional, wept copiously, and even retired to a retreat for a month to mourn her.

The final irony of the true history of Philip II of Spain and his dysfunctional family is that two years after Elisabeth's death, for the second time, Philip married a woman who was originally destined for his son: the Archduchess Anne of Austria, the Queen who would soon bear him a male heir of sound mind and body.

Verdi's opera and Schiller's play present a tragedy about star-crossed lovers and frustrated idealism. The historical chronicle reveals a catastrophic clash between a frail and feeble-minded prince and an intolerant, brutally severe father, all documented under the watchful eyes of the powerful Spanish monarchy. As such, there is no historical evidence extant supporting the rumor that Philip II murdered Carlos and Elisabeth; only Shakespeare, the quintessential dramatist, could document those royal slaughterhouses that were propelled by blood, lust and greed. And, there is no historical evidence that Carlos supported the Flemish rebellion, or had an improper relationship or romantic liaison with the Queen.

Schiller's play and Verdi's operatic portrayal of the story, certainly fictionalize the historical facts, or they uncannily provide the true history; no one will ever know. Nevertheless, their *Don Carlos* story provides a dramatic panorama of human passions as their protagonists confront conflicts of love, duty and idealism.

Verdi's earliest acquaintance with the sixteenth century history of Spain's King Philip II dates from his youth when he was a gifted teenage music student in Busseto, Italy. At the time he had read and admired Vittorio Alfieri's tragedy *Filippo*, a penetrating nineteenth century drama about Philip II, his Queen, Elizabeth de Valois, and the Infante Don Carlos.

Alfieri was a consummate liberal, continuously struggling with issues relating to Italy's nationalist ambitions, social injustices, and authoritarian and clerical abuse; Alfieri's passionate advocacy of Italian freedom ennobled him as a hero to republicans who wished to overthrow the autocratic French and Austrian rulers of Italy. In *Filippo*, Alfieri wrote an allegory of his countrymen's contemporary despair

under foreign rule, passionately assailing King Philip II's tyranny by condemning the "ancient cult of fear" that haunted every tyrant's court. In describing Philip's despotism and autocracy, he wrote: "The palace is his temple; the tyrant is a god there; courtiers are its priests; and the victims are freedom, honesty, right thinking, virtue, true honor, and finally, ourselves; we are immolated there."

As early as the age of sixteen, Verdi became immersed in Alfieri's philosophical and political ideas, enthusiastically sharing the dramatist's republicanism, his radical anticlericalism, and his well founded dislike for abusive authority. In later life, Verdi honored Alfieri by naming his son and daughter Icilio Romano and Virginia, after the heroic protagonists in another Alfieri tragic drama, *Virginia*.

The German poet and dramatist, Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) was a favorite of Verdi: three of his previous operas were based on his works; *Giovanna d'Arco*, *I Masnadieri* and *Luisa Miller*. Schiller's abhorrence of authoritarianism is a theme recurring in most of his plays, a result of adolescent experiences in which he was confronted by the rule of a petty tyrant, stifling corruption, and abuse of power.

Schiller's blank verse poetic drama, *Don Carlos*, *Infant von Spanien*, was published in book form in 1787, two years before the storming of the Bastille. The drama became a turning point in his development as a dramatist. On one level, his drama presented a love triangle between the aging King Philip II, his third wife, Elisabeth de Valois, and his son by his first marriage, Don Carlos, the latter in love with his stepmother. However, the conflict between father and son is not confined to their private lives, and involves the broader political implications of the rebellion in Spain's territory of Flanders that had been sparked by the Reformation.

As the plot alternated between individual passions and external politics, Schiller's drama became complicated and tortuous. Nevertheless, he compensated for these apparent faults by introducing a wealth of exciting and moving scenes, and a wide range of sharply individualized characters.

Schiller's drama provided Verdi with an opportunity to express his lifelong fear of authoritarianism as well as his profound anticlericalism to a greater degree even than that of his beloved Alfieri.

Neither Verdi nor Schiller was writing history, but rather, through the drama's portrayal of the inhumanity of Spain's King Philip II, and the stifling power of his monarchy and the Church, they were injecting their own ideals about humanity in a great work of art. Both were children of the Enlightenment, a belief in humanitarian idealism that focused on the dignity of man, freedom and liberty. Ultimately, Schiller's potent words inspired Verdi's operatic musical inventions, which added the emotive power of music to the story's profound human passions.

