

Dear Chorus,

Please enjoy from our archive of chorus correspondence from Robert Shaw a letter and two poems about Verdi and his *Requiem*:

Jeffrey W. Baxter (02-23-06)
Choral Administrator - Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

(from May 5, 1977)

More, perhaps, than with any other composer or oratorio the Verdi *Requiem* depends upon vocal splendor and authority. The soloists and chorus must soar over the orchestra. Every bit of text must be inflected and fashioned. No tone left unsternum'd as to color, accentuation and dynamics.

Beauty in music is not always quintessential. But Verdi unadorned and unadorned is green without gold. His is not a paste-on beauty. No house-pet, quick-change, easy-on-easy-off. No skin-deep.

Think Michelangelo, da Vinci and Donatello. Think St. Peters, San Marco, La Scala and Pizza Hut. Think Otello, Falstaff and Marlon Brando. Think sunshine, cannelloni, Alps and olive oil. Think Sophia Loren, Arturo Toscanini and Two Ton Tony Galento. Think beauty. And think sub-cutaneously.

Sing same.
R

(from April 22, 1980)

Cabaletta:

Verdi kept by his desk
A composing machine –
(The recent invention
Of mean-well Joe Green.)

As quick as a flash –
Or ahbrahcahdahbrah!
He put in a mass –
And out popped an opera!

Canzone:

His operatic plots, it's clear,
Were frequently intended
As parables of social wrongs
And how to get them mended.

If he were writing wrongs today
We'd call him a humanist:
He'd not a womanizer be,
-But might be a womanist.