



# GIUSEPPE VERDI

## *Overture to La Forza del Destino*

**Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi** (9 or 10 October 1813 – 27 January 1901) was an Italian Romantic composer primarily known for his operas. He is considered, with Richard Wagner, the preeminent opera composer of the 19th century. Verdi dominated the Italian opera scene after the eras of Bellini, Donizetti and Rossini. His works are frequently performed in opera houses throughout the world and some of his melodies have taken root in popular culture, examples being "La donna è mobile" from *Rigoletto*, "Va, pensiero" (the Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves) from *Nabucco*, and the "Grand March" from *Aida*. Philosopher Isaiah Berlin described him in 1969 as "noble, simple, with a degree of unbroken vitality and vast natural power of creation and organization, Verdi is the voice of a world that is no more. His enormous popularity among the most sophisticated as well as the most ordinary listeners today is due to the fact that he expressed permanent states of consciousness in the most direct terms: as Homer, Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Tolstoy have done... After Verdi this is not heard in music again." In his early operas, Verdi was greatly influenced by his predecessors, while in his middle and later period, Verdi exhibited a "growing freedom in the large scale structure...and an acute attention to fine detail," growing dissatisfied with the prevailing structures. A major figure for Italian nationalism, mourners at Verdi's funeral sang "Va, pensiero" in a chorus of 820 singers, conducted by Arturo Toscanini.

**La Forza del Destino** (The Force of Destiny) is an Italian opera based on a Spanish drama, *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino* (1835). It is frequently performed, and there have been a number of complete recordings. In addition, the overture (to the revised version of the opera) is part of the standard repertoire for orchestras, often played as the opening piece at concerts. Don Alvaro is a young nobleman from South America (presumably Peru) who has settled in Seville where he is not very well thought of. He falls in love with Donna Leonora, the daughter of the Marquis of Calatrava, but Calatrava is determined that she shall marry only a man of the highest origin. Despite knowing her father's aversion to Alvaro, Leonora is deeply in love with him, and she determines to give up her home and country in order to elope with him. Accidentally killing the Marquis when he discovers them eloping, Don Alvaro joins the army under a pseudonym; however he is discovered by Leonora's brother Don Carlos. In the end, Don Carlos, mortally wounded by Don Alvaro, kills his sister in rage. As she dies, Alvaro prays to heaven. The overture notably begins with the famous "Fate" Motif, an ominous three Es unison in the brass, highlighting the inescapability of fate.