

***RECONDITE HARMONY***

*Essays on Puccini's Operas*



Giacomo Puccini  
(1858–1924)

# ***RECONDITE HARMONY***

## ***Essays on Puccini's Operas***

by

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to  
Lewis Lockwood, who always encouraged  
and  
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**Notes on the text**

All translations are by the author unless otherwise noted.

Locations in the score are marked by Act/Rehearsal Number/Measures after, so that the first measure of an opera would be labeled I/0/0.



# Introduction

“Il mio mistero è chiuso in me.”<sup>1</sup>

Who is Puccini? His operas, while everywhere heard, have until recently remained in large part hidden from the analyst’s eye. Not an opera season goes by without a performance of at least one of his works, and although much has been written about Puccini’s biography, his love life, the dramaturgy of his libretti, his psychological makeup, his revisions, etc., less critical attention by scholars has been paid to the actual notes he put together. More than twenty-five years ago, Roger Parker wrote that “Puccini represents a last outpost against the rigours of music theory”<sup>2</sup> and, although that situation has improved with some important analytic contributions at the dissertation level,<sup>3</sup> in books,<sup>4</sup> and in scholarly articles<sup>5</sup>—a number of which do not agree—

<sup>1</sup>[My mystery is hidden in myself.] From *Turandot*, music by Puccini, libretto by Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni.

<sup>2</sup>Roger Parker, *Analysis: Act I in Perspective*, in “Giacomo Puccini: *Tosca*”, ed. Mosco Carner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 118.

<sup>3</sup>Micheal F. Anders, “Musical and Dramatic Structure in the Finales of the Operas of Giacomo Puccini” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1997); Deborah Burton, “An Analysis of Puccini’s *Tosca*: a Heuristic Approach to the Unifying Elements of the Opera” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1995); Andrew C. Davis, “Structural implications of stylistic plurality in Puccini’s *Turandot*” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2003); Franca Ferrari, “Il linguaggio melodico di Puccini nella drammaturgia di *Bohème*, *Tosca* e *Madama Butterfly*.” (diss., Università degli Studi di Bologna, 1989-90); Helen Greenwald, “Dramatic Exposition and Musical Structure in Puccini’s Operas” (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1991).

<sup>4</sup>William Ashbrook and Harold Powers, *Puccini’s “Turandot”: the end of the great tradition*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Nicholas Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions & Puccini: Compositional Theory & Practice* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011); Norbert Christen, “Giacomo Puccini: Analytische Untersuchungen der Melodik, Harmonik und Instrumentation” *Schriftenreihe zur Musik* 13. (Hamburg: Verlag der Musikalienhandlung Karl Dieter Wagner, 1978); Andrew Davis, *Il Trittico, Turandot and Puccini’s Late Style* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010); Michele Girardi, *Giacomo Puccini: L’arte internazionale di un musicista italiano*. Venice: Marsilio, 1995 [English translation: *Puccini: His International Art*, trans. Laura Basini, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000)]; Antonino Titone, *Vissi d’arte: Puccini e il disfacimento del melodramma*. Materiali 36 (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1972).

<sup>5</sup>A select list of studies that devote space, at least in part, to analyzing the music of Puccini includes the following works: Allan Atlas, “Crossed Stars and Crossed Tonal Areas in Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*” *19th-Century Music* 14 (1990): 186-196; Nicholas Baragwanath, “Analytical Approaches to Melody in Selected Arias by (cont.)

there has so far been no study of all his operas examined through a primarily analytic lens.

Perhaps the most contentious of those debates are focused on Puccini's cultural and musical identity: is he traditional or progressive? This author does not challenge the sometimes conflicting analytic work by William Ashbrook, Allan Atlas, Nicholas Baragwanath, Andrew Davis, William Drabkin, Michele Girardi, Helen Greenwald, James Hepokoski, Harold Powers, Giorgio Sanguinetti and others, nor suggest that her book will supersede it. Rather, the analytic investigations completed previously have made possible this book's focus. In short, the thesis of this volume is that the diametrically opposed forces of the traditional and the progressive live together in Puccini's music, embedded deeply within his harmonic constructs and in many musical parameters. The author hopes that the observations set forth in these pages will help frame Puccini studies in a way that helps to reconcile previously contentious issues.

Often the question of Puccini's identity is put in nationalistic terms: is he the scion of the Italian tradition or a progressive composer steeped in the foreign influences of his day. This is indeed the subject of Alexandra Wilson's book *The Puccini Problem*, and the issue is succinctly referenced by the original title of Michele Girardi's volume *L'arte internazionale di un musicista italiano* (literally, "The international art of an Italian musician").<sup>6</sup> It was a controversial subject in Puccini's

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Puccini," *Music Theory Online*, Volume 14/2 (June 2008); Marcello Conati, "Il *tabarro* ovvero la 'solita' insolita forma" *Studi Musicali* 3 (2004): 265-282; William Drabkin, "The musical language of *La bohème*" in *Giacomo Puccini: La bohème*, ed. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 80-101; Helen Greenwald, "Puccini, *Il tabarro*, and the Dilemma of Operatic Transposition," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51/3 (Autumn, 1998): 521-558; James Hepokoski, "Structure, Implication and the End of *Suor Angelica*," *Studi Musicali* 3 (2004): 241-264; René Leibowitz, "L'arte di Giacomo Puccini," *L'Approdo musicale* II/6 (April-June 1959): 3-27; Alfredo Mandelli, "La logica del West (appunti su un finale di Puccini)," *Rassegna musicale Curci* 30/ 1 (April 1977): 19-21; Roger Parker and Allan Atlas, "A Key for Chi? Tonal Areas in Puccini," *19th-Century Music* 15 (1992): 229-234; Giorgio Sanguinetti, "Puccini's Music in the Italian Theoretical Literature of Its Day," in *Tosca's Prism* eds. Deborah Burton, Susan Vandiver Nicassio and Agostino Ziino (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 221-248; Roman Vlad, "Attualità di Puccini," in *Critica pucciniana* (Lucca: Comitato Nazionale per le Onoranze a Giacomo Puccini..., 1976), 152-189. For a more complete bibliographic listing, as of 1999, see Linda Fairtile, *Giacomo Puccini: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland, 1999).

<sup>6</sup>See note 4.

own time and he left clues supporting both sides of the issue. How are we to make sense, for instance, of the following two quotes?

“I am not a Wagnerian; my musical education was in the Italian school.”<sup>7</sup>

“Although I may be a Germanophile, I have never wanted to show it publicly.”<sup>8</sup>

Was Puccini a secret Wagnerian, then? Exploring the composer’s place within the highly charged nationalistic atmosphere of his social and cultural milieu—the subject of Chapter 1—also has ramifications for multiple parts of this study.

By extension, this debate must also inform the choice of analytical tools. Should only traditional Italian compositional methods be considered? Are German-influenced analytic tools—either Puccini’s or own time—off-limits? While some might say “yes,” this author would argue that inviting factors of social context into the discussion cuts both ways: in Puccini’s time and place, there was a wide acceptance of German musical thought and compositional techniques. As Sanguinetti writes, “Toward the end of the 19th century, the influence of German theoretical thought begins to be strongly felt.”<sup>9</sup>

This negates neither the *italianità* of Puccini’s earlier training nor his output. But since traits from both sources find resonance in his music, it would be too restrictive, and ultimately unsatisfying, to draw xenophobic boundaries, opting for one to the exclusion of the other. Therefore the analyses here will draw upon ideas of Italian theorists, such as Domenico Alaleona, Alfredo Casella, Giacomo Setaccioli, (and, to some extent, Abramo Basevi), as well as the more organicist, Germanic methods of Heinrich Schenker, Arnold Schoenberg and others. (More recent analytic insights will also be considered.) As William Rothstein writes, “It seems foolish to eschew organicist methods of analysis for music conceived according to organicist premises, but it

<sup>7</sup>*Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 79 (1912): 241; cited in John Deathridge, *Wagner: Beyond Good and Evil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 234, and Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 40.

<sup>8</sup>[Benchè io sia un germanofilo non ho voluto mai mostrarmi pubblicamente.] Claudio Sartori, *Giacomo Puccini* (Milan: Edizioni Accademia, 1978), 306.

<sup>9</sup>[Verso la fine del XIX secolo inizia a farsi sentire potentemente l’influenza del pensiero teorico tedesco.] Giorgio Sanguinetti, “Un secolo di teoria della musica in Italia. Bibliografia critica (1850-1950.” *Fonti Musicali Italiane* 2/1997: 163-4.

is equally foolish to apply *only* [emphasis added] organicist methods to music differently conceived."<sup>10</sup> The author hangs her analytical hat on Rothstein's "only."

An organicist approach would normally entail a search for overall musical coherence. In opera studies, this is often linked to an exploration of tonality, to how or whether the music is "in a key." Too frequently the issues at stake in this debate have been framed in yes-or-no terms: is there a single overarching tonality for a given work? Do keys have associations to characters or concepts?<sup>11</sup> Do transpositions to accommodate singers or certain instruments negate or undermine tonal organization? These questions highlight the challenges of understanding opera as a musical art, but in searching for coherence *only* in tonality—or railing against it—some scholars may have bypassed more subtle cohering elements. Let us then problematize this discussion a bit and take a fresh look at Puccini's scores.

In addition to being shrouded in mystery to most music theorists (many of whom recoil from looking at scores of any Italian operas), the works themselves are full of tonal, metric and formal ambiguities that do not fit neatly into standard analytic rubrics of any era. But as Lewis Lockwood has stated, "behind the vast emotional and dramatic world of Puccini's operas there is a wonderful and intricate musical mind, part of which we can come to know through

<sup>10</sup>William Rothstein, "Common-tone Tonality in Italian Romantic Opera: An Introduction," *Music Theory Online*, Volume 14/1 (March 2008), §1. Accessed January 2011. <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.08.14.1/mto.08.14.1.rothstein.html>.

<sup>11</sup>Patrick McCreless, with Robert Bailey, isolated four types of tonality that interact: *classical tonality*, which involves normal tonic-dominant relations, *associative tonality*, in which keys are linked with aspects of drama, *expressive tonality*, in which ascending or descending keys express intensification or relaxation, and *directional tonality*, an interplay between two different tonal centers. Patrick McCreless, *Wagner's "Siegfried": Its Drama, History, and Music* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 88-95, summarized in Warren Darcy, *Wagner's "Das Rheingold"* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 52. The case has sometimes been made convincingly that Puccini employs what is known as "associative tonality," in which keys symbolize aspects of the drama. (See, for example, Atlas, "Crossed Stars.") But there are also many instances in which the same key in different contexts admits little apparent fixed association. In *La bohème*, for example, B-flat major is the key of Rodolfo's "Nei cieli bigi," the first act "lost key" scene (I/27), the parade at the end of Act II, and Mimì's discussion with Marcello in Act III/9. In *Tosca*, A-flat major is both the key of Tosca's entrance music and Scarpia's "Ha più forte sapore," while F-sharp major is the tonality in which Cavaradossi shouts "Vittoria" and G-flat major, its enharmonic equivalent, is the key of Scarpia's "Sei troppo bella Tosca." Although imaginative writers could make connections here, it seems a stretch to do so.

close analysis of his harmonic language.”<sup>12</sup> Yet his scores are not simple to analyze: there are thickets of unresolved dissonances, unexpected changes of key, sudden leitmotivic appearances, shifting rhythms and meters, and motions to keys remote from the initial or final tonic.

