A new year, a new issue of Horizons. This winter of 1948-49 brings volume 10, number 2, whole number 37, FAPA number 31, VAPA number 11. Editor is Harry Warner, Jr., 305 Bryan Place, Hagerstown, Md., who is responsible for the contents. Once again, production is on the Doubledoubletoilandtrouble Mimeograph.

In the Beginning

I am, understandably, happy to announce that the army rejected me when my draft number came up in mid-October. Two months later, I attained my 26th birthday, which means that I'm safe from induction as long as the present selective service rules remain in effect. Many thanks to all those who tried to relieve my apprehensions ahead of time by assuring me that they'd never seen a more complete physical wreck.

Last issue's experiment of farming out the reviews was only half successful. I appreciate Jim Blish's acceptance of them for VAPA publication, but the gent who promised to run them for the FAPA wasn't represented in the mailing at all. So for this time, at least, they're back in Horizons. There isn't enough commentable stuff in the VAPA mailing to inspire me to impose on Blish again, and there are several things to say about the FAPA publications that won't be much good if they miss the coming mailing again.

To the VAPA, then: I like the colloquy method of presenting ideas, and had long been surprised that no one except Speer used it in ayjay work. My interest in educational matters centers more about revision of the curriculum than around Seedy's teacher qualifications. But I'm inclined to think that the very best teachers should be assigned to the first year or two of elementary school. Once they reach nine or ten years of age, kids have the ability to get information out of a book almost as much as teenagers and need mmm little more than guidance in their studies; it's the six- and seven-year-olders who depend almost wholly on the instructor, and that is when important reading and writing habits are formed. '' A couple of tsktsks to you, Virginia. I think it must take you almost as long to stencil the Cadavres Exquises as it would to type a stencil full of your words. I know I'd enjoy the words a lot more; the collaborated drawings draw a smile and five seconds of inspection from me, but they must be interesting primarily to the three persons who drew them. '' The most impressive thing about "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House," Bill, was the fiendishly clever manner in which the contractors and real estate men nullified most of its power as propaganda. The book was written with such good humor that it might have caused many people to realize what incredible profiteering is going on in those fields. (Savage satire or attacks usually aren't so effective: people think that the writer is simply a neurotic with a fixation against his subject.) So immediately the newspapers and builders and allied groups got together and constructed "Mr. Blandings Dream Houses" in all sections of the country, ran contests, and in general got people to believing that it was just the American success story of a couple who succeed in owning their own home. '' A sideline to that "incest on a high spiritual plane" remark: I asked a correspondent who had some long talks with EESmith how under the sun the Kinnison race was to propagate if there was nothing living in any universe with a chance of matching its powers. The correspondent said Smith told him that he tried to prepare the readers all through the final story in the series for the fact that Kinnison will even-

tually be forced to mate with his sisters. '' As to Dreadful Sanctuary, I can't see that Russell definitely answers the question of whether the earth is the nuthouse. Finding nothing on the moon when the "first" rocket landed there proves nothing: the probability of its descending on the center of an outpost is extremely remote. '' I don't care for Wagner in translation, and yet I don't think the argument that it makes his operas seem "easier" than they are. The main difficulty is that Wagner (a) seldom set a line of poetry to music without tying at least one of its words tight to the vocal line or orchestral accompaniment; and (b) was one of the least diffuse poets who ever put a pen to paper. The (a) difficulty remains even if you try to prepare an English translation without regard for the rhyme and alliteration. The climax of Isolde's long first act narration is an excellent example: "Tod uns beiden!" simply has no approximate English equivalent that will fit, except the ridiculous "Death for me, too!" And you can't say anything different, because this is a key point in the drama, foreshadowing as it does the solution to the whole problem of the opera. Such things reach incredible depths in existing translations of Wagner. The most frequently used English version of Tristan puts the final lines of "unbewusst--höchste Lust!" into this: "in a kiss, highest bliss!" This despite the fact that preceding these lines are four full hours of opera devoted to one thing and one thing only: the efforts of Tristan and Isolde to escape (in a manner consistent with their honor and ideals) their unsolvable dilemma of life. For Isolde to mention kiss with its material connotations at this point is as absurd as a version of Othello in which at the end it would turn out that Desdemona had been unfaithful to the Moor all along. (b) holds good despite the enormous length of some of the operas: even if you insist that Wagner says too much, you can't claim that he says it in too many words, and you can prove that simply by trying to put any passage from the opera at all into other words, English or German, prose or poetry, without using as many words as Wagner does. '' Yep, I think the Liszt Hark, Hark, the Lark is very fine, considered as a composition which uses the tune that Schubert composed. Remember that a composer's bad works don't affect the good ones. If an inveterate liar says only one true thing in his life, that truth is still true.