Verdi believed that the duty of an artist was synonymous with that of a priest. *Don Carlos* became the composer's voice to teach morality. During Verdi's first creative period — 1839 – 1850 — his mission was a profound emotional commitment to inspire Italy's liberation from foreign oppression and tyranny, and his operatic pen provided his nation's anthems for freedom. Temperamentally and ideologically, Verdi abominated absolute power and deified civil liberty; his lifelong manifesto was a passionate crusade against every form of tyranny, whether social, political, or ecclesiastical. *Don Carlo* — and later *Aida* — through their portrayal of the abuse and corruption of church and state power, represent an opportunity for Verdi to present his fears, and by inference, his profound idealism and noble conception of humanity

The Renaissance marked the transition from the Medieval to the modern world, a rebirth and transformation of Western civilization from the stagnant Middle Ages to an era of lofty and noble human values and ideals. Perhaps the most significant historical events that occurred during those early Renaissance years, between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, were the invention of the gun in 1327, Guttenberg's printing press in 1457, the voyages and discoveries of Columbus starting in 1492, and Martin Luther's publication of his 96 Theses, sparking the Protestant Reformation, and its counterpart, the Counter-Reformation.

In late fifteenth century, Isabella I of Castille and Ferdinand V of Aragon united Spain and became its supreme monarchs, defeating Granada, the last Moorish stronghold on the Iberian Peninsula, and

setting the stage for world leadership and power by launching Spain's adventures into the western hemisphere.

In sixteenth century Spain, secular and religious power were united, a theocracy in which there were no ideals of democracy, and certainly, no separation between church and state; the monarchy, allied to the Church, was endowed with divine power. Religious coercion was a form of spiritual imperialism. Spain's pious monarchs were known as the "Catholic Kings" who were endowed to enforce the purity and supremacy of the Catholic faith, as well as protect and consolidate their royal power; religion and politics were one.

In Spain, power was wielded through the Inquisition, which started in 1480, and was abolished 354 years later in 1834. The Inquisition became the arch-symbol of religious intolerance and ecclesiastical power. In its worst incarnation, through its tyranny, it demanded theocratic absolutism; it was the forerunner of the twentieth century KGB and Gestapo secret police, their motto: "an eye that never slumbers." The Inquisition was a malevolent Argus that was assisted by legions of spies on the lookout for deviance, ultimately becoming an engine of immense power that was constantly applied for the furtherance of obscurantism, the repression of thought, non conformity, the exclusion of foreign ideas, and the obstruction of progress.

The Inquisitors were royally appointed guardians who were vested with both civil and church power that exempted them from normal jurisdiction. Their proceedings were secret, and they arbitrarily confiscated the property of the condemned and distributed it among the crown, the Inquisition itself, or the accusers.

The Inquisition was initially created for the purpose of dealing with apostasy, particularly Spain's large population of Jews who they forced to convert to Christianity, but who refused or were reluctant to assimilate; nevertheless, the Jews were eventually expelled from Spain in 1492. In its later incarnation, the Inquisition persecuted Protestants as a part of the Counter Reformation, and it served as a vehicle to destroy political opposition, humiliate and punish those considered blasphemers, heretics, bigamists, foreigners, and ultimately, any undesirable.

Beginning with Columbus' voyages, Spain created a huge overseas empire. Their spectacular expansion into the Americas resulted in the destruction of the Aztec empire in Mexico by Cortes (1519-1521), the conquest of the Inca empire of Peru by Pizarro (1531-1533), and by the mid-sixteenth century, the conquest of most of the South American continent, Central America, Florida and Cuba. Their overseas empire brought enormous wealth in the form of silver and gold, and the by-product of those conquests was the forcible imposition of Christianity on those vanquished across the Atlantic.

At the time of the *Don Carlo* story, Spain was busy assembling its enormous empire, and had assuredly established itself as the richest and most powerful Empire in the western world.

During the first half of the sixteenth century, Ferdinand's grandson, Charles V, became the Holy Roman Emperor. Almost simultaneously, the Protestant Reformation was launched in Germany by Martin Luther's 95 theses, challenging fundamental Catholic theology as well as clerical abuses. Charles V led the vanguard to suppress Protestantism that had been sweeping across northern Europe; they would halt its spread by publicly burning Luther's books, and use the power of the Inquisition to suppress its heresy.

In 1556, Charles V relinquished the Spanish throne to his son, Philip II, who would rule Spain for the next forty-two years: until 1598. During Philip's reign, the empire rose to the pinnacle of its power and influence, and like his father, Philip served the Roman Catholic Church in its struggle against the Protestants. Rebellion erupted in the Low Countries, particularly in Flanders, where Spain's persecuted and oppressed Protestants in those territories.