Most problematic to interpret are shifts between diatonic and alternative pitch collections (such as whole-tone or pentatonic scales), and passages that seem to exhibit compounded qualities of both. Ashbrook, Powers and Davis have written extensively on the former, focusing on the juxtaposition of different musical styles. One example of the latter is the famous opening motive of *Tosca*—called “preludio” by the composer and the “Scarpia motive” by almost everyone else. It is constructed of layers of different pitch collections: we hear three diatonic major chords, laid out on a whole-tone framework (B-flat-A-flat-E) and topped by a chromatic line (D-E-flat-E). [Ex. I.0<sup>13</sup>]

Ex. I.0: Autograph of “preludio” of *Tosca*



<sup>12</sup>Private communication with the author.

<sup>13</sup>This autograph was reproduced without attribution in Mario Morini, “*Tosca all’anagrafe della storia*,” *49o Maggio Musicale Fiorentino* (Florence, 1986), 58.

Then there are passages that appear to have no functional bass line and are composed with a parallel *non-voice* leading, as Hepokoski puts it.<sup>14</sup> Both Baragwanath<sup>15</sup> and Drabkin have noted, for instance, how both the soprano and bass lines of several Puccini arias, such as Mimi's "Sono andati" and Butterfly's "Un bel dì" follow an underlying parallel scalar motion. These sorts of analytic knots are tackled in Chapter 2, in which both puzzles can be seen to derive from more normative underlying schemata; these are made more complex by techniques framed here as *direct* (synchronic) and *indirect* (diachronic) *conflation*.

Another technique, one that relies on the invariance and the functional redefinition of pitch-classes, can help explicate the following passage from *Suor Angelica*. [Ex. I.1, opposite<sup>16</sup>] Here, the harmony moves from C-sharp minor to a tonicized E major to C major to a common-tone F-sharp half-diminished seventh chord to an E-minor chord, all in a few moments. This array is clearly tonal, yet it cannot be analyzed in a standard functional harmonic way—nor should it be. The score also has a disjointed, unintelligible look. The puzzle is why it does not sound that way.

In this passage, an element of cohesion may be found sequestered beneath the tumultuous surface: each of the harmonic sonorities (C-sharp minor, E major, C major, F-sharp half-diminished seventh chord, E minor) contains pitch-class E.<sup>17</sup> Like a seclude thread, winding furtively through this harmonic maze, this note allows for an aural connection that smoothes the way, and which may eventually lead us to a certain amount of daylight. (The paths these threads take are discussed in Chapter 3.)

An isolated pitch class (as pivot note, common tone or pedal tone) can instantly travel far afield in the tonal universe. For example,

<sup>14</sup>James Hepokoski, "Structure, Implication and the End of *Suor Angelica*." *Studi Musicali* 3 (2004): 241.

<sup>15</sup>Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 270-1.

<sup>16</sup>The text translates as "Everything has been offered to the Virgin, yes, everything; but there is an offering I cannot make: to the gentle Mother of Mothers, I cannot offer to forget...my son!" [Tutto offerto alla Vergine, sì, tutto; ma v'è un'offerta che non posso fare: alla Madre soave delle Madri, non posso offrire di scordar...mio figlio!]

<sup>17</sup>The sonorities in bar 2 (a 7-6 suspension moving into a half-diminished 6/5 on B, and the half-diminished seventh on D-sharp) do not contain E, but they do prepare

Ex. I.1: *Suor Angelica*, rehearsal numbers 52-53.

52 *Andane mesto*

Tut - to offer - to al - la Vergine, si, tut - to! ma v'è un'of

fer - la che non pos - so fa - re: al - la Ma - dre so - a - ve del - le

Ma - dri, non pos - so offri - re di scor - dar mio fi - glio!

C# minor E major C major C major F#<sup>7</sup> E minor F#<sup>7</sup> E minor

53 (gridato/shouting)

if C is the tonic of a C-major passage, it can, if presented in isolation, be reinterpreted immediately as the leading tone B-sharp to C-sharp minor, or the sixth scale degree of E minor. One aspect of the study of Puccini's harmonic writing, akin in some ways to the idea of *sonorità* originally discussed by Pierluigi Petrobelli, is a study in this sort of pitch-class sleight-of-hand. Petrobelli defines that term as “a specific pitch prolonged by various means of articulation, and considered independently of any harmonic function.”<sup>18</sup> Puccini's use of pitch invariance, however, often occurs in the orchestral parts not only in the vocal lines, and thus in pitch classes, not individual pitches.

The enharmonic reinterpretation of pitches has a history at least as old as the tempered scale itself. And Puccini was by no means alone among 19<sup>th</sup>-century composers in using the technique to slalom among key areas: “common-tone tonality,” as this practice has come to

and tonicize the E major in bar 3.

<sup>18</sup>Pierluigi Petrobelli, “Towards an Explanation of the Dramatic Structure of *I*

be known,<sup>19</sup> is usually analyzed with transformational tools, which have probed these types of progressions in a vast repertoire including many examples from nineteenth-century Italian opera. But Puccini adapted this compositional resource to his own sensibilities, often including invariant dissonant pitch-classes in the mix.

To acknowledge such devices is to view the musical score as multidimensional and layered, but not in the sense of Schenker's structural levels. While some Schenkerian concepts are put in play here (such as the ideas of prolongation and motivic parallelism), this is not a book of Schenkerian analysis. Schenker himself, while he had heard and reviewed *La bohème*,<sup>20</sup> would never have admitted Puccini to his pantheon of geniuses as the second "honorary German" (Chopin was the only one); and while *Ursätze* can be identified in a few cases, the mysteries of Puccini's technique are not solved so straightforwardly. Schenker might also disapprove of how some of his concepts are extended here (for example, prolongations extending over more than one act). Unorthodox as this may be, taking a few steps back and noting patterns larger (or deeper, if you will) than the boundaries of a single act has turned out to be a fruitful means of approaching Puccini's organizational procedures.

The examination of Puccini's operas offered here cannot lift all veils: opera is a multivalent art-form and to put under the spotlight a single aspect of a many-faceted work is to leave uninterrogated many rich contextualities. Opera is a genre in which the music is inextricably tied to visual, textual and dramatic elements, and should be considered from these diverse, oft-contradictory, vantage points. As Parker writes, "When we write about the medium, we, of course, have to choose our personal route, and we will perforce leave huge areas of any work we address gaping in our wake."<sup>21</sup>

*trovatore*," trans. William Drabkin, *Music Analysis*, 1/ 2 (July 1982): 132ff.

<sup>19</sup>The term was coined by David Kopp in *Chromatic Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and has also been used by William Rothstein, "Common-tone Tonality."

<sup>20</sup>Schenker's opera reviews were published in *Die Zeit*, the *Neue Revue*, and *Die Zukunft*, in the 1890s. See Hellmut Federhofer, "Heinrich Schenker als Essayist und Kritiker" (Zurich: Hildesheim, New York: Olms, 1990), and Nicholas Rast, "A Checklist of Essays and Reviews by Heinrich Schenker," *Music Analysis* VII/2 (1988): 121-132. Italian translations of Schenker's opera reviews appears in Giorgio Sanguinetti, "L'opera italiana nella critica musicale di Heinrich Schenker" *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana* 29/3: 431-67. Schenker felt that the music of *La bohème*, for example, was superficial, that it compared poorly to Mozart, and that Puccini would have been better off choosing a subject set in an Italian milieu.



Although the focus here is on analysis (placed in cultural context), we do not, and could not, approach the scores of Puccini's operas as if they were instrumental works (see, for example, the comparison in Chapter 6 of the opening of *Manon* and the minuet from which it is derived). Reflecting dramatic twists and turns, this operatic music is more restless and fragmented in many parameters. (It was, in fact, the fragmentary nature of Puccini's operatic scores that received much contemporary comment.) Nevertheless, investigations such as these hopefully work to establish some musical "knowns" upon which further hypotheses can be more securely grounded.

The impetus to undertake this enterprise was not to enshrine Puccini as a Great Composer,<sup>22</sup> but to attempt to solve the mystery of what makes his music tick. Does *Recondite Harmony* then promise to break a Puccini "code," to reveal a *Geheimnis* to his oeuvre? Not in the least. But since the composer did not show his compositional hand in treatises, essays, or even letters, a discussion such as this can only help us to peek behind the curtain and spy on this wizard's clandestine doings.

*Recondite Harmony* offers essays on salient aspects of each of Puccini's operas while tracing in them both progressive and traditional elements. The volume is divided into two parts. In the first, approaches that inform the entire corpus of Puccini's operas are examined. Chapter 1 sets the stage, evaluating the influences on Puccini of Wagnerism and Modernism, examined in relation to his cultural context, and in reference to the criteria of Puccini's contemporary, theorist Domenico Alaëna, and others. The next two chapters focus on specific elements of his musical palette (the pitch-related and the motivic), in order to probe not only the content of his musical vocabulary, but also to search for compositional procedures that are shared among the works.

However, as Charles Rosen has said, "it is disquieting when an analysis, no matter how cogent, minimizes the most salient features of a work."<sup>23</sup> Therefore, heeding this warning, the second half of the book is devoted to brief essays discussing interesting aspects of single works. But Part II is a tasting menu, not a twelve-course meal: only a small number techniques in each opus that merit analytic attention are

<sup>21</sup>Parker and Atlas, "A Key for Chi?": 232.

<sup>22</sup>See Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 35.

<sup>23</sup>Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York: Norton, 1972), 3.

highlighted and discussed in relation to the drama at hand, individuating more fully musical aspects special to each score. Nevertheless, the interpenetration of traditional and progressive musical factors is a recurring motive throughout.