And so to FAPA: I've swung around to the belief that nothing should be done about members who enter the service. The constitution provides a mechanism by which they can stay in the organization if the army prevents them from sufficient activity. If the service member or a friend isn't sufficiently interested to go through the necessary procedure, the service member will probably survive dropping from the rolls. '' Gad, Len, if your nurseryman's ideas about Negroes seemed novel to you, what sort of ideas seem to you to be the conventional ones? '' "Watts with This Stf?" reminds me considerably of religious tracts. I see no reason why we, who have read and thought considerable about science fiction, at this late date should read articles meant to convince people that it's good reading. It's just like church members who every week go through their Sunday school books to convince themselves about about the reality of God. '' Big Name Fan is a superb job. All the violent attacks on fandom by people who have decided to quit the field don't have half the impact of this, and it's considerably closer to the truth than things which have emanated from guys like Fortier and Duncan. '' Thoughts While Typing is probably the most encouraging thing in this mailing: Sneary is growing up very fast mentally. I suspect that it may be a hypnotic effect

caused by the power of suggestion in the don'tsellsnearyshort campaign. Whatever the cause, he is rapidly developing the ability to write in clear, easily comprehended manner fresh slants on old topics, an ability currently possessed by only about one-fourth of the FAPA membership. Two quotes from The Wabbler: "How much did I rewrite HUBBY'S HOBBY? Just one sentence, which was left incomplete due to being overly involved." "And it would prevent such occurrances as when Train's postmailing, being so late, was declared of no effect and even that it could be considered as a postmailing to the following mailing in which Train had been dropped because he had not fulfilled his activity requirements." But all that aside, Coswal, I hope you eventually swing around to realize that nothing is more fatal to a hobby than this completism mania. The day that you wake up and realize that the world isn't going to end because you can't find the 1928 Weird that is missing from your collection --on that day you'll really begin to enjoy the magazines you have. '' Milty's logic is dreadful. So Milty would decide whether a guy is a crackpot simply by the manner in which he responds to needling? That system just doesn't work out. My newspaper work brings me into contact with every crackpot in Hagerstown; the individual specimens of the genre, when crossed, exhibit varying degrees from Christ-like patience to the most violent fits of temper, and the same ought to hold true for the genius genre. The theory that Graham has had his tongue in cheek all along is probably the correct one; but I held that belief about Palmer's attitude toward fandom for three or four years, and finally realized that it wasn't so. Rothman's description in this Plenum about his attitude toward science is more attractive than what he said in earlier stages of the discussion. I would question his inclusion of "our senses do not deceive us" in the first section, particularly coming from a guy who knows what Korzybski is talking about. '' I'm just getting in on the tail end of the Cox excitement. Even if we assume as correct Paul's statement that Negroes in general have less intelligence than the white race, I fail to see why anti-Negro sentiment should follow. "Intelligence" to begin with is something that is subject to many definitions; but no matter how you define it, it is far from being the only desirable quality in man. If everyone had his IQ tested, Paul, and the Jewish race turned out to score a higher average than anyone else, would you think it just to undergo the same treatment at the hands of the Jews that you've been giving the Negroes? '' Burton Crane says some surprisingly stupid things about music in Fandango. He ought to know perfectly well the reason--real reason--why sharp keys are preferred for strings and why music for brass instruments is more frequently written in keys containing flats. I am also extremely skeptical about musicians who claim to play accidentals in real tune instead of the piano's compromised notes. I think that it's as much a delusion as the belief held by many great composers that each key has its own personality. Most music of any complexity would sound unbearably dissonant after a few bars, if each instrument played in exact tune, simply because almost every modulation would throw at least one instrument out of contact with the others. '' Paul Spencer not only is becoming our greatest authority on Keller; he's starting to write like the good doctor. A Visit to Underwood is considerably above the average travelogue, perhaps because of this very fact. '' You cheated a little on that anthology boxscore, Redd, when you didn't take into consideration The Other Worlds. It would pull Amazing and a couple other junky magazines up a little. '' Your mention of the trouble in getting the quasi-quotes straights prompts me to wonder