Although Philip II banned Protestantism in the Netherlands, he could not force the Dutch to accept Roman Catholicism. He resorted to his armies and the Inquisition to quell the rebellious Dutch Protestants; the Flemish revolt led to the Eighty Years War that began in 1566. Nevertheless, in England, Queen Elizabeth I, then a Protestant power, supported the Dutch rebels, and England dealt the most disastrous blow to Spain's power by defeating the Spanish Armada in 1588. Spain's northern provinces eventually won their independence and the Peace of

Westphalia established an independent Netherlands: a Protestant nation.

Significantly, the defeat of the Spanish Armada began the decline of the Spanish Empire both domestically and internationally. Their diminishing acquisition of American treasures alone could not support Spain's wars and their economic instability; as a result, oppressive taxation was invoked. Also, epidemics swept Spain and significantly reduced its population. The end of the sixteenth century signaled the twilight of Spain's power and influence, a condition from which they never recovered.

In Verdi's *Don Carlo*, the catalyst of the story is the King's decision to preempt his son and marry the young Elisabeth himself. Philip becomes suspicious that the Queen still loves his son, becomes obsessed with jealousy, and becomes tortured by his loneliness and Elisabeth's indifference to him. Carlo, distraught and despairing, adopts his friend Posa's idealism, a treacherous act through which he becomes the advocate of liberty for Spain's territory of Flanders.

Don Carlo portrays a complex interaction between its six principal characters: King Philip II, his son Don Carlo, Queen Elisabeth, Princess Eboli, Rodrigo, the Marquis of Posa, and the Grand Inquisitor. The geometry of these relationships fuses into six individual tragedies as each character becomes enmeshed in grand, universal conflicts: Catholic vs. Protestant, father vs. son, liberalism vs. conservatism, and state vs. church.

In Verdi's musical language, their personal dilemmas are depicted with immense passion and compassion; the opera presents powerful, exploding confrontations between these characters. But beyond their conflicts and tensions, the opera story's ultimate passions are the noble ideals and sentiments of liberalism: the King and the Grand Inquisitor portray the rigidity and intransigence of sixteenth century conservatism; and eighteenth and nineteenth century ideals of liberalism and human progress are represented by Rodrigo, the Marquis of Posa, and eventually the Infante, Don Carlo.

The underlying theme of *Don Carlo* expresses Verdi's profound personal and moral concerns about the abuse of power by political and religious institutions that not only call for sacrifice for the greater good, but interfere with personal happiness and freedom by inflicting a helplessness, impotency, and repression of individual freedom and liberty.

Following *Don Carlo*, Verdi's next opera, *Aida* (1872), would again focus on man's helplessness against the power of state and religion. In *Aida*, ancient Egypt's religious and secular power are united as one singular, awesome, sacred institution; it is a classical theocracy with its rule exercised by one man whose power is divinely endowed; the King — or Pharaoh — is a god, an incarnation of god on earth, the supreme ruler and descendant of the divine and cosmic gods. The Priests of Isis, just like the Grand Inquisitor and the Church in *Don Carlo*, protect and invoke the sacred unity of God and the state. Both opera stories are saturated with the unrelenting authoritarian power of religion and state, what Verdi feared as destructive powers that interfered with human freedom and dignity.

The glory of *Don Carlo* remains in its ideas: its dramatization of the political tensions between liberalism and absolutism, and its complex portrait of ambivalent humanity. Saturating and dominating the drama is Philip II's harsh — if not demonic — absolute tyranny, and his oppression and persecution of heretics at the stake; Act II's *auto-da-fê* processional represents awesome horror and inhumanity. The *auto da fé* of the opera actually occurred at Valladolid in Madrid in 1559; *auto da fé* is literally the Inquisition's "protestation of faith."

Don Carlo's underlying theme is a passionate love of freedom and idealistic democratic principles: they are echoed by Rodrigo, the Marquis of Posa, and Don Carlo; in the original French of the libretto, they proclaim *L'amour exalte, l'amour de la liberté*. Don Carlos's appeal to the King for freedom and democracy for Spain's territory of Flanders, in effect, represents an appeal for liberalism and egalitarian ideals. His actions are patently suspicious and treacherous, prompting the King to fear his son. It causes him to believe that his son is insane, and then he is forced to condemn him to prison and eventual execution.