Chapter 4, *An individual voice: traditional and progressive elements in Le villi*, places Puccini's first opera in the context of the competing traditional and progressive musical forces of late 19th-century Italy. Although *Le villi* is in many ways a standard numbers opera, contemporary critics considered Puccini "original" and noted his early use of extended chords, dissonant pedal points, and the "Tristan chord." Chapter 5, *The scattered jewels of Edgar* treats Puccini's next opera in light of its failed dramatic and musical procedures; some of the opera's musical moments, including instances of proto-bitonality<sup>24</sup> and parallelisms, served the composer in later works. Traditional forms, proposed but often declined, as well as the relation of this musical characteristic to the depiction of Manon, is the focus of the sixth chapter, *Towards a new country: Form and Deformation in Manon Lescaut*. Concepts of "la solita forma" and aspects of Hepokoski's and Darcy's Sonata Theory are invoked here. The chapter *Sfumature*.<sup>25</sup> *La bohème's fragmentation and sequential motions* highlights the abundance of traditional sequences in this opera—one of which opens the work—and discusses how these unstable patterns are unleashed to foster a new episodic format reflecting the mercurial dramatic narrative. Previously unpublished libretto sketches are reproduced here as well. Chapter 8: *Structural symmetries and reversals in Tosca* scrutinizes large-scale non-traditional musical design within a diatonic framework, in relation to Sardou's play and its Neoclassic reliance on the structure of Greek tragedies.

Transformations, both dramatic and musical, are so embedded in the organization of *Madama Butterfly* that they take on a thematic quality of their own. Chapter 9 describes a journey from the strict counterpoint of the opera's opening to the harmonically unresolved conclusion that seems to herald atonality. Motivic and common-tone (Neo-Riemannian) transformations are also discussed. The focus

<sup>24</sup>We use the term "proto-bitonality" to indicate the superimposition of elements from different diatonic collections, without a larger-scale establishment of those keys.

<sup>25</sup>[nuances]

of Chapter 10, *Rhythms and redemption in La fanciulla del West* is the elaborate rhythmic and metrical development in this opera; featured is a previously unpublished autograph rhythmic sketch. Puccini's stated theme of redemption is also touched upon. The composer's eighth stage work, a response to a commission to write a Viennese operetta, is in dialogue with that genre. Chapter 11, *La rondine's Masquerades and Modernisms* treats the influences on Puccini of Johann Strauss, Richard Strauss and Franz Lehár, the use of diatonic constructions with a Modernist ironic twist, and the concept of "musica al quadrato."<sup>26</sup> Considering the three operas of Puccini's triptych as a single tripartite entity, the twelfth chapter, *Amore, dolore e buonumore:*<sup>27</sup> *dramatic and musical coherence in Il trittico* explores dramatic and musical connections among the individual works, followed by a discussion of narrative musical techniques in these operas that invokes the work of Davis and Conati, among others. Last, Chapter 13, *Dawn at dusk: Puccini's trademarks in Turandot* details the dialogue between Italian traditions and progressive Modernism which, far from finding resolution at the end of Puccini's life, became more intense. Issues raised by Ashbrook, Powers, Davis and others are explored here. Plot summaries of all the operas are included in the Appendix.

Our hope is that, by peeking behind Puccini's mask, by shedding light on musical aspects that have heretofore been obscure, the listener familiar with Puccini's music will be enticed to hear it again with new ears. And from that may spring discussions of his music that, although they might challenge, support or enhance the ones presented here, would ultimately enrich the discourse.

<sup>26</sup>[music squared]

<sup>27</sup>[love, sorrow, and good humor]



# PART ONE



## Chapter 1

# Puccini the Progressive?

### *Viva Wagner!*

Giacomo Puccini = This great musician was born in Lucca in the year.....and it can well be said he was the true successor to the renowned Boccherini. — Handsome with a vast intellect, he brought to the field of Italian art a breath almost as powerful as an echo of the transalpine Wagner.<sup>1</sup>

- Puccini, in a school notebook, 1882

A common image of Puccini is at one with Bernard Shaw's when the playwright hailed him as the most likely successor to Giuseppe Verdi.<sup>2</sup> Yet at the Milan Conservatory in 1882, when the student Puccini doodled this youthfully exuberant, imaginary encyclopedia entry in a notebook, probably during a less than scintillating class (the rest of the notes seem to bear out that hypothesis), he left us a peek at himself that mentions both his Italian roots, as the "true successor" to local Lucchese hero Luigi Boccherini, and the new "transalpine" Wagnerian influences.<sup>3</sup> [Ex. 1.0, next page]

Puccini's fanciful statement could be unpacked in several ways: as evidence of the young man's desire to become either an important Italian composer with influence as great as Wagner's, the next favorite son of his home town, Lucca. Or it may suggest the young man's absorption of the artistic, Wagner-influenced reforms put forth by the Milanese futurists [Avveneristi], whose name itself is redolent of *wagnerismo*.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Nicholas

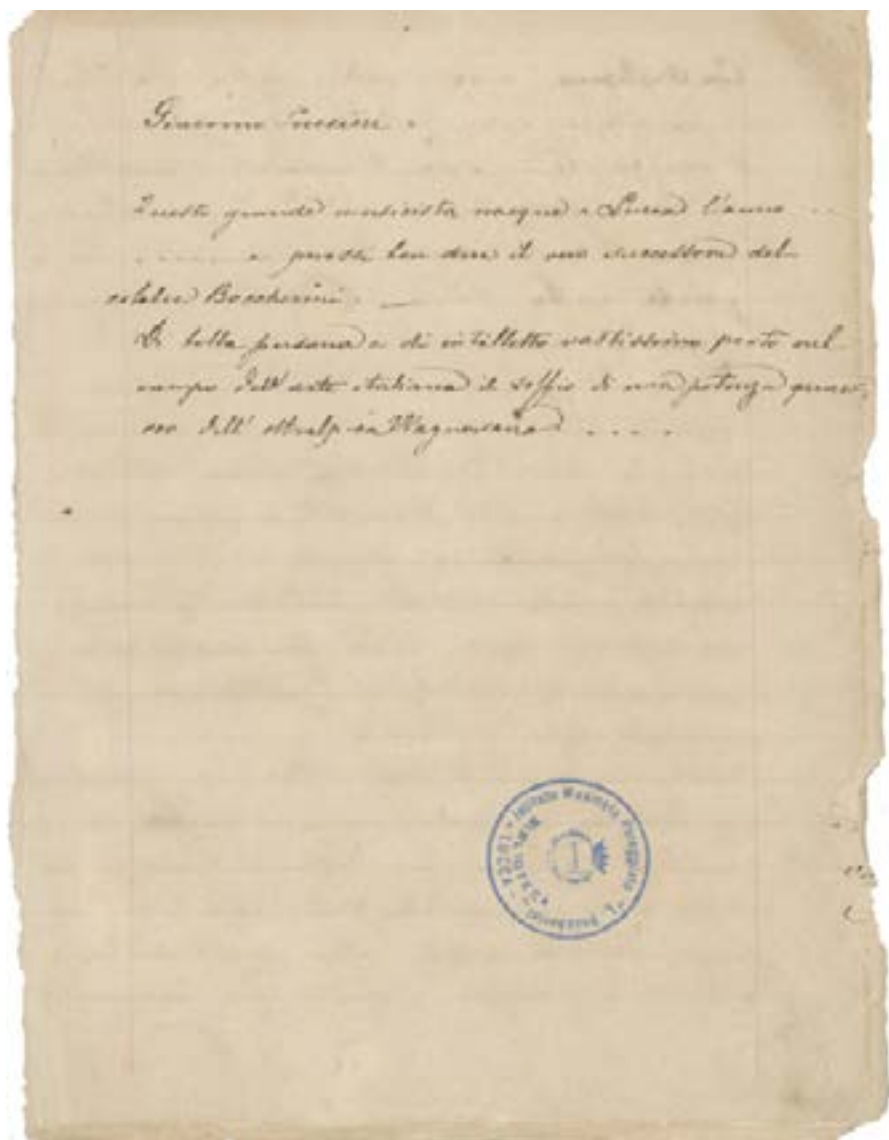
<sup>1</sup>[Giacomo Puccini = Questo grande musicista nacque a Lucca l'anno.....e puossi ben dire il vero successore del celebre Boccherini. — Di bella persona e di intelletto vastissimo porto' in campo dell'arte italiana il soffio di una potenza quasi eco dell'oltrapiaga Wagneriana.]

<sup>2</sup>George Bernard Shaw, "Born-again Italian Opera" in *Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism in Three Volumes*, ed. Dan Lawrence, 3 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1981), 3:217. Puccini has been similarly placed at the end of the "Great Tradition" by Ashbrook and Powers, "Turandot", and his connections to Italian musical traditions explored by Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*.

<sup>3</sup>Greenwald, among others, has noted a strong French influence in Puccini's works as well: not just in regard to his whole-tone and modal harmonic materials, which are often associated with Debussy, but in the influence of French naturalist literary sources on the *verismo* movement. And as a young man, Puccini saw and admired both Bizet's *Carmen* and Massenet's works. Greenwald, "Puccini, *Il tabarro*, and the Dilemma of Operatic Transposition," 525.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter 4 for more discussion of the changing musical milieu that Puccini entered as a young professional.

Ex. 1.0: Facsimile of Puccini's auto-description, Biblioteca dell'Istituto Musicale "L. Boccherini." Lucca, Italy. Student notebooks of Giacomo Puccini, 1881-1882. N.IV.5 a-c.. Used by permission.



Baragwanath has used this same quotation to support his view of the composer as an exponent of the Italian traditions.<sup>5</sup> In any case, we can already find at this early stage a hint of the confluence of the native traditional and the imported progressive factors that will be a constant hallmark of Puccini's

<sup>5</sup>Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 38-9.



career, and which will have direct connections to his technical compositional choices.

At the end of Puccini's life too, he still seemed to acknowledge respect for both Italian and German masters, as the Italian writer Ugo Ojetti described after a visit to the composer during his last days at home in Viareggio:

Today, here is Puccini at home, in his ground floor studio, between his shiny black piano and me. [...] No photograph of a singer, nor a photograph of some dear colleague. Only an autograph of Rossini,<sup>6</sup> inside a small mahogany frame. [...] On the music stand, held in place by two small bronze tablets, one with the portrait of Beethoven, one with the portrait of Wagner, are standing upright the last pages of his dear *Turandot*.<sup>7</sup>

The antagonistic cultural milieu that pitted Verdi against Wagner (and, by extension, Italian against German musical thought) into which Puccini stepped at the start of his career has been well documented. Verdi, a national hero of the Italian Risorgimento, saw his competition with Wagner in patriotic terms: a letter of Autumn 1892 reads, “the public wants Italian music and not imitations or travesties of German music. We need other stuff than ‘the Music of the Future.’”<sup>8</sup> Although Wagner's writings had been available in Italy since 1856, the first actual performance of a Wagnerian opera was not until 1871, with *Lohengrin* in Bologna. The vehement pro- and anti-Wagnerians in Italy did much to fan the xenophobic flames and fostered Wagnerian and Verdian stereotypes—the shaky binary opposition that Verdi was a melodist and Wagner was a symphonist.<sup>9</sup> Any tendency to emphasize the orchestra was automatically dubbed “wagneriano.”