on stencil why Speer didn't adopt some other symbol for easier typing. Many typers can't manage the process of striking the - and " while the space bar is held down: backspacing becomes necessary. Use of something like ,, to begin and end quasi-quotes would be a lot simpler, and even clearer in poor mimeography. It would also be adaptable to printed fanzines without driving jobbers nuts with orders for a type face which does not exist. '' Oh, for a Danner or a Tucker 1940 to do a satire on the fifth issue of Full Length Articles! Even as it is, it seems excruciating funny to me, whenever I can forget for a moment that this is the sort of thing that goes on all the time in law and passes for justice. I don't know any more about the legal aspects of the matter than I did before I read Speer's doctrine, but it did give me moments of pleasure and amusement. '' Wireway sounds the best to me of the wire recorders that I've heard in operation. But none of them is satisfactory for musical purposes. Unless the price of the wire or tape falls far, far down, I'm not interested. You don't get the quality of the musical performance that you do from recordings, and it's virtually as expensive as Columbia's new Longplay discs--wire that runs for an hour costs $5; you get from 40 to 50 minutes on Longplay for $4.85. '' Prokofieff didn't imitate Mozart in the Classical Symphony, Don; he wrote something like Mozart might write if alive today. There's a big difference. Several good reasons exist why contemporary composers shouldn't write just like 18th century composers, quite aside from questions of progress. Modern musicians know contemporary music; the musician who tried to compose in the old styles would suffer a certain amount of frustration from the knowledge of what he must avoid. More relevant, however, is the simple fact that there is more great 18th century music in existence than you or I shall ever live long enough to become familiar with; what we need is more great music that takes advantage of techniques that have been developed in more recent times.

Peccavi, Peccavi

It becomes time to confess and to accuse. Early in 1948, I decided to find out whether anyone in the FAPA and VAPA would recognize abominably bad poetry when confronted with it. The result of the experiment does not flatter the members of these groups.

I had some trouble deciding how I could make sure of publishing bad poetry. I finally hit on a chapter from Martin Chuzzlewit. Dickens, whose prose is as lacking in anything resembling rhythm as anyone who ever lived, was poking fun at literary pretenders in the course of Martin's visit to America. This seemed the ideal place to find some lines that have no merit whatsoever.

So I extracted a couple of sentences from the prose emitted by one of Dickens' Literary Ladies, broke it up into lines of unequal length, gave it a title, and stuck it into volume 9, number 3 of Horizons. Not a soul mentioned it in the mailings that have ensued.

Someone might object that it was so bad that it didn't rate anyone's mention. But that isn't a valid claim; the "poem" was worse than that, far worse, and certainly ought to have received scathing remarks from several sources. It just goes as another support for my conviction that poetry has now "advanced" to the point where no one can hope to know whether he likes or dislikes any given specimen of the "advanced" school, and that it is no longer possible to distinguish the hopelessly bad from the good.

From Unknown Worlds
Street & Smith Publications, Inc., New York, 1948

A book review usually goes into this space. But the only fantasy that I've read in the last three months appeared in magazine form--a few stories from Astounding, one issue of Thrilling Wonder (which was an improvement over Astounding) and this reprinted volume from Unknown and Unknown Worlds. At least it is a good opportunity to deliver some remarks about the magazine that I've intended for a long time to put into print.

It would be a big help if editors or publishers would provide information about the conditions under which a project like this is issued. When Campbell or whoever set about to select the stories for this reprint edition, what method of choice did he use? Was the picking done on the basis of the stories that Campbell liked the best, or the yarns that seemed most likely to sell the reprint, or the items which stood no change of getting themselves anthologized and were free from difficulties over reprint rights, or merely a random selection as the result of a quarter-hour's tumbing through the files? If it was either of the first two methods, valuable light is thrown on the mental processes of the responsible person.

Re-reading these yarns gave me two principal impressions: one that the stories from this magazine stand up remarkably well under the strain and stress of time; the other, that the choice for this edition was not a particularly good one. About half of the items in this issue had stuck in my memory well enough that I could have synopsized the plots before re-reading; the remainder were only the vaguest of memories or completely forgotten. Yet I don't think I enjoyed any of them less than at first reading; that seems to indicate that the element of surprise is not the vital factor in this type of yarn and that the better literature I've read in the last ten years hasn't caused my taste for this lighter stuff to suffer.

