Italian Opera

Historical Background
- Established Tradition
- Only Important Music Outlet
  - Concentration of Genius
  - Conservative Attitude
  - Fewer Experiments
- Romantic Elements Gradually
  - Traditions and Restraints of Librettists
- Shift in style
  - Decline of the Castrato
    - Castrati—Contralto—Tenor
  - Open the scene with an Aria
    - Prevents an aria from freezing the action
- Attraction of Paris

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)
- Parents were musicians
- Bologna Conservatory
- Opera Career began in 1810
- Big break in 1813
  - Tancredi and L’Italiana in Algieri
- Employed by Neapolitan Opera (1815-1822)
  - Accompanied Recitative
- 1823: Paris
  - L’Opéra Comique
  - L’Opéra
- 1830: Semi-Retirement
  - Religious Vocal Music
Pre-Verdi

Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)
- Successor to Rossini in Naples
- Several Operas a year
- 70 Operas Total
- Lot of other Music (Instrumental and Vocal)

Vincenzo Bellini (1801-35)
- 10 Operas (all serious)
- Utmost in Refinement
- Intense, Expressive, Flexible
- Chopin-esque
- Theatre-Italien

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)
- Denied Admission to Milan Conservatory
- Private Lessons
- 1838  First Opera
- La Scala (1839)
- 1893 Last Opera
- Intensely Patriotic

"Viva VERDI"
- Viva Vittorio Emanuele, Re D'Italia!
- Unification Cry of Italians
- Operas became very popular
- Performed all over the world
- Financed Casa di Riposo per Musicisti (Milan)

Verdi’s Operas
- Four Basic Subjects
  - Heroism (1842-1849)
    - Nabucco
  - Personal Lives (1849-1853)
    - Il Trovatore
    - Rigoletto
    - La Forz'etta
  - French Influence (1853-1871)
    - Un ballo in Maschera
    - Aida
  - Shakespeare
    - Otello (1887)
    - Falstaff (1893)
- Many Librettists/Authors
  - Schiller, Victor Hugo, Dumas, Byron, Scribe, Shakespeare
Verdi’s Style

- Nothing Radical
  - Brought Italian Opera to the point of Perfection
- Refinement of Detail
- Emotional Force
- Directness and Clarity
- Reminiscence Motives
- Four-Fold Division
  - Four Acts
  - Prologue and Three Acts
    - 2 and 3: Ensemble Finales
    - 3: Big Duet
    - 4: Prayer Scene or Meditation

Post-Verdi

- Verism (Verismo, Veristic)
  - Truthism, Realism, Naturalism…
  - Everyday people, violent primitive emotions
    - Mascagni: Cavalleria rusticana
    - Leoncavallo: I Pagliacci
- Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)
  - Realistic libretti
  - Musically attractive
    - Madama Butterfly
    - Turandot
    - La bohème