<sup>6</sup>It is interesting to note that the Italian composer whose image Puccini kept close by was Rossini who, as William Rothstein and others have shown, was an originator of several innovative compositional techniques absorbed by many European composers. Rothstein, “Common-tone Tonality.”

<sup>7</sup>[Oggi, eecolo nella sua casa, nel studio a terreno, tra me e il suo pianoforte nero lucente. [...] Nemmeno la fotografia d'un cantante, nemmeno la fotografia d'un caro collega. Soltanto un autografo di Rossini, entro una cornicetta di mogano. [...] Sul leggìo, fermati da due targhette di bronzo, una col ritratto di Beethoven, una col ritratto di Wagner, stanno ritti gli ultimi fogli della cara *Turandot*.” Ugo Ojetti, *Cose Viste* (Florence: Sansoni, 1951): 336-7.

<sup>8</sup>Letter from Verdi to Giuseppe Perosio, Autumn 1892, Alessandro Luzio, ed., *Carteggi Verdiani*, vol IV. Quoted in translation in Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 2nd edition (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1974), 30.

<sup>9</sup>Abbate explores the meanings of “symphonic” in regard to Wagner's operas in Carolyn Abbate, “Opera as Symphony: a Wagnerian Myth” in *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner*, Carolyn Abbate, Roger Parker, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989): 92-124.

As Baragwanath has shown, Puccini's early training was very much in the traditional Italian school. But since restating that abundant material in detail is beyond our scope, we shall concentrate in this chapter on the more progressive side of the composer's works.

In fact, Puccini seems to have shown his "oltrealpica"<sup>10</sup> tendencies from the start of his operatic career, with the early operas including extended wordless orchestral intermezzi, for example—a sure sign of "symphonism."<sup>11</sup> However, since Puccini's mentor was Giulio Ricordi,<sup>12</sup> Verdi's publisher and champion, and an anti-Wagnerian—at least until his firm acquired the Italian rights to the Wagner operas—the younger man probably tried to keep his affinities disguised.<sup>13</sup> One of Puccini's long-time friends wrote a remembrance in 1926 that read, "Ricordi didn't even want to listen to the music because Puccini was on the black list of the Wagnerians."<sup>14</sup>

As a young man Puccini had walked from Lucca to Pisa to hear Verdi's *Aida*, an event that is often credited with inspiring him to compose operas.<sup>15</sup> But even Puccini's fellow Lucchesi had some notion of their native son's double musical inheritance: in 1891, on the

<sup>10</sup>[from beyond the Alps.] See note 1 above.

<sup>11</sup>Even Puccini's later operas, such as *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*, retain long-breathed instrumental passages.

<sup>12</sup>Giulio Ricordi (1840-1912) inherited the Ricordi publishing firm, which had been established by his grandfather Giovanni Ricordi in 1808; he then enlarged and transformed it enormously, and restarted the periodical *Gazzetta Musicale*. He was also a composer under the pseudonym J. Burgmein. *La Nuova Enciclopedia della Musica* (Milan: Garzanti, 1983, rep. 1991): s.v. "Ricordi."

<sup>13</sup>As noted earlier, Puccini wrote, "although I may be a Germanophile, I have never wanted to show it publicly." [Benché io sia un germanofilo non ho voluto mai mostrarmi pubblicamente.] Claudio Sartori, *Giacomo Puccini* (Milan: Edizioni Accademia, 1978), 306; also partially cited in Eugenio Gara, ed. *Carteggi Pucciniani* (Milan: Ricordi, 1958), 433. Although this statement was written much later in his life, and in the midst of a world war in which Italy and Germany were on opposite sides, the composer's word "never" seems to embrace an extended period of time that could include his younger years as well.

<sup>14</sup>Arturo Buzzi-Pecchia, "The Young Puccini as I knew him," *The Musical Courier*, 93/22, November 25, 1926: 33. And in the Ricordi house organ, the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, on 1 February 1885, Giulio Ricordi wrote, "[Musical ideas cannot] be acquired by studying and restudying the dots, counterpoint, harmony, disharmony, and sweating for long hours over those hieroglyphs full of science and poison that are Wagnerian scores. [...] Let Puccini remember that he is Italian; he should remember it and not be ashamed of it [...]; he will gain from it, and it will be Italian glory!" Quoted in Girardi, *Puccini*, 24. Yet, after Ricordi bought out the Lucca publishing house, which held the rights to Wagner in Italy, the anti-Wagnerian rhetoric ceased.

<sup>15</sup>For example, see Carner, *Puccini*, 18-9. Greenwald adds, [Puccini] "was remarkably silent about Verdi the artist. Needless to say, he had had great exposure to (cont.)

occasion of a performance of his second opera, *Edgar*, they awarded Puccini a diamond ring engraved with portraits of both Verdi and Wagner.<sup>16</sup>

Straddling this artistic divide could not have been easy. The group of young Italian composers to which Puccini belonged, was known as the “young school” [giovane scuola], and was an outgrowth of the “wild ones” [scapigliati] and futurists, passionate with progressive *wagnerismo*.<sup>17</sup> Their compositions—ultimately to be considered works of *verismo* (usually translated as “realism”<sup>18</sup>)—could never be taken for Wagnerian imitations today, as they are still under the strong influence of Italian traditions. And, especially after Verdi composed *Otello*, in 1887, which incorporated the newer emphasis on motivic development and continuous flow, there were two operatic gods to be worshipped. But Mascagni made clear in a letter to a friend the relative importance to him of both influences, and which had the more far-reaching influence: “In Rome, you could go hear the *Otello* by the father of maestros,” he underlined, “I am speaking of Italian maestros since you know how much I admire Wagner as the father of all maestros past and future.”<sup>19</sup>

From the start of his career to its end, Puccini left written evidence in his compositions—in words as well as notes—that he had Wagner on his mind. As a young student in 1883, Puccini had written a sketch for a song “Ad una morta!” with nonfunctional harmonies, parallel

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Verdi, even as a young man in Lucca, where Verdi’s operas were performed often and frequently within a year of their premières. [...] Yet his letters contain few references to Verdi’s operas.” Helen Greenwald, “Verdi’s Patriarch and Puccini’s Matriarch: Through the Looking-Glass and What Puccini Found There,” *19th-Century Music* 17/3 (Spring 1994): 235.

<sup>16</sup>Gino Arrighi, “La prima rappresentazione di un’opera pucciniana in Lucca.” *Lucca: Rassegna del Comune* 1 /2 (September 1957). Quoted in Dieter Schickling, *Giacomo Puccini: Biographie*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt), 91.

<sup>17</sup>See also Julian Budden, “Wagnerian Tendencies in Italian Opera,” in *Music and Theatre: Essays in Honour of Winton Dean*, ed. Nigel Fortune (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 299-332.

<sup>18</sup>Recently the concept of *verismo* has been critically re-examined. See, for example Adriana Guarneri Corazzol, “Opera and Verismo: Regressive Points of View and the Artifice of Alienation,” trans. Roger Parker, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5 (1993), 39-53, and Arman Schwartz, “Rough Music: *Tosca* and *Verismo* Reconsidered,” *19th-century Music* 31/3 (Spring 2008), 228-44.

<sup>19</sup>Pietro Mascagni’s letter to Vittorio Gianfranceschi of 8 april 1887, is housed at the Museo Teatrale alla Scala, Milan: [*Otello* [è] del Papà dei Maestri. Parlo sempre dei Maestri italiani, poichè tu sai quanto stimo il Wagner come Papà di tutti i maestri presenti e futuri.]

voice leading, and a dissonant pedal point—and above it scribbled “Alla Wagner.” This could also, of course, be interpreted as a critique of a passage he did not ultimately use. [Ex. 1.1]

Ex. 1.1: Sketch for “Ad una morta”



Yet, at the other end of his life’s journey, as a dying man, one of Puccini’s deathbed sketches for the unfinished *Turandot* shows the annotation “poi Tristano,” indicating that a theme borrowed from *Tristan* should appear next. And while writing this last opera, Puccini made the following comment to a friend who played the opening bars of *Tristan* at the keyboard: “Enough of this music! We are mandolinists, dilettantes: woe to us if we get caught by it! This tremendous music annihilates us and we cannot finish anything anymore!”<sup>20</sup>

Puccini also adopted the use of Leitmotifs, as many of his contemporaries did, which he employed consistently from *Manon Lescaut*, his third opera, until the end of his career.<sup>21</sup> He composed at the piano, often using only libretto drafts or the script [*copione*] as a guide, making handwritten musical and non-musical notes in the margins. In several *copioni*, the composer left written indications that he was thinking in terms of Leitmotifs. The February 1898 *copione*

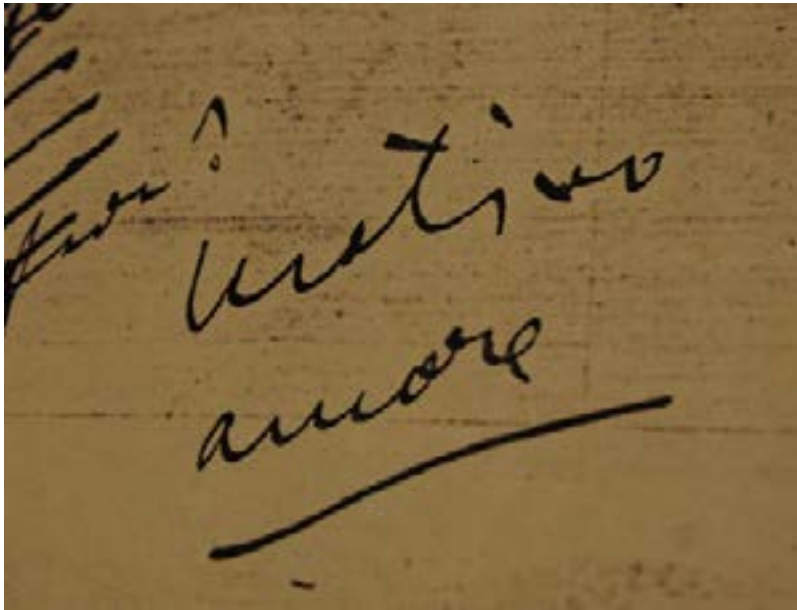
<sup>20</sup>Giudo Marotti, *Giacomo Puccini Intimo* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1942), 203-4. [Basta di questa musica! Noi siamo dei mandolinisti, dei dilettanti: guai a noi se ci lasciamo prendere! Questa musica tremenda ci annienta e non ci fa concludere più nulla!] In the middle of Puccini’s career, after composing *Madama Butterfly*, Lawrence Gilman, music critic for *Harper’s Weekly*, wrote: “How closely, with what unswerving fidelity, the music clings to the contours of the play; and with what an economy of effort its effects are made! Puccini is thus, at his best, a Wagnerian in the truest sense—a far more consistent Wagnerian than was Wagner himself.” Lawrence Gilman, *Aspects of Modern Opera: estimate and inquiries* (New York: Lane, 1909), 48.