But I wonder whether Campbell ever really understood what he was getting into, when he began Unknown a decade ago? As I recall, there were two main reasons for starting the magazine, aside from the obvious effort to make more money: a vehicle for Sinister Barrier was needed, and Campbell wanted to publish a magazine dealing with a new type of fiction, a "modern mythology." Those two words in quotes are practically meaningless, of course. Campbell never stuck to any consistent policy in Unknown, it should be remembered, although it's impossible to tell whether this was intentional or not, an effort to provide variety or inability to get the kind of story he wanted or vagueness as to his real goal. A very large proportion of the stories that Unknown did publish fell into two classes that are hardly sensational or new enough to require the institution of a brand new magazine: the conventional weird or horror story with the traditional James-Lovecraft-Poe elements removed, replaced by flippancy or toughness; and stories based on traditional mythology or folklore, in which the modern character falls into the world of myth or the creatures of myth are described in the modern world. Sinister Barrier remained something sui generis; it seems reasonable to object that Astounding published Lo! and could have published Sinister Barrier, since the fiction was somewhat closer to the traditions of science fiction than Fort's dialectics.

Then there is the interesting question of why myth-making seems to stop as a civilization grows older, and whether it is now starting again at the present point in today's civilization.

A very large proportion of the earliest surviving writings of any civilization is fantasy: not merely the words about gods and goddesses, but the more sophisticated type of fantasy, like that in the Odyssey and Beowulf. Even in later years when a new field of writing opens up, the same seems to hold true in most cases. The unbroken history of the short story can be traced back only a comparatively short time, and many of the first real examples are out and out fantasy. And in the earliest literary history of the United States, the same story is repeated: Poe, Hawthorne, Irving, and a dozen of the other earliest important figures based their reputation to a generous extent on their fantasy. But as output of prose goes up and the public begins to turn it into a big business by reading a lot of books, the proportion of fantasy to non-fantasy declines rapidly. It's only in the last couple of decades that novels and short stories conforming to Campbell's magazine have been appearing with any regularity; try to think of some from the turn of the century, for instance, and you'll get stuck after you recall the names of Frank L. Stockton and John Kendrick Bangs.

In any event, Campbell did not inspire the creation of this "modern mythology." He simply printed in a single magazine quite a few stories of that general type, which were and had been bobbing up from time to time in book form and in other magazines. During the last 20 years, however, this type of story has had a renaissance: outside of Unknown, it may not be found much more frequently than before, but it's much more skilfully done.

I'm thinking now primarily of the stories that appeared in Unknown which were not simply sophisticated weird fiction or modernization of myth. Both of those types have limited survival value: sooner or later, all the familiar critters of legend will be brought into the modern world and 20th century men will have been whisked into all the legendary times, if enough stories along these lines are published; and I find an uninspired modernized weird tale just as boring as the Gothic type. But Campbell did manage to run a fair proportion of stuff that doesn't fall into stereotype. He puts very few into this reprint edition, unfortunately; Sturgeon's excellent Yesterday Was Monday is the only really good story that is not the direct descendent of something else.

Even though I don't read the slicks very often, I can't help noticing that the Unknown type of yarn is turning up there pretty frequently of late. The Saturday Evening Post featured a story recently about a showman who may or may not have been exhibiting a real mermaid; about the same time, Collier's ran a yarn about a new Noah; and The New Yorker had an incredibly skillful little yarn about a big public lottery with an offtrail ending. Maybe it's escapism; maybe it's a sign that there is a point in a civilization at which the people and the writers again turn to fantasy, with the arrival of more leisure hours.

In any event, I regret to report that such a trend does not apply in Hagerstown, where From Unknown Worlds has been piled high on the newsstands for months and is not selling worth a darn. It is hard to see how anyone could resist the Cartier cover, and it seems logical that all the old readers would purchase this issue under the delusion that it contains new stuff. But things just haven't worked out that way. I suspect that the very dirty typography has something to do with this situation: it is shamefully bad reproduction, and I'm at a loss to understand why. It looks like some sort of lithographing process throughout, but there has been no major typesetters' strike in New York, and many of these stories appeared originally in small-sized issues, so engraving could not have been done direct from the printed pages.

