Il Trovatore

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA
2009–10 SEASON

Timings:	**Acts I & II**	1 hour, 10 minutes
	Intermission	25 minutes
	Acts III & IV	1 hour

Total Running Time: 2 hours, 40 minutes

First performance:	Rome, Teatro Apollo, January 19, 1853.
First performance in the U.S.:	New York, Academy of Music, May 2, 1855.
First San Francisco performance:	Maguire's Opera House, May 5, 1859, by the Bianchi Opera Troupe
First San Francisco Opera performance:	October 6, 1926

Orchestra: 1 flute (plus 1 piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 cimbasso, timpani, 2 percussionists; regular (40) strings.

Backstage: various moments involving chimes (both tube chimes and electronic), snare drum, harp, horn, and organ, and of course choruses. The anvils for the Anvil Chorus are played live onstage by dancers and choristers.

Cuts: Standard, including:

- One verse of Leonora's cabaletta "Di tale amor"
- One verse of Count di Luna's cabaletta "Per me ora fatale"
- One verse of Marico's cabaletta "Di quella pira"
- One verse of Leonra's cabaletta "Tu vedrai"

Production: This production has previously appeared at Lyric Opera of Chicago (2006) and the Metropolitan Opera (2009). Both companies co-produced this production in addition to San Francisco Opera.

Director David McVicar maintains the original Spanish setting if *Il Trovatore,* however he moves the action from 1409 to the Spanish War of Independence fought against Napoleon. According to the director, "What guides me is that that period must work musically. The early 19th century fits with Verdi's tinta, the dark palette he creates for Spain." McVicar and the creative team drew their inspiration from Francisco Goya's *Los Desastres de la Guerra* (*The Disasters of War*), a series of prints created between 1810 and 1820.

An illuminating *New York Times* interview with McVicar about the creation of this production is available at nytimes.com.

Past San Francisco *Trovatore* trivia: (Sources: Hixon: *Verdi in San Francisco*; Martin, *Verdi at the Golden Gate*; WPA Monograph: *Opera in San Francisco*) Long before San Francisco Opera came into being, *Il Trovatore* had an interesting local history, with 942 (!) performances given between 1859 and 1899 alone. The first performance (1859) went without a women's chorus, and the men's chorus numbered a total of "eight Germans"... A reviewer in the *Call-Bulletin* had this to say: "..the costumes, scenery and stage appointments generally, were of a magnificent description; and having done so...we think that a few critical, if not disparaging remarks, may be ventured upon. We must protest against that horrid bell introduced in the first scene and again in the Miserere. Surely an instrument of purer and clearer tone can be found...And *apropos* of bells, an improvement would be effected by dispensing with the cow-bell used to signal the orchestra into their places, preparatory to calling up the curtain. The ordinary stage bell...would answer the purpose quite well. Then for Heaven's sake, let the property-man remove the trade-labels from the anvils..."

After numerous *Trovatore* performances by the Bianchi troupe, the opera was reintroduced in 1860 by the New Orleans English Opera Troupe—in English. These stagings were seemingly complete, which caused the local music critics to point out how heavily cut the Bianchi performances were, dispensing not only with the nuns' chorus etc., but also with items such as Manrico's "Mal reggendo."

The most amazing item at two of these performances was the fact that the role of Manrico was sung by a contralto, Georgia Hodson. The *Alta California* reviewer praised her singing and demeanor, but found the experience "passing strange." In the summer of 1860, a string of *Trovatore* performances was presented by the "Italian and English Opera Company," and these featured Mme. Hodson in the role of Azucena.

Flaws and all, *Trovatore* caused quite a mania here, and the extraordinary popularity of it in its first year was such that a visiting Spanish drama troupe was persuaded to stage a performance of the play, Gutiérrez's *El Trovador,* on which the opera is based.

Some interesting *Trovatore* cancellations took place around here in the 19th century. In addition to several performances that were cancelled because of illness (9 out of 10 times Manrico's), there were the following: 1866—two performances cancelled "due to a violent explosion in San Francisco"; 1868—Oct. 21 performance cancelled because of an earthquake of that date, while the next scheduled one was cancelled due to poor ticket sales; 1872—May 3 performance never completed because the orchestra walked out after the first act, fearing they would not get paid; 1884—Oct. 4 cancelled because of the Republican Procession; 1889—Dec. 19 cancelled because the ensemble was not sufficiently prepared.

Previous San Francisco Opera Casts:

	Leonora	Azucena	Manrico	Luna	Ferrando	Director	Conductor
1926	Muzio	Meisle	Lindi	Bonelli	Nicolich	Agnini	Merola
1927	Roselle	Meisle	Martinelli	Picco	D'Angelo	Agnini	Cimini
1929	Rethberg	Meisle	Lauri-Volpi	Danise	Rothier	Agnini	Merola
1931	Rethberg	Silva, L.	Martinelli	Danise	D'Angelo	Agnini	Merola
1932	Muzio	Meisle	MacKenzie	Bonelli	D'Angelo	Agnini	Cimini
1936	Rethberg	Castagna	Martinelli	Morelli	D'Angelo	Agnini	Papi
1939	Rethberg	Meisle	Martinelli	Bonelli	Cordon	Agnini	Papi
1943	Milanov	Thorborg	Baum	Weede	R. Silva	Agnini	Cleva
1946	Roman	Harshaw	Bjoerling	Valentino	Moscona	Agnini	Adler
1948	Menkes	Elmo	Baum	Warren	Moscona	Agnini	Marzollo
1952	Nelli Curtis	Turner Barbieri	Del Monaco	Guarrera	Moscona	Agnini	Breisach
1956	Farrell	Dominguez	Bjoerling Turrini	Colzani	Moscona	Maestrini	De Fabritiis
1958	Price*	Turner Dalis	Bjoerling Ferraro	Quilico	Elyn	Frigerio	Sebastian
1962	Price	Simionato Cervena	McCracken	Bastianini Stewart	Hecht Macurdy	Yannopoulos	Molinari-Pradelli
1964	Lee	Resnik Warfield	McCracken	Wolansky	Hecht	Mansouri	Molinari-Pradelli
1968	Bakocevic	Lilova	Ilosfalvy	Braun† Quilico	Berberian	Hager	Patané
1969	Bakocevic	Nadler	Ilosfalvy	Braun	Berberian	Hager	Patané
1971	Price Molnar-Talajic	Lilova Dalis Allen	King Domingo McCracken	Wolansky Quilico	Mundt Michalski Berberian	Hager	Cillario Wilson
1975	Sutherland* Scotto	Obraztsova Verrett Berini	Pavarotti* Lloveras	Wixell Quilico	Grant Dworchak	Libby Farruggio	Bonynge Adler
1981	Price	Cossotto	Lamberti	Brendel	Rydl	Mansouri	P. Steinberg
1986	Dimitrova	Zajic	Bonisolli	Carroli Cappuccilli	Skinner	Guttman	Meltzer
1994	Millo Waite Vassileva†	Zajick Toczyska	Armiliato O'Neill	Gavanelli Chernov Del Campo	Wells Skinner	Copley	Oren I. Robertson
2003	Mescheria-kova	Zajick	Margison	Fu Alvarez	Doss	Dalton	Armiliato

* Role debut
† U.S. debut