<sup>21</sup>Puccini’s leitmotivic technique is less interwoven and fluid than Wagner’s, but he does occasionally transform and combine motives in a Wagnerian manner. Two examples from *La bohème* occur at I/43/1, where Mimi’s theme appears in canonic diminution, and at III/14/18 where the Love motive appears together with both Rodolfo’s “cieli bigi” theme and the opera’s opening motive.

of *Tosca*,<sup>22</sup> for example, shows Puccini's notations of themes for both major and minor characters: we find "Mario's theme mixed in" [framezzato tema di Mario] and "small hint of the Sacristan" [petit accenno al Sagrestano], indicating places in the score where those themes do indeed appear. In a version of the libretto housed at the Museo Puccini in Torre del Lago,<sup>23</sup> the composer's notations show that he also created musical themes for concepts ("motivo amore") and for places ("motivo villa").<sup>24</sup> Moreover, in a letter to

Ex. 1.2: Leitmotifs

a) "motivo amore" [love theme], *Tosca* Act I libretto, Museo Puccini, Torre del Lago, Italy (hereafter TDL). Used by permission.

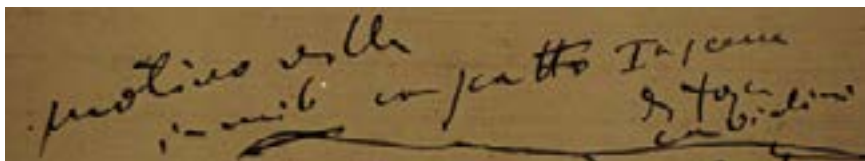


<sup>22</sup>This is a nearly complete draft of Act I, housed at the Music Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, New York.

<sup>23</sup>This manuscript, in a secretary's hand with copious annotations by Puccini, begins part way through Act I, scene 5 and extends to the end of the act, but scenes 6 and 7 are incomplete. This was probably a copy that Puccini used over a long period, as evidenced by his annotations: for example, many musical sketches present here were never used, which would indicate an early draft, yet we can also find here the murmured prayers for scene 10 that the composer located only towards the end of his orchestration work. Also, Puccini has pasted in a page of Illica's comments, and sections of a printed libretto draft.

<sup>24</sup>The recent publication of another *Tosca* libretto with Puccini's notes [FCRLu] shows similar annotations; for example, one finds "Motivo Tosca in F# a due" on p. 12. Gabriella Biagi Ravenni, ed. "*Tosca*" di Victorien Sardou, Giuseppe Giacosa e Luigi Illica, musica di Giacomo Puccini (Florence: Olschki, 2009), 2 vols.

b) “motivo villa in mib con scatto I<sup>a</sup> scena di Tosca con violini” [villa theme in E-flat with burst of Tosca’s first scene with violins], TDL. Used by permission.



Tito Ricordi of 23 November 1897 about the ending of *Tosca*'s first act, Puccini even uses the term “leitmotif,” along with a sketched line of music, writing “Questo sarà il leitmotif della trombata finale per i colleghi e uniti”<sup>25</sup>

Puccini also included many musical quotations from Wagner’s operas in his own works, altering their outer appearance with different rhythms or harmonies—but sometimes not even much of that. In one contemporary review of Puccini’s first opera, *Le villi*, Eugenio Sacerdoti, who knew his Wagner well, admired the new work, but pointed out the following:

The duet between Anna and Roberto has an introduction that reminds one too closely of the entrance of Pogner and Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* by Richard Wagner (Act 1, scene 3) and the fact that Puccini has studied this work by the Great Man of Leipzig is clear from the *Andante mosso* with which the first act closes. Here the effect on the public is great and faultless, but the author has done nothing except destroy the prelude from *Die Meistersinger*, imitating it to the point of plagiarism. [...] And to think that when *Le villi* was performed, everyone sang hymns to the triumph of Italian music, which glowed in Puccini’s work with new and inspired melodies! But, you see, Wagner is so rich he can even lend melodies to Italian masters!<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup>A translation could read: “This will be the Leitmotif of the trumpet finale for the ecclesiastics and everyone” but “trombata” is used here as a pun and can also mean “disaster” or worse. Reproduced in Giuseppe Pintorno, *Puccini: 276 lettere inedite* (Milano: Nuove Edizioni, 1974), 70.

<sup>26</sup>[Il duetto fra Anna e Roberto ha una introduzione che ricorda troppo da vicino l’entrata di Pogner e di Bekmesser nei Maestri Cantori di Norimberga di Riccardo Wagner (atto 1, scena 3) e che il Puccini abbia studiato questo lavoro del Grande di Lipsia risulta chiaramente dall’andante mosso col quale si chiude il primo atto. Qui l’effetto sul pubblico è grande ed immanchevole, ma l’autore non ha fatto altro che guastare il preludio dei Maestri Cantori, imitandolo fino al plagio [...] E dire che quando le *Villi* furono rappresentate, tutti inneggiarono al trionfo della musica italiana la quale rifulgeva nel lavoro del Puccini di nuove ed ispirate melodie! Eppure, vedete, Wagner è tanto ricco da poter prestare melodie anche ai maestri italiani.] Eugenio Sacerdoti (pseud. T.O. Cesardi), *L’opera di Riccardo Wagner e la nuova* and art critic, and wrote for the *Patria* in Bologna; then he was director of the journals *Il* (cont.)

It is somewhat surprising that Sacerdoti did not also notice the theme from *Parsifal* written prominently into the opening bars of *Le villi*.<sup>27</sup> [Ex. 1.3a and b]

Ex. 1.3:

a) Wagner, *Parsifal*, "Liebesmahl-Spruch" Leitmotiv



b) *Le villi*, theme from the Preludio



These intertextual borrowings from *Die Meistersinger* in Puccini's first opera predate the work he did for Ricordi making cuts for the Italian production of the Wagner opera, and thus speak to Puccini's early interest in the score. The publisher sent Puccini twice in 1889 to see the work in Bayreuth.<sup>28</sup> In 1888, Ricordi had bought the Lucca publishing house, which until then had held the Italian rights to Wagner's opera.<sup>29</sup> After this, Ricordi began to publish and produce these operas in Milan and elsewhere, commercial interests apparently outweighing his prior distaste.<sup>30</sup> Puccini's task—to shorten the opera

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*Capitan Fracassa* and *La Tribuna* and also ran the *Don Marzio* in Naples, and the *Travaso delle idee* in Rome. Teodoro Rovito, *Dizionario Bio-bibliografico dei letterati e giornalisti italiani contemporanei* (Naples: Melfi, 1907), s.v. "Sacerdoti, Eugenio.

<sup>27</sup>This has also been noted in Deborah Burton, *An Analysis of Puccini's "Tosca,"* 109, and in Girardi, *Puccini*, 44.

<sup>28</sup>The first time he traveled with librettist Ferdinando Fontana and the second time with Adolf Hohenstein, who would design sets for *Tosca* in 1899. Girardi, *Puccini*, 57. Schickling has revealed that when Puccini and Fontana went to Bayreuth in August 1888, they seem to have disguised their identities: in the *Fremden-liste* their names appear as Puccini, Giocoma and Fontona, Ferdinando. Schickling, *Giacomo Puccini: Biographie*, 74.

<sup>29</sup>Giovanna Lucca, who headed the Lucca house, was famous for her support of Wagner. During a pilgrimage to Bayreuth in 1876 she presented the composer with a silver laurel wreath. In 1880, she suggested to Wagner himself that he abridge the *Ring* to fit a single night's performance. Carner, *Puccini*, 29-30.

<sup>30</sup>Not entirely, however. During the year of Verdi's death, 1901, Ricordi withheld all performances of Wagner's operas in Italy. Julian Budden, *Puccini: His Life and Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 22.

as inaudibly and smoothly as possible—required a profound study and analysis of the score.<sup>31</sup>

There are Wagner quotations to be found in most, if not all, Puccini's operas, borrowings that are used at moments redolent of dramatic events in the source operas. After quoting *Parsifal* and *Meistersinger* in *Le villi*, Puccini graced *Manon Lescaut* with *Götterdämmerung*'s “salvation of love” Leitmotiv [Exx. 1.4a-b] sung near the end of Act I by the new *innamorati* Manon and Des Grieux; and indeed it seems that love will save Manon from a forced marriage at this point. In *Tosca*'s second act, full of violence and torture, Puccini quotes the “Kundry” theme from *Parsifal*, a Leitmotiv associated in the earlier opera's second act with horrible cries of pain. [Exx. 1.4c-d]. In *La fanciulla del West*, Puccini manages to quote the opening of *Tristan*, presented imaginatively with tritone-related harmonies, at the moment when the two desperate lovers most recall the doomed Wagnerian pair.<sup>32</sup> [Exx. 1.4e-f]. When Suor Angelica discovers that her son has died, we hear the “grief” [Sorge] motive from *Die Meistersinger* [Exx. 1.4g-h]. Finally, the violent opening chords of *Turandot*, an opera about the transformative power of love, proclaim the “Liebesruhe” motive from *Tristan*<sup>33</sup> although there are also great similarities to the opening of Iago's credo in Verdi's *Otello* [Exx. 1.4i-k].

#### Ex. 1.4

a) Wagner, *Götterdämmerung*, “Salvation of Love” Leitmotiv



b) *Manon Lescaut*, I/57



<sup>31</sup>Guido Salvetti's reconstruction of Puccini's cuts from the libretto of the La Scala production appear in “Come Puccini si aprì un sentiero nell'aspra selva del wagnerismo italiano,” in Gabriella Biagi Ravenni and Carolyn Gianturco, eds., *Giacomo Puccini: L'uomo, il musicista, il panorama europeo*, Studi Musicali 4 (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1997), 73ff .

<sup>32</sup>At the opening of the next act of *Fanciulla*, this same tritone pair, E-flat (D-sharp) and A, is heard harmonized with F major and B major, the Neapolitan and dominant of the ultimate tonic, E.

<sup>33</sup>This motive was also borrowed by Richard Strauss and Paul Dukas. See Chapter 13 and Deborah Burton, “*Tristano, Tosca e Torchi*,” in *Studi Musicali Toscani: Giacomo Puccini: L'uomo, il musicista, il panorama europeo*, Gabriella Biagi Ravenni and Carolyn Gianturco, eds. Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1997: 127-45.



c) Wagner, *Parsifal*, “Kundry” Leitmotiv



d) *Tosca*, II/9/3



e) Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, prelude



f) *La fanciulla del West*, II/60



g) Wagner, *Die Meistersinger*, “Grief” [Sorge] motive



h) *Suor Angelica*, 53/2



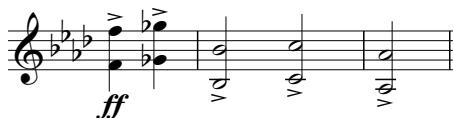
i) Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, “Liebesruhe” motive



j) *Turandot*, opening



k) Verdi, *Otello*, Act II, scene 2



But what can it mean that, in a sketch for *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini wrote “too *Tannhäuser*” [troppo *Tannhäuser*]?<sup>34</sup> That the passage would be a too-obvious borrowing? That it clashed with the eighteenth-century musical ambience? Was he rejecting a Wagnerian influence? There is no definitive way to resolve the issue.