The Grandest Opera

To voice admiration for Verdi these days takes courage. It is more interesting to campaign for some contemporary composer of today whose music is little played and little liked. There is nothing exciting about a crusade for a composer who is already very famous, very dead, very well liked by a lot of people, and very badly looked down upon by a lot of others. Verdi is in a rather odd position: that of a composer who appeals to those who know nothing about serious music and to those who know the most about it; one who is considered on a par with Johann Strauss by the very greater numbers of persons in the middle.

I want to try to explain reasons why I put Verdi on a plane with Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, and Wagner, and to tell why I consider him greater than Bach or Brahms. The most important reason always is personal taste and preference; but it's usually possible to find reasons behind that principal reason. I can understand that another person thinks Bach or Brahms wrote greater music than Verdi; I'll fight to the last ditch anyone who claims that they wrote compositions that are better from the standpoint of technique, theoretic methods, or contributions to the progress of music.

One big difficulty comes from the fact that the revolutionary music becomes the most conventional-sounding music after a few decades. The "Sun" quartets of Haydn are as important as anything in the history of music, but they're also among the most unobtrusive in their impression on present-day listeners. The reason is obvious. The truly revolutionary music influences great compositions for many years to come; their influence is so strong that future generations hear them echoed everywhere, and only history books reveal what was the original discovery and what was the influence of that discovery. Allegedly revolutionary music that sounds as remarkable today as when first written simply wasn't revolutionary; simply a minor insurrection that failed. (Failed in the sense of diverting the trend of musical progress, that is; this has nothing to do with intrinsic values simply as music.) Muzart's fugues, Pelleas, the last works of Beethoven, all sound as wonderful and strange as when first played, simply because they sprang into being from spontaneous generation and were unable to sire and dam offspring for other composers.

5. So Verdi, as great a revolutionary in music as Wagner, has come to be considered typical Italian opera today. The popular textbooks give little hint of what Verdi really did to Italian opera. He didn't write pamphlets as Wagner did; maybe he didn't realize his own importance as an innovator, although such things as his refusal to keep any other composers' music in the house are significant.

Almost all pre-Verdi Italian opera has disappeared from the stage today, blinding us to the situation that confronted Verdi whenhe started to write music. Bellini had turned the opera stage over to the greatest stream of unadulterated melody that the world has ever known. Rossini had given the public what it thought it wanted, and had the sense to retire at the height of his fame before the inevitable revulsion in public opinion arrived. Another cultural stream had produced Meyerbeer's Hollywood productions. Each of the three trends, though they varied in intrinsic worth, carried the seeds of its own destruction.

Yet today people claim that Verdi's operas are the natural imitations and outgrowth and his predecessors. Nothing could be more wrong. He learned from Bellini, Donizetti, and the others,

but even as early as Rigoletto, Traviata, and Trovatore, the operas were principally Verdi.

Whether by design or accident, Verdi used a radically different type of libretto, too. The plots have unity of effect, simplicity, and avoid spectacle for the sake of spectacle. I know that Trovatore is held up as a masterpiece of complexity and that the first act of Traviata sometimes resembles Moscow on May Day. The latter is the fault of the producers--Traviata is as close to a "chamber opera" as anything in the repertoire--and the former is simply incorrect. Trovatore's plot makes sense, and that is much more than can be said for the Rube Goldberg machines that are included in the plots of popular librettists of the day like Scribe.

In fact, most of the surviving operas of Verdi are simply adaptations of the 19th century dramas that are still considered important today. The poetry is not good, but the adaptation to the new form is skilfully achieved. Persons who complain that these dramatic works of Hugo, Dumas, de Vega, and Shakespeare become skeletons in their Verdi incarnations simply do not understand the basic principles of opera. They make the same complaint that Gluck heard, when he made Orestes declare that at last he had found peace while an agitated phrase sounded from the orchestra. The critics said the music didn't fit the words; Gluck replied, "Orestes lies. He has just killed his father. The orchestra tells the truth." And so today: it is the worst of redundancies for the libretto to say the things that the music tells. Emotional matters in a play must be expounded through long dialogues, simply because actors cannot express complicated ideas through gestures and facial expressions. The music takes the place of most of the words in opera.