King Philip and the Grand Inquisitor confront each other in a powerfully dramatic and passionate duel between the powers of church and state; both are the agents of God on earth. The character of the Grand Inquisitor in *Don Carlo* was Verdi's own creation, a man he wanted to appear as a dreadful prelate, mordant and severe. Verdi insisted that the character be very old and blind, his cynical private vendetta against a blind priest from his native Busetto who had continually opposed him. The actual Grand Inquisitor holding office at the time was Diego de Espinoza, a character who was neither blind, old, or awe-inspiring. Espinoza would have been an important advisor to the King but would not have had influence since Inquisitors owed their appointment to the King but not the Pope; the Papacy mistrusted an institution whose aims were more political than religious.

Philip appeals to the Church for its justification if he executes his errant son. The Draconian king sets himself above the law, vindicating himself and freeing himself of blame by justifying his decision in the name of patriotism: "Our country demands this, not I." The stern Grand Inquisitor accommodates the King, justifying his actions by reminding him that God sacrificed his own Son for the good of mankind. Nevertheless, the Inquisitor demands the life of Posa, a man he considers a foe of the church and a traitor to Spain. The King refuses the Inquisitor's request, claiming that Posa is the only person in his court whom he can trust, but the King too must accede to authority and power: in the end, he must consent to the Inquisitor's wishes.

The King is all-powerful and austere, an authoritarian hiding behind the absolute rightness of faith and the divinity of Church and state. Nevertheless, the King himself is vulnerable to that same authority and power that he represents: the Grand Inquisitor.

Schiller noted the internal conflicts in his story were "a picture of family relations in an Imperial household," a dysfunctional family deeply immersed in passionate conflicts and tensions; without its music-drama context, a perfect "soap opera" scenario.

Passionate amorous entanglements indeed saturate Verdi's opera story: Elisabeth's dutiful love for her husband, Philip II, in conflict with her passionate love

for her former fiancé, Don Carlo; the King's love for Elisabeth in conflict with his adulterous love for Princess Eboli; Carlo's hopeless passion for his stepmother, the Queen Elisabeth; and Eboli's obsessive passion for Don Carlo.

Dominating the passions of human love is the inviolable love of God and country, expressed passionately by the King and the Grand Inquisitor. Exactly like *Aida's* story, the drama highlights the conflict of duty vs. love. All the characters seek love, but the powers of state and church supercede and interfere with those yearnings and desires, eventually abandoning the protagonists to individual powerlessness and loneliness.

In particular, Philip's unhappiness emanates from his suspicion that his wife and son are engaged in an adulterous love affair, a rejection and disaffection that the King is unable to cope with. Don Carlo is unable to cope with the loss of Elisabeth to his father, and he continually laments the woman who has spurned him in the name of duty, now the Queen of Spain and his stepmother. In the end, love leads to tragedy.

Unquestionably, the *Don Carlo* drama represents an intense denunciation of Philip II of Spain, a demonic despot whom Verdi and Schiller portray as one of the most ferocious and ruthless tyrants in history: a fierce sovereign and a harsh Machiavellian monster.

In his most human sense, the King is a lonely, self-pitying and brooding old man whose soul has become tortured by disaffection and jealousy. Above all, he suspects that Elisabeth's unresponsiveness to him is the result of her love for his son. But Philip also believes that his son Don Carlo hates him for his excessive exercise of brute force in Flanders and his marriage to his former fiancée. Philip's insane suspicions lead him to forsake his son, using treason as a reason to convict him of insanity, and eventually, to execution.

The lonely King, distrustful of all, is consoled by only a few whom he believes are loyal: Eboli becomes his mistress; Posa becomes his trusted surrogate son and only friend, but one who dares to challenge his King on matters of church and state. The King craves love but knows not how to give love. In Philip's Act

III aria, Verdi exposes the inner soul of the man with unbridled pathos: *Ella giammai m'amò*, "She never loved me." It is the King's poignant and eloquent outpouring of his unhappiness and disaffection. He opens his soul to all the principal characters: his wife Elisabeth, his son, Posa, Eboli, and of course, the Grand Inquisitor.

The motives of Princess Eboli are suspect. She is patently politically ambitious and yearns for power and status, nevertheless she is spurned and rejected in her aggressive affections for Don Carlo. In revenge, Eboli decides to plot against Carlo and Elisabeth; she delivers Elisabeth's jewel case to the King, and ultimately finds consolation in becoming the King's mistress. Eboli, as a keeper of the keys to all of Elisabeth's locks, is certainly, for much of the drama, the prime intriguer who causes most of the mischiefs.