Puccini’s musical and verbal allusions to Wagner are only one facet of a “transalpine echo of Wagnerism.” More general Wagnerian influences, also adopted by many of his contemporaries, near the time of Verdi’s *Otello*, include a continuous musical texture without explicit divisions into numbers (after *Le villi*),<sup>35</sup> the use of the orchestra as protagonist and narrator, and the close correspondence of stage and musical gestures. Arthur Wilson, a critic who traveled from Boston to New York for the première of *La fanciulla del West* in 1910, observed some of these qualities:

There is a far more elaborate network of guiding motifs than before. [...] There is a “redemption” theme, a “Minnie” theme, a rapid succession of accented chords for Johnson, and a melodic gem for Rance. The thematic development begins to suggest music drama from the *Ring*. The pertinent thing is that Puccini has mirrored in his orchestration the salient action, the big moments on the stage with almost unerring instinct and with swift and vivid power.<sup>36</sup>

Some, such as a reviewer for the *New York Times* during Puccini’s first visit to the United States in 1907, were not altogether pleased with the close ties between music and stage action:

Puccini’s style was undoubtedly new [...] But the musical treatment was more fundamentally strange. The broad delineation of moods is not enough. [...] The music [is] short-breathed and paragraphic in its minute commentary upon the passing word, the detail of action, with occasional pauses for lyrical expansion at points of emotional climax. Music, text and action are knit more closely together than was ever

<sup>34</sup>Michael Kaye, *The Unknown Puccini* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 222.

<sup>35</sup>Ashbrook and Powers assert that *Turandot* is a return to numbers opera. They make a strong case for this, although the score is not visibly divided into separate arias, duets, etc. Ashbrook and Powers, *Puccini’s “Turandot”*: 15–38. See Chapter 13.

<sup>36</sup>Arthur Wilson, “Puccini’s New Opera Given: ‘Girl of the Golden West’ a Success,” *Boston Daily Globe*, 11 December 1910.

attempted by the Italian composers of an earlier generation. The music bears along upon its current all the feelings, passions, and incidents of the story as fast as they occur...The touch is lighter, the impression more fugitive. The characterization is less deep.<sup>37</sup>

The subject of orchestral narrativity in opera is a large and complex subject that has been investigated at length elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> Rather than rehashing those issues here in regard to Puccini's works, which is beyond the scope of this book, we will briefly take note that, whereas Wagner's Leitmotifs often bear the brunt of the storytelling while little stage action is visibly occurring<sup>39</sup> and thus narrate "inner action" for the audience, Puccini's orchestral writing seems to ally much more closely with the more easily perceptible visual or textual cues.

Nevertheless, there are moments in which Puccini's orchestra seems to comment directly on the stage action at a critical distance. One need only think of the opening of *Gianni Schicchi*, where the orchestra presents a riotous *allegro* theme, suggesting the comedy to come (even though funeral drums are indicated), which slows to a *largo* when the curtain opens upon a scene of hypocritical mourners waiting for their meal-ticket to pass on. Here the initial appoggiatura-like pairs of eighth notes—metrically displaced, in the *scherzo* tradition—become transformed into a traditional two-note lament motive. Without this prior instrumental "commentary," the opening lachrymose scene could be initially interpreted as sincere, and the audience would not be in on the joke.

In a quest for greater dramatic naturalism—unlike Wagner—the *giovane scuola* employed some of the elder composer's tricks: as noted previously, they opted for increased continuity with fewer form-defining breaks in the musical texture, such as traditional divisions into numbers and recitative/aria.<sup>40</sup> Musician and publisher Carlo Clausetti, who was close to Puccini throughout most of his career, and was even present at his death, wrote a guide to *Tristan* (which Puccini admired) that was compiled on the occasion of the opera's Neapolitan première in 1907. Here, he explains the continuous musical fabric—the Wagnerian "endless melody"—in terms of traditional Italian operatic formulae:

In *Tristan*, true and proper recitative—that which serves to prepare a

<sup>37</sup>Richard Aldrich, *The New York Times*, 3 February 1907.

<sup>38</sup>See, for example, Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>39</sup>At the end of Act I/scene 1 of *Die Walküre*, between Siegmund and Sieglinde, for example, six different Leitmotifs appear in thirty-two bars that contain only nine words of sung text and little physical stage action.

<sup>40</sup>Puccini's second opera *Edgar*, does still contain a bit of recitative, such as in Act II's "Orgia, chimera dall'occhio vitreo."

sung piece—is completely lacking. Instead passages exist in the course of a great tale in a dialogue, for which Wagner uses formulas borrowed from recitative style. But these passages are never separated. In *Tristan* the forms are independent of any musical servitude. [...] they develop in an order that is certainly logical and sagely thought-out, but free of any conventional arrangement, with an extraordinarily varied and agile plan that is adapted to the action, scene by scene, without any break in continuity.<sup>41</sup>

Yet to simply label Puccini a “Wagnerian,” or even a progressive, is too facile. Baragwanath has demonstrated ably the composer’s strong ties to Italian traditions. Yet, just as his ancestors—five generations of successful composers—had absorbed each then-current compositional trend, Puccini also seems to have adopted many of the new ideas affecting his generation, while retaining elements of his traditional education. Not just a question of style, this dichotomy extends to the very construction of his sonorities,<sup>42</sup> the formal organization of musical passages, and the rhythmic and metric pacing. But if Puccini revitalized aspects of the Italian tradition with the “powerful breath” of progressive, non-native ideas, Wagnerism was only one of many innovations yet to come.

<sup>41</sup>[Nel *Tristano* il vero e proprio recitativo—quello cioè che serve a preparare un pezzo di canto—manca del tutto. Esistono in vece dei brani nel corso di un grande racconto, in un dialogo, nei quali Wagner si serve di formole chieste in prestito allo stile del recitativo. Ma questi brani non sono mai dei pezzi distinti. Nel *Tristano* le forme sono indipendenti da ogni servitù musicale [...] esse si sviluppano in un ordine sicuramente logico e saggiamente meditato, ma libero da ogni disposizione convenzionale, con una trama straordinariamente varia ed agile, che s’adatta all’azione, scena per scena, senza alcuna soluzione di continuità.] Carlo Clausetti, *Tristano e Isotta di Riccardo Wagner: Notizie e documenti raccolti da Carlo Clausetti* (Naples: G. Ricordi, 1907), 52. Puccini wrote to Clausetti on 5 January 1908: “Very beautiful publication, yours on *Tristan*. It’s very interesting and very well compiled.” [Bellissima pubblicazione, la tua, su *Tristano*. È interessante molto e molto ben compilata.] Eugenio Gara. ed. *Carteggi Pucciniani*. (Milan: Ricordi, 1958), 362. Clausetti (1869-1943) who worked for the Naples affiliate of Ricordi but who also briefly took charge of the main Milan office, wrote libretti and Neapolitan songs. He often accompanied Puccini abroad to stage his operas. Later in his *Tristan* guide, Clausetti makes reference to “primordial themes” [temi primordiali] from which individual Leitmotifs are derived. This concept, given voice and credence by a close friend and colleague of Puccini’s, will resonate with the discussion of Puccini’s motivic technique in Chapter 3. Clausetti, *Tristano*, 52.

<sup>42</sup>See Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion of the conflation of different types of structures in Puccini’s harmonic language.

***Astonish me!***

Was Puccini a Modernist?<sup>43</sup> The answer depends in large part on the definition of that term. And as Peter Gay has written, “it is not that defining Modernism has been tried and found wanting, but that it has been found difficult and not tried.”<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, Gay isolates a general characteristic of the trend that he calls the “lure of heresy”: “the modernist poet who pours obscene content into traditional meters; the modernist architect who eliminates all decoration from his designs; the modernist composer who deliberately violates the traditional rules of harmony and counterpoint.” In essence, “insubordination against ruling authority.”<sup>45</sup> Thus a key ingredient is an attitude of rebelliousness, and the attempt to shock or astonish. Since Wagner too was something of an insubordinate, it was but a small step for his veristic followers to pick up the torch of ipseity and march onward.

In the musical world of late nineteenth-century Italy, rebellion against the prevailing traditions would have entailed some sort of assault on tonality (especially the beginnings and endings of musical units where the hierarchical power of the tonic is normatively affirmed), and on traditional voice leading. Puccini certainly did battle with traditional rules of tonality in many ways (as we shall see), and he was so well known for his empty parallel fifths that one French critic described *La bohème* as “La Vide Bohème.”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup>This was the subject of the roundtable discussion *Puccini the Modernist?* held at the November 2008 meeting of the American Musicological Society and Society for Music Theory, in Nashville, TN. Participants were: Nicholas Baragwanath (University of Nottingham), Deborah Burton (Boston University), Andrew Davis (University of Houston), David Rosen (Cornell University, respondent), Matteo Sansone (New York University-Florence), and Alexandra Wilson (Oxford Brookes University). The topic is also discussed at length in Alexandra Wilson, *The Puccini problem: opera, nationalism and modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>44</sup>Peter Gay, *Modernism: the Lure of Heresy* (New York: Norton, 2008), 2.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>46</sup>[The empty Bohème] “Willy,” *L’assiette au beurre*, n. 78 (27 Septembre 1902). This commentary, whose author is identified only as “Willy,” was used as a caption to the French caricature of the musician by Aroun al Rascid, pseudonym of the illustrator Umberto Brunelleschi (1879-1949), reproduced on this volume’s cover. Punning on Henry Murger’s “Vie de bohème,” it reads in full, “This transalpine devil, as reserved as his music is familiar, has risked a *Manon Lescaut* that does not recoil before the desert scene (What does Massenet think of it?) One can recognize in him a certain theatrical vivacity, but that instrumental emptiness, those harmonies hollow as those of *The Empty Bohème!*” [Ce transalpin roublard aussi réservé que sa musique est tutoyouse, a risqué une *Manon Lescaut*, qui ne recule pas, elle, devant la scène du Désert (Qu’en pense Massenet?) On peut lui reconnaître une certaine vivacité scénique, mais quelle vacuité instrumentale, quelles harmonies creuses que celles de la *La Vide Bohème!*]

But for each of Puccini's Modernist constructions, there seems to be another in which pure diatonicism reigns. Are we then to understand Puccini then only as a "transitional" figure? To resort to such a conclusion would not only be unsatisfactory, but would ignore salient aspects of what Modernism entailed. One of the most well known Modernist slogans is Ezra Pound's "make it new."<sup>47</sup> But that begs the question, "make *what* new?" The answer would seem to be to make the *old* new, implying that at least a remnant of prior material must remain in the modernized form, just to be recognized as the new, "improved" version.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps a more apt Modernist catchphrase would be Sergei Diaghilev's "Astonish me!" with which the impresario of the Ballets Russes reportedly berated his choreographers.<sup>49</sup> But if astonishment is the criterion for Modernism, this inevitably leads to a process of continual obsolescence: a Modernist work would become less so as soon as it ceased to astonish. Avant-garde composer John Cage seemed to recognize this when he said, "If my work is accepted, I must move on to the point where it is not."<sup>50</sup> Puccini too, in an elegy on the death of Claude Debussy, seconded this spirit:

Those harmonic progressions which were so dazzling in the moment of their revelation, and which seemed to have in reserve immense and ever-new treasures of beauty, after the first bewitching surprise always surprised less and less, till at last they surprised no more: and not this only, but also to their creator the field appeared closed, and I repeat I know how restlessly he sought and desired a way of exit. As a fervid admirer of Debussy, I anxiously waited to see how he himself would assail Debussyism; and now his death has rendered impossible that we shall ever know what would have been the outcome that indeed might have been precious.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup>This catch-phrase was invented by Pound before World War I, but was also the title of a later collection of his essays: *Make it New* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934).