Actually, most Verdi operas contain one dramatic improbability which, if accepted, permits the other events to happen quite logically. This isn't far from Wells' doctrine of one fantastic assumption or happening in an otherwise normal world for fiction. In Traviata, the hearer must accept that Violetta will let herself be talked into leaving Alfredo by a man she has met only a quarter-hour previously, for the sake of a girl of whom she has known nothing. In Forza del Destino, the improbability is that the exploding pistol should kill the father; in Rigoletto, it is the hunchback's stupidity during the abduction; in Trovatore, it is the manner in which the separated brothers should love the same girl. I don't think that anything in Verdi's libretti is poorly enough done to ruin his operas.

The most important thing about the music of Verdi is not mentioned in detail in any of the standard books of musical history, commentary, or criticism, with which I'm acquainted. I don't imagine that I've discovered it myself, but I'm unable to tell anyone where to look fora description of it, and must give an outline of it in Horizons. In all the words about music that I've read--and they represent everything I've been able to lay hands on for the past dozen years--the only hint of what follows that has come to my attention is in Lang's "Music in Western Civilization," one of the few really good musical histories in existence.

This "most important thing" is simply that Verdi's operas do not consist merely of a series of overtures, arias, duets, and concerted numbers, held together only by the libretto. The popular opinion seems to be that each "number" in a Verdi opera has no connection with what has just occurred or what will immediately follow, nor any relation to anything elsewhere in the act or other acts of the work. The truth is the exact opposite. Each Verdi opera is bound together and unified by certain thematic, harmonic, and struc-

tural methods. Each opera has them, although varying from opera to opera. This is not the more obvious leitmotif system of Wagner (which actually is an outgrowth of his compositions' larger musical proportions) nor the literal quotation of an aria in laterstages of an opera, as when Riccardo's "La Rivedrò nell'Estasi" comes out of the orchestra at the end of The Masked Ball, or the repetitions of "La Donna È Mobile" for dramatic reasons in Rigoletto. The only parallel that I have seen discussed in print is the "germ motive" discoveries of Robert Haven Schauffler in his biographies of Beethoven, Brahms, and Schumann. But Verdi's plan is not necessarily confined to a brief succession of notes, nor does one or two such patterns run through all his compositions, nor is it necessarily unconsciously done on the part of Verdi. The only parallel in actual music that I can recall will be found in Mozart, particularly his sonatas, which are full of tantalizing half-references among their movements.

Putting unity into opera has always been a major difficulty. The three greatest composers solved it in three different ways. Mozart utilized his uncanny skill at musical characterization: even though his tunes vary from act to act, they are so characteristic of the persons on the stage that the whole is tied together. Wagner did it by expanding the entire time scale of music to cover, not the two or three minutes of the early madrigals, not the quarter-hour of Beethoven's biggest symphonic movements, but four or five hours in the opera house. (Tovey's articles in the Encyclopedia Brittanica provide an excellent explanation of this little-understood matter; if you want an audible explanation and proof, listen to a Bruckner symphony and see what happens when a composer tries to use the same methods within the time limits of the symphony.)

Verdi's methods are less easily spotted. They become more difficult to catch when excerpting is as popular as it is today. A single aria from a Verdi opera stands up pretty well by itself and makes musical sense; but when the excerpting fad is so popular, it becomes hard to hear the opera for the excerpts upon a complete performance. And so, how many people who hear and like or worship Traviata realize how cannily Verdi has tied the whole thing together with certain devices? I don't have space to give a full analysis, and I don't think enough FAPA and VAPA members own the score or complete recorded version to make such an exhaustive analysis desirable. But to demonstrate my thesis:

The real key to the opera is Alfredo's little song in the first act that begins with the words "Un di felice." I had heard the first act a dozen times before I realized that this provides the basis of everything that follows in the remaining quarter-hour of the act. The structure of its latter half provides the basis for "Ah, fors' è lui," and its opening notes are identical with the opening of "Sempre libera." But search a little deeper, and you will find this same little tune mirrored to a startling closeness in the melody which Violetta uses to start off the quintet that ends the last act, "Se una pudica vergine."

