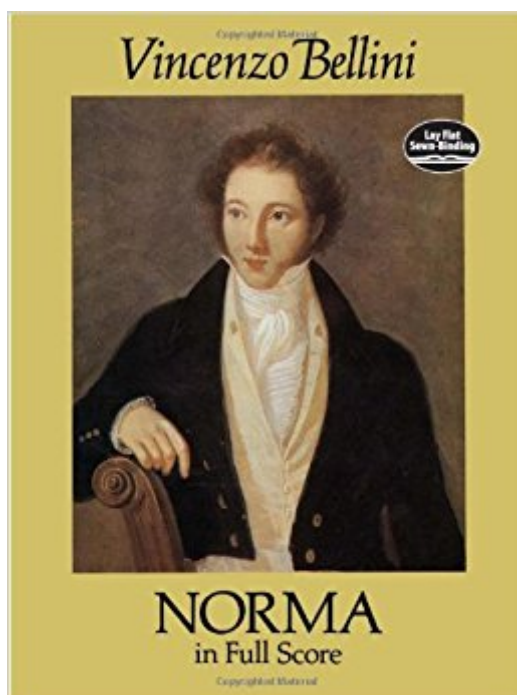


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Synopsis

One of the standards of the operatic repertoire, *Norma* is Bellini's masterpiece, a work of great emotional power and radiant melody, celebrated for its purity of style and "an ecstatic unfolding of sonority." Based on a French play of the same name by Soumet, *Norma* concerns the tragic love of a Roman consul and a Druid high priestess, set against a background of war and national entanglements. The premiere took place at La Scala in 1831, and although Bellini felt the first performance was a fiasco, the public soon came to realize the worth of *Norma*. Besides its popularity with opera goers, Bellini's most important serious opera is also significant for its influence on Verdi and Wagner. And while the work's demanding score and pure vocalizing present a daunting challenge to singers, *Norma* remains one of the most frequently performed and recorded operas.

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