<sup>48</sup>Louis Menand, in a review of Gay's book, writes: "The 'It' in 'Make It New' is the Old—what is valuable in the culture of the past. A great deal of Pound's poetry therefore takes the form of translation, imitation, allusion, and quotation." *The New Yorker*, 9 June 2008.

<sup>49</sup>Gay, *Modernism*, 3.

<sup>50</sup>Interview of Cage by Peter Gena, 1982. Quoted in Gay, *Modernism*, 266.

<sup>51</sup>*The Musical Times* (July 1918). Quoted in Mosco Carner, "Portrait of Debussy: Debussy and Puccini?" *Musical Times* 108 (June 1967): 502, and reprinted in Carner *Major and Minor* (London: Duckworth, 1980), 139-47. In a sketch for the unfinished finale of *Turandot*, Puccini scribbled that he wanted to add "surprises" [sorprese]. See Chapter 13.

Thus, if astonishment (and with it an essential quality of Modernism) is fleeting, then all Modernist works would have to be considered transitional, depending only upon *when* one observes them (and perhaps then Modernism can only cease when it is no longer possible to be astonished.) The question then arises: from which point in time should we try to judge Puccini's art in this regard?

Puccini furthered his own bid for Modernist credentials by having attended the Graz première of Richard Strauss's *Salome* in 1906,<sup>52</sup> one of the first riotous Parisian performances of Igor Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in 1913,<sup>53</sup> and hearing Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in Florence in April 1924 near the end of his life, following along with the composer's personal score.<sup>54</sup> After that concert, according to

<sup>52</sup>In a letter to Ervin Lendvai of 17 May 1906, Puccini wrote, "*Salome* is the most extraordinary thing, terribly cacophonous, there are the most beautiful orchestral sensations, but it ends up exhausting one a lot. It is a greatly interesting show." [La *Salomé* è la cosa più straordinaria cacofonica terribilmente ci sono delle sensazioni orchestrali bellissime ma finisce a stancare molto. È uno spettacolo di grande interesse.] Lendvai (1882-1948) was a Hungarian composer and choir director who in 1905 took some lessons with Puccini.

<sup>53</sup>Puccini wrote, "I was at the *Sacre de Printemps*: ridiculous choreography. The music a cacophony in the extreme. It was curious however and done with a certain talent. But all together, the stuff of madmen. The public booed, laughed and...applauded." [Fui alla *Sacré de Printemps*: coreografia ridicola. La musica una cacofonia all'estremo. Curiosa però e fatta con un certo talento. Ma nell'insieme, roba da matti. Il pubblico fischiò, rise e...applaudì.] Giuseppe Adami, ed., *Epistolario* (Milan: Oscar Mondadori, 1928, rep. 1982), 153.

<sup>54</sup>Marotti describes the encounter thus: "I [...] accompanied Puccini [...] [who] did not bring with him Schoenberg's score of *Pierrot Lunaire* for the simple reason that he did not own it, nor did he ever have the occasion to see it.[...] Schoenberg, advised of Puccini's presence, wanted to pass him a copy of the score of *Pierrot Lunaire*—on the program—so that he could easily follow it during the performance. [...] Turning the pages on our laps, we followed with concentrated attention this very original score. [...] [At the end of the concert, Puccini went to return the score and to meet and thank the author. Before then, the two musicians had never had the occasion to meet; and Arnold Schoenberg showed his deferential enthusiasm (I cannot find more appropriate words) and very clear satisfaction at finally being able to shake hands with Giacomo Puccini. The words he directed towards him [...] were of such great pleasure and lively cordiality that Puccini (who had always remained shy, despite his exposure to the 'ways of the world' and to the triumphs to which he should have become accustomed, if not indifferent) visibly blushed. [...] Reverting then to French, he said to his illustrious Viennese colleague (almost) word for word, 'I thank you for having clarified for me your theory by way of *Pierrot Lunaire*, which I followed very attentively and which seemed to me a very interesting work.'" [Io [...] accompagnavo Puccini [...] non recava affatto seco la schoenberghiana partitura del "*Pierrot lunaire*," per la semplice ragione che non la possedeva, nè mai aveva avuto occasione di vederla. [...] Schoenberg, avvertito della presenza di Puccini, volle inviargli copia della partitura del *Pierrot Lunaire*—posto in programma—onde avesse agio di seguirla durante la esecuzione [...] volgendone le pagine sulle (cont.)

Guido Marotti, Puccini said, “Don’t think that I’m a traditionalist! [...] I am happy to have had a means of touching with my hand, or rather with my ears, the facts as they are today.”<sup>55</sup>

Other statements—from all periods of his life—also bear witness to Puccini’s desire to clear new progressive paths. As early as his *Tosca* period, in a letter to Carlo Clausetti from 10 November 1899, Puccini wrote: “I have wanted to sail in other seas. [...] We need musical discoveries, essentially musical ones [...] whatever has already been done should not be done again.”<sup>56</sup> After composing *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini wrote to Giulio Ricordi on 23 February 1905: “Forward not backward! With a work that is constructed and heard in a modern way.”<sup>57</sup>

That work was to be *La fanciulla del West*, an opera that shocked and astonished many at the time. When it was completed, Puccini wrote to Alberto Crecchi, from Milan on 8 January 1911 saying, “Did the harmonization of *Fanciulla* surprise you? Never fear. In the orchestra everything becomes smoother and softer. The clashes are something different in different timbres than on the piano.”<sup>58</sup> Later that year, he wrote to Clausetti on 9 July 1911: “Everyone, from Verdi to Mascagni, evolved their style; some for good some for ill. [...] Renew oneself or die? The harmony of today and the orchestra are no longer the same.

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nostre ginocchia, seguimmo con concentrata attenzione la originalissima partitura. [...] A termine del concerto, Puccini si recò a restituire la partitura, a conoscere e a ringraziarne l'autore. Prima di allora i due musicisti non avevano mai avuto occasione d'incontrarsi; e Arnold Schoenberg manifestò il suo deferente entusiasmo (non saprei usare più appropriate parole) e molto palese soddisfazione di poter finalmente stringere la mano a Giacomo Puccini. Le frasi che gli rivolse [...] furono di così alto compiacimento e viva cordialità che Puccini—timido com'era sempre rimasto, nonostante gli 'usi di mondo' e i trionfi che avrebbero dovuto assuefarlo, se non all'indifferenza, alla disinvoltura—ne arrossì visibilmente. [...] Rivolgendosi quindi in lingua francese all'illustre collega viennese, gli disse (quasi) testualmente: 'Je vous remercie de m'avoir éclairé sur votre théorie avec le *Pierrot lunaire* que j'ai suivi très attentivement et qui me paraît une oeuvre fort intéressante.' Guido Marotti, “Incontri e colloqui col Maestro,” *L'approdo musicale* 6/II (April-June 1959): 54-7.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid. [Non penserai ch'io sia un passatista! [...] sono contento di avere avuto modo di toccare con mano, anzi con le orecchie, i fatti come si presentano oggi.]

<sup>56</sup>[Volevo navigare in altre acque. [...] ci vogliono trovate musicali, essenzialmente musicali [...] quanto si è già fatto non bisogna rifarlo.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 182.

<sup>57</sup>[Ma avanti, non indietro! Con un lavoro modernamente costruito e sentito.] Adami, *Epistolario*, 98.

<sup>58</sup>[Caro Crecchi, ...Dunque ti ha sorpreso l'armonizzazione della *Fanciulla*? Niente paura. In orchestra tutto si appiana, s'addolcisce, gli urti coi timbri diversi sono altra cosa che al piano.] Dr. Crecchi was a music lover from Livorno. Gara, *Carteggi*, 384.



[...] I resolve, if I find the subject, to continue to do better on the path I have taken, sure not to be left in the retroguard.”<sup>59</sup>

The question of Puccini’s Modernism *qua* astonishment ultimately rests not on whether his music shocks listeners now, but whether it astonished those of his own time—which only his contemporaries can judge. In 1918, Webern wrote to Schoenberg after hearing *La fanciulla del West*: “A score that sounds original in every way. Splendid. Every measure astonishing.”<sup>60</sup> The same year Luigi Parigi had this to say: “Puccini and Mascagni, who have let themselves be carried along by the current and have been swept away, [...] have followed it and have made themselves into modernists, externally, in various senses and in various ways.”<sup>61</sup> Parigi’s comment is intriguing in that he identifies the composers’ Modernist traits as “external”: as we shall see below and in Chapter 2, the interaction of a progressive superface and a more traditional substructure is evident in Puccini’s compositional strategies in many ways.

Despite the many contemporary voices cited in Alexandra Wilson’s informative book on Puccini reception,<sup>62</sup> there is one whose name is passed over: Domenico Alaleona, one of the few musicians who discussed Puccini’s scores analytically. Alaleona was a musicologist and composer, as well as a theorist, who also worked as a choir director and taught music history at the Conservatory of Santa Cecilia in Rome.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup>[Tutti, da Verdi a Mascagni, hanno evoluto lo stile. [...] Rinnovarsi o morire? L’armonia d’oggi e l’orchestra non sono le stesse...io mi riprometto, se trovo il soggetto, di far sempre meglio nella via che ho preso, sicuro di non rimanere alla retroguardia.] *Ibid.*, 392.