Eboli aptly describes her dilemma in her aria, *O don fatale* ("Oh, fatal gift"), a conclusion that her beauty is responsible for her fatal destiny, a liability that has made her vulnerable and contributed to her unhappiness. In her interplay with Posa, he compliments her gallantly, but he knows better than to trust her, intuitively sensing her duplicitous character and secret ambitions.

Eboli is a true historical personage. Paintings from the period suggest that she was blind in one eye, which explains her eye patch. In mythology, one-eyed figures are symbolic; they know everything that happens around them, but are in conflict to know their inner selves. Eboli's tragedy is not much different from that of Philip, of whom Posa comments, "You rule the world, yet you cannot rule yourself."

During Carlo's incognito trip to Fontainebleau to meet his prospective bride, he and Elisabeth fell in love immediately. Nevertheless, Elisabeth immediately became confronted with her obligations and was forced to resolve her conflict of love vs. duty; she accepted her destiny and married King Philip.

In the opera story, Elisabeth is portrayed as overcome with guilt and remorse because she truly loved Carlo, but was forced to abandon that love. She is constantly under scrutiny by the suspicious King, who eventually unjustly accuses her of adultery. However, she is undaunted and strengthened by her

honesty and convictions. In her final aria, *Tu che la vanita*, Elizabeth maturely perceives her essential loneliness and vulnerability, clearly understanding her dilemma and knowingly recognizing that she has become the victim of the vast sweep of history and duty.

Don Carlo's confusion and inner psychological turmoil bring him into constant conflict with his tyrannical father; he cannot cope with being spurned by his father, as well as Elisabeth. To overcome his rejection by Elisabeth, at the urging of the idealistic Posa, he advocates a new agenda and mission, dedicating himself to the noble liberal ideals of freedom and liberty for Flanders.

Carlo is continually overcome by emotion and passion, a man who has lost the power of reason. In their confrontation after Elisabeth's marriage to Philip, Carlo's new Queen and stepmother tries to explain that she acted for a higher purpose, but Carlo is inwardly tormented and explodes uncontrollably into anger and rage. Elisabeth reminds him of the Oedipal nature of his passions: "Will you kill your father and then, stained with his blood, lead your mother to the altar?" Indeed, like Oedipus, Carlo's actions are wayward and foolish passions. His ultimate irrational act occurs when he draws his sword against his father in a threatening gesture after he challenges the King to place the fate of Flanders into his hands.

Schiller's creation of the character of Rodrigo, the Marquis of Posa — a less-than-historical and scarcely discernible character in the absolutist sixteenth century world of authoritarian Spain — was to establish a voice to represent the embodiment of the Enlightenment ideals of tolerance, political and religious freedom, and universal brotherhood. The seventeenth century writer, Vischard de Saint-Réal, invented much of the Posa myth that became Schiller's primary source; it was Schiller's idealism that prompted him to make Posa a key character in the drama: to achieve his noble agenda, Posa exploits his boyhood friendship with Carlo; they went to school together.

Posa's mission is to alleviate oppression and persecution in Flanders: he is a noble and independent spirit, an obsessed personal crusader and champion of liberty, an advocate of religious freedom and practice, and an opponent of the Inquisition. Schiller explained

Posa as a man with many faces, sometimes duplicitous, manipulative, and at times appearing to suggest opportunism that is disguised as democratic liberalism.

Posa's affection for Carlo is genuine, yet he manipulates his trusted friend, fully realizing that Carlo provides the only means through which his humanitarian and political dreams can be fulfilled: "O my beloved prince, the hour has struck. The Flemish people are calling you. Help them." Posa exploits his friendship with Carlo, but he also hopes that when Carlo succeeds his father on the throne, he will become an enlightened monarch who will help him to accomplish his personal goals.

Ultimately, Posa persuades the Prince that he must go to Flanders and inaugurate an era of religious tolerance and national independence, a noble goal that seems blind to its inherent treachery. Carlo and Posa unite in a solemn pledge of friendship, a hymn whose musical language celebrates humanity's craving for freedom: *Dio che nell'alma infondere amor* ("May God infuse love and hope within my soul.") Posa symbolizes noble universal ideals, but in the real world where confrontations challenge nations to war, it was Schiller's ideal that the more momentous challenge of humanity was the greater challenge to invoke peace.