But there are wheels within wheels within this apparently innocent little melody. At the words "vissi d'ignoto amor," and more loudly as "Di queel'amor," Alfredo introduces a little three-note descending pattern that is even more prominent throughout Traviata. It is perfectly obvious that this is quoted literally in the last act. A few of the commentators also mention the fact that the broad theme in the second half of the first act's prelude begins with the same downward progression. But no one to my knowledge has demonstrated how the same pattern bobs up everywhere in

each act of the opera. You can hear it for yourself, simply by listening. I might point out in particular the pattern's prominence all through the long duet between Violetta and the elder Germont in the second act, particularly in his "Un di, quando le veneri," Violetta's "Non sapete," later in his famous "Di Provenza" aria, in the second theme of the famous last act duet, and of course in Violetta's famous sudden cry of "Amami, Alfredo," in the second act. It either begins or occurs at the beginning of the first full measure of most of the opera's melodies.

But there are other structural devices in Traviata. The most obvious is the cunning way in which Verdi uses three-quarter time or some other triple rhythm whenever Violetta or Alfredo is the center of attraction, reserving common time for the elder Germont and the chorus. There is the tremendous musical significance given the word "voglio" whenever it occurs. There are others, which I can't find room to explain now.

Naturally, such elementary devices by their very nature will not be found to be confined to Traviata: tunes that start off with three descending notes have been written by composers other than Verdi. But I've checked pretty carefully and have found the frequency with which they're employed in a given Verdi opera to be far higher than could be accounted for by coincidence. Verdi, in fact, seems to avoid in other operas a device which he has used in one work for the stage. Each of the other Verdi operas has its own germs and methods.

All this, of course, doesn't insure excellence in an opera--it isn't a method that makes a work great, it's the manner in which the method is used. But it does indicate that Verdi was not the 19th century equivalent of the current composer who digs up a dozen of tunes out of his backlog and puts them together in a musical show. Whether the listener realizes these germs exist or not, their presence gives a sense of progress and unity to any Verdi opera that is heard without prejudice and without too much previous experience with excerpts.

It is perfectly obvious that Trovatore is not Gotterdammerung; that does not mean one is inferior to the other. Verdi himself gave the answer when he asked someone, "Do you think I could have composed Tristan under this sun?" The Verdi operas are Italian, the outcome of a far different tradition, written in a different milieu, for a different public, by composers who used radically different methods from Wagner. The most important difference is in the very nature of the characters on the stage. Alfredo couldn't by any stretch of the imagination spend three-fourths of an hour on an actionless stage as Tristan does, raving about endlos ewig Urvergessen while his soul wanders free from his body. Alfredo is made of such simpler stuff; it doesn't mean that his love is less genuine, but he does voice it in a different manner, musical as well as semantically. Wagner deals with matters that are considerably past space and time; Verdi's libretti, although based on the same fundamental human emotions, concern individuals, not generalized types. The Spanish troubador, the young Parisian who attends parties of questionable women, and the ribald Duke of Mantua simply couldn't be expressed consistently in any language other than Verdi's pounding rhythms, simple tunes, and violent accents. The pounding and violence disappear when someone like Azucena or Rigoletto starts to sing.

A good parallel lies in the first acts of Die Walkure and Il Trovatore, each of which contains a narrative of blood and guts, feud, murder, and revenge. Persons who laugh at Ver-

di's little mazulka tune, when compared with Wagner's impassioned music for Siegmund's narration, had better be careful that they understand the situation. Siegmund is telling what has happened to wipe out his family, in the presence of his worst enemy and a girl with whom he is falling in love. Zuniga is simply keeping a bunch of soldiers awake on a dull night by repeating the familiar legend of a crime in the di Luna household.

Verdi was the first of the verismo school, although he is seldom credited with that standing. His operas seldom concern peasants, and the gore rarely drips on the stage, but the realism is there. When there is a ball, the characters dance a waltz or a minuet; when they sing a drinking song, the music takes on the character of salon music; when a soldiers' chorus is heard, the tune is the simple type that soldiers are apt to sing. When a character falls violently in love, he expresses his emotion in a characteristic fashion, by singing at the top of his lungs. Debussy makes Pelleas and Melisande whisper when they finally admit their love, very effective as an effect in that never-never land of symbol, but thoroughly unbelievable.

It's significant that Verdi instantly steps up his musical level when he encounters a complex character, even in his early operas. Azucena is the most complicated person in Il Trovatore, the only one whose intentions and emotions go below the surface. As a result, she sings music that could easily be identified without the aid of the words: in pathos and power, it goes far beyond anything else in the work.

I'm strongly inclined to believe that the great change in Verdi's style that did not show up until his last two operas would have come much earlier, had he found a Boito at an early period to write the libretti. Otello and Falstaff are probably the finest operas ever written, from the standpoint of sheer listenability. But nothing in them is completely new to Verdi: in the earlier operas, the same methods are used, but much less frequently. It would be impossible to know that the prelude to Trovatore, or Leonora's last act aria from the same opera didn't come straight from Otello, if it weren't for the printed scores that exist.

The matter of length is one for which Verdi deserves another honorable mention. Wagner's operas have the reputation for being the mammoth ones; but the fact is that Verdi is almost the only great composer who consistently kept his operas down to sane proportions. Gounod's Faust, for example, would run almost as long as anything by Wagner if presented uncut. It lasts for about three and a half hours at the Met today, despite the fact that it is performed without the long Walpurgisnacht scene, without the interminable ballet, without a whole scene between Siebel and Marguerite, without about fifty per cent of the love duet, and with a dozen or more smaller cuts that save from several seconds to several minutes in performance. Similarly, dozens of pages of the original Carmen have disappeared from today's published scores. A little earlier, it was even worse. Wagner's first major work, Rienzi, was a success even though its length required its publication in score in two volumes and its performance in two halves on successive nights. Even the canny Rossini dared to turn out a five-hour work in William Tell.

Verdi's operas, on the other hand, are constructed so well that they can be performed in today's time limitations with little editing. Traviata, for instance, contains just about the same amount of music as the third act of Meistersinger, if intermissions between acts are not counted, and somewhat less than

the first act of Gotterdammerung. It is performed today with only two cuts of any consequency--a rather dull ariafor Alfredo in the second act, and a continuation of the elder Germond's pleading in the same act, following Di Provenza. Other cuts consist only of repetitions of arias or parts of arias. Aida survives with only two very minor cuts, one of them in the big triumphal scene and the other in the Nile scene, that represent less than five minutes in playing time.

If all this has given anyone a fresh interest in the composer, I suggest turning to the works themselves, rather than to books about Verdi. Giuseppe needs less commentary and description in words than any other composer, despite the five pages which I've just stenciled. If you can pick out tunes on the piano, I recommend the purchase of a score or two and closer acquaintance with the music in that manner. You won't find a stroke of genius in every line of recitative; to criticize Verdi on that grounds is to say that Norman Rockwell is a greater artist than van Gogh because he can draw prettier sunflowers, that look more like real ones. Fortunately, Verdi's works stand up under the closest inspection and repetition. I admit that something like the St. Sulpice duet in Massanet's Manon bowls me over more completely than anything in Wagner or Verdi, if I hear it only once a year; but it would bore me if I heard it frequently; Wagner and Verdi can stand repetition.

As far as records are concerned, the situation is both good and bad. Verdi is much better represented on wax than Wagner, in that six operas are in the domestic catalogs in virtually complete form, two others may be bought if you can afford the price of imported discs, and at least one or two sides are in the catalogues from a dozen less familiar Verdi works. However, the recording powers have not shown the intelligence toward Verdi that they showed toward Mozart when it comes to recording; as a result, the Italian has not benefitted from Fritz Busch or Sir Thomas Beecham and the complete sets are filled with inferior singing and stereotyped conducting. I'm waiting for new sets to appear. It is probable that all the Verdi operas will be replaced, as La Traviata has been, since the recordings are now close to the antiquated stage. These new versions (Victor will probably release soon the Aida that is now on HMV discs) are sure to be better from the standpoint of reproduction, and it is unlikely that the singing will be inferior.

I might recommend in particular some of the older Victor records of Verdi's music. There are a couple of superb Pinza discs, some Gigli without the sobbing that wrecks his Puccini, and a number of good samples of the treasures in Don Carlos, Masked Ball, Simon Boccanegra, Macbeth, and the other rarely performed works. Don't overlook Victor 6000, far and away thebest Caruso record in existence, in which that celebrated star refrains from the hammiess that made him famous and sings very beautiful one of Verdi's finest tenor arias, O Tu che in Seno agli Angeli. There's also a good brand-new Columbia album of tenor-soprano duets, including stuff that was hard to find outside of the complete sets before, and a few arias that are never sung today, available in poorly recorded versions in Victor's Heritage Series. Or, if you want something a little different, you might try the Bjoerling disc from the Requiem, and move on from that to the complete recording if you like the style. I approve the remark that it's Verdi's best opera.