With the exception of the Grand Inquisitor, all the other characters trust Posa: the King, Elisabeth, Eboli and Don Carlo. During Posa's audience with the King, he unhesitatingly describes in the most vivid terms the miserable suffering caused by intolerance that prevails in Flanders: inhabitants crushed by the iron fists of the Spanish soldiers; and a people relentlessly oppressed by the agents of the Spanish Inquisition.

The King defends his policies of military repression by noting that authoritarian power has brought peace and calm in other Spanish lands, and he has no doubt that he will achieve the same favorable results in Flanders. However, a bold Posa replies, "it is a peace of graveyards," the ultimate answer to all dictatorships that claim that their despotic policies create peaceful conditions in their realms. Posa cautions King Philip not to be remembered in history as a second Nero, but the King remains intransigent and totally committed to the righteousness of power, a power supported by the Inquisition. Nevertheless, the King trusts Posa and desperately needs his loyal

friendship. He confides in Posa, and even commands him that his patriotic duty is to spy for him; to prove the correctness of his suspicions about adultery between the Queen and Carlo.

The trusted Posa also becomes Carlo's messenger, the man who will arrange a private meeting between Carlo and the Queen, the encounter in which the Queen promises Carlo that she will plead with the King to heed his petition to be named governor of Flanders. And when the impetuous Carlo draws his sword against the King, it becomes Posa, Carlo's trusted friend who accepts his surrender, in effect, his invitation to imprisonment.

Verdi hated history's oppressors, and believed more profoundly in consolation for history's oppressed. He wanted his audience to know that Posa's eventual death was not to be viewed as a useless sacrifice; Posa's martyrdom was intended to express the importance of man's dedication to ideals, a demonstration that the pursuit of those noble ideals is more important than life itself. Posa's purposes are humane, and in Verdi, that loftiness and nobility of purpose is clearly portrayed in his music. Unquestionably, Verdi wrote perhaps his most poignant and noble music for Posa's death: *Io morro, ma lieto in core* ("I die with my heart gladdened.")

Verdi ends *Don Carlo* with a *deus-ex-machina* finale in which that same "spiritual" character who opened the opera, closes the opera: the spirit of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. Verdi intended that illusion to represent a melodramatic declaration to the existence of a loving, providential power; a spiritual power above and beyond the dynamics of history and the uncertainties of human relationships. At the end of Verdi's story, the old monk who rescues Don Carlo may indeed be Charles V, still alive to save his grandson from execution by his father and the Inquisition.

For many years, Verdi's masterpiece, *Don Carlo* slept peacefully in the opera canon, most companies finding it a long and cumbersome opera to produce, and one requiring an astounding cast of six major singers. In 1950, after so many years of neglect and indifference, Sir Rudolph Bing sprung it from limbo and mounted the opera to inaugurate his

Metropolitan Opera administration; since then, and in increasing numbers, opera lovers have come to view *Don Carlo* as one of Verdi's greatest masterpieces.

The original plot for the 1867 *Don Carlos* in Paris was cumbersome, and the opera's expansive subplots served to make the story extremely complicated. And respecting French opera traditions, *Don Carlos* included the inevitable ballet, so the resulting French version of *Don Carlos* was pure spectacle, true to the prevalent French Meyerbeerian traditions of grand opera.

Although the French premiere was a success, Verdi was unhappy and uncomfortable with the final opera. Immediately, he sought to make a number of changes and modifications to both the dramatic action and the music score. Arrigo Boito, the renowned poet who would eventually collaborate with Verdi on *Otello* and *Falstaff*, provided revisions to *Don Carlos*; in 1869 the opera premiered in Italian as *Don Carlo*, the version that ultimately satisfied the composer, and the version that is most often heard today.

By the time Verdi had arrived at the composition of *Don Carlo*, his 25th opera, he had evolved into a supreme musical-dramatist, no longer the composer of number-recitative operas, but now a master of Italian music drama, who provided a great synthesis and fusion between text and music: the "Italian Music of the Future" that he would more fully develop in his next opera, *Aida*, and in his final operas, *Otello* and *Falstaff*.

In many respects, *Don Carlo* was Verdi's prototype for his lofty ideal of the future of Italian opera, and in particular, Italian music drama, an integrity between text and music that would be embellished with sublime lyricism and melody. Words provoke thought; music evokes feeling. Verdi's *Don Carlo* is an opera about profound and timeless ideas that can reach into the human soul because they are expressed through the composer's impassioned lyricism. It is a masterpiece of lyric theater that is a tribute to the art form, as well as to the genius of Giuseppe Verdi.