<sup>60</sup>Postcard of 27 March 1918, now housed at the Library of Congress. Webern goes on to write, “Very special sounds. (Not a trace of kitsch!) And mine is a first-hand impression. I have to say I really like it. How can it be? Do I err so completely? I would like so much to look at this score together with you. Has this opera completely bewitched me?” [Eine Partitur von durchaus ganz originellem Klang. Prachtvoll. Jeder Takt überraschend. Ganz besondere Klänge (Keine Spur von Kitsch!) Und ich habe den Eindruck [aus] erster Hand. Ich muss sagen, dass es mir sehr gefallen hat. Wie ist es nun? Irre ich mich ganz und gar? Ich würde so gerne diese Partitur mit Dir zusammen ansehen. Ganz verhext hat mich diese Oper?]

<sup>61</sup>[Il Puccini, il Mascagni col loro farsi trasportar dalla corrente e col loro avvenuto travolgimento...l’hanno seguita e si son fatti modernisti: in vario senso, in vario modo, esternamente.] Luigi Parigi, “Il momento musicale Italiano,” *La critica musicale* (1918), in installments. Quoted in Giorgio Sanguinetti, “Puccini’s Music,” 223.

<sup>62</sup>Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*.

<sup>63</sup>Alaleona’s life and work are discussed in Sanguinetti, “Puccini’s Music,” 226-32. Sanguinetti also notes, “the most significant aspect noted by writers of the day was—overwhelmingly—Puccini’s modernism, above all with respect to harmony.” *Ibid.*, 222. Also see Mariella Busnelli, “Carteggio Giacomo Puccini-Domenico Alaleona, 1919-1924” *Quaderni Pucciniani*, 1985: 217-9.

He corresponded and worked with Puccini from about 1919, when Alaleona orchestrated Puccini's *Inno a Roma* ("disgraziato porcheria,"<sup>64</sup> as Puccini called it), and they knew each other well enough then to use "carissimo" as a form of address. Before that, however, in 1910 and 1911, when Alaleona, certainly no Wagnerian,<sup>65</sup> published his important theoretical articles, he was part of the Torinese circle of the journal *Rivista Musicale Italiana*, a publication quite unfriendly to Puccini.

In these two articles, one subtitled "the Art of Astonishment," ["L'arte del stupore"], which were published contemporaneously with the composition of *Fanciulla*, Alaleona describes the modern musical technique of using harmonies and melodies that derive from the equal division of the octave.<sup>66</sup> If the octave is divided equally into two tritones, he labels it "biphony" [bifonia]; if it is divided equally into three major thirds, it becomes "triphony" [trifonia]; into six whole tones, it is "hexaphony" [esafonia]; and Alaleona does indeed continue on to "dodecaphony" [dodecafonia].<sup>67</sup> Example 1.5 shows the harmonic and melodic forms of these pitch collections, which he calls "neutral tonalities." Although part of his articles detail innovative divisions of the octave, such as "pentaphony" [pentafonia], Alaleona separates his new ideas from what he calls "material previously known."<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup>[wretched garbage]

<sup>65</sup>Alaleona writes of Wagner's Italian acolytes, "his imitators are wretched people." [i suoi imitatori sono la gente misera]. Domenico Alaleona, *Il Libro d'oro del Musicista*, 3rd ed. (Rome: Manuzio, 1922), 117. But Alaleona still admired the German composer: "If we have admonished the young Italian musician not to submit blindly to his influence in those qualities that are specifically German, at the same time we urge him to give to the figure and the operas of Wagner all the attention and all the study that one gives to the greatest." [Se noi abbiamo messo in guardia il giovane musicista italiano a non voler subire ciecamente la sua influenza per ciò che v'è in lui di specificamente tedesco, nello stesso tempo lo incitiamo a volgere alla figura e alle opere di Wagner tutta l'attenzione e tutto lo studio che si volge ai grandissimi.] Ibid., 122.

<sup>66</sup>Domenico Alaleona, "I moderni orizzonti della tecnica musicale. Teoria della divisione dell'ottava in parti uguali," *Rivista musicale italiana*, 18 (1911): 382-420, and "L'armonia modernissima: le tonalità neutre e l'arte di stupore" *Rivista musicale italiana*, 18 (1911): 769-838.

<sup>67</sup>Alaleona, in "I moderni orizzonti," 386, writes, "In our instruments that are tuned to the tempered chromatic scale, this division [of the octave into equal parts] can be made in five ways: in two, in three, in four, in six or in twelve equal parts. From each division arises a scale (melody), if the sounds are intoned successively, while intoning them simultaneously results in a chord (harmony)." [Nei nostri strumenti a scala cromatica temperata questa divisione si può fare in cinque maniere: *in due, in tre, in quattro, in sei e in dodici* parti uguali. Da ciascuna divisione nasce intonando i suoni che ne risultano successivamente una scala (melodia) intonandoli simultaneamente un accordo (armonia).]

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 383. [materiale già conosciuto]

## Ex. 1.5: Alaleona's equal divisions of the octave

The image displays five musical staves illustrating Alaleona's equal divisions of the octave. Each staff is labeled with a specific system: Bifonia, Trifonia, Tetrafonía, Esafonia, and Dodecafonía. The notation shows the sequence of notes for each system, demonstrating how the octave is divided into equal intervals.

Equal divisions of the octave were not new in 1910, with well-known examples abounding in nineteenth-century opera, such as early examples by Rossini and Weber.<sup>69</sup> But now Alaleona individuates two ways in which equal divisions of the octave can be used: tonally and atonally. If the symmetrical construction, say an augmented triad, resolves tonally, then it is the tonal form; if not, and if the chord is used structurally (such as in a major-third cycle), then it is the atonal form.<sup>70</sup> He rages against the teachers of traditional harmony who regard these chords only as altered forms of diatonic structures:

<sup>69</sup>In Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821), the keys of the Wolf's Glen scene are based on a diminished seventh chord (F-sharp minor at the opening-C minor at m. 50-E-flat major at m. 102-A minor at m. 236-C minor at m. 247-F-sharp min at m. 412); in addition, from measure 389, rising keys C, D, E, F-sharp, A-flat form a whole-tone pattern. Rossini's use of third-relations is discussed in Rothstein, "Common-tone Tonality," §6: "in chromatic third-relations it was Rossini who set the pattern for the rest of Europe to follow." Verdi also used interval cycles of thirds, as Rothstein notes, §49: "Some operas, such as *Macbeth* (1847, rev. 1865) and *Simon Boccanegra* (1857, rev. 1881), rely on major-third cycles and their associated hexatonic systems for their principal keys, each of which may have clear dramatic associations." Bribitzer-Stull has even found an underlying large-scale C-A-flat-E-C structure in the Act II finale of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, "The A-flat-C-E Complex: The Origin and Function of Chromatic Major Third Collections in Nineteenth-Century Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 28/2 (Fall 2006): 175.

<sup>70</sup>Alaleona describes this in quite colorful terms in "L'armonia modernissima," 771: "The scale and the chord of each system can be presented in two forms, one tonal form, the other atonal, in respect to classical tonality. In the first form, the component pitches of the system [...] avidly fling themselves toward the cadential axis of that tonality toward which in that moment love takes them—since all these phonic orders have the characteristic of being able to belong to several keys." [La scala e l'accordo di ciascun sistema si possono presentare in due forme: in una forma tonale e in una forma atonale, rispetto alle tonalità classiche. Nella prima forma i suoni componenti il sistema...si precipitano avidamente sull'asse cadenzale di quella tonalità verso cui in quel momento—poiché tutti questi ordini fonici hanno la caratteristica di potere appartenere a più tonalità—amor li porta.]

Traditional harmony has considered biphony, triphony and tetraphony [...] only from the harmonic point of view, and even from this vantage point, it has limited its examination to a most restrictive sphere. That is, it considered the chords related to these systems as incomplete forms or alterations of diatonic chords [...] a very grave aesthetic error, understandable given the vicissitudes of harmonic theory and the mentality of the schools of harmony that do not know how to detach themselves from the past, but [an error] that alters and greatly decreases the sphere in which these chords are to be considered.<sup>71</sup>

There are many instances in Puccini's works of equal divisions of the octave, most notably the tritone, the augmented triad and the whole-tone scale, which were duly noted by the composer's contemporaries. The third one-act opera in the *Trittico*—*Gianni Schicchi*—even shows parallel complexes combining both whole-tone scales (WT0 and WT1) [Ex. 1.6]. This passage exemplifies Alaleona's "dodecaphony."

Ex. 1.6: *Gianni Schicchi*, reh. 81, two whole-tone sets, or "dodecafonia"

Often, however, Puccini does resolve them into an underlying tonal structure—Alaleona's "tonal form." The whole-tone sonorities at the conclusions of *Manon Lescaut*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Fanciulla*, for example, all move to the tonic, as if they were harmonic "problems" requiring and receiving solutions. The end of *Manon*, preceding the closing reiterations of the heroine's theme, shows a superficial use of the whole-tone complex: here, substituting for a dominant, it resolves to a more fundamental tonal structure, a passage Alaleona would consider a "tonal" use of the hexaphonic resource. [Ex. 1.7]

<sup>71</sup>[L'armonia tradizionale ha considerato la bifonia, la trifonia e la tetrafonia [...] soltanto dal punto di vista armonico, e anche da questo punto di vista essa ha limitato l'occhio a una sfera ristrettissima: ha considerato cioè gli accordi relativi a questi sistemi come forme incomplete o alterazioni di accordi diatonici [...] un gravissimo errore estetico, spiegabile nelle vicende della teoria armonica e nella mentalità delle scuole di armonia che non sa distaccarsi dal passato, ma che altera e impiccolisce grandemente la cerchia in cui tali accordi vanno considerati.] Alaleona, "I moderni orizzonti," 394.

Ex. 1.7: *Manon Lescaut*, Act III, conclusion

whole-tone

*ppp* *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff* [...]

[Manon's theme] [Manon's theme]

F# minor

The question of resolution is not so straightforward, however. In *Tosca*, which premièred in 1900, the opening “prelude” (as Puccini labeled just the first three chords) consists of major chords on B-flat, A-flat and E, which, while diatonic in themselves, belong to no single diatonic collection. In fact, they are aligned along a whole-tone axis (hexaphony, in Aleona’s terminology). As if to emphasize the “atonal” nature of this musical statement, Puccini notated it in the autograph score without a key signature, as he did in the sketched keyboard version reproduced in Ex. I.1. It would seem, then, that this gesture does not resolve. However, as Example 1.8 shows, at the conclusion of this opera’s first act, the prelude’s “atonal” passage is shown transposed down a tritone, filling in more of the whole-tone scale in the bass line. This results in B-flat-A-flat-E/E-D-B-flat, which can be seen to prolong the dominant B-flat—ultimately a diatonic move that then resolves to E-flat major. (These nested layers of diatonic and non-diatonic structures are explored further in Chapter 2 as examples of *direct conflation*.)

Ex. 1.8: *Tosca*, Act I, conclusion

*tutta forza*

B $\flat$  A $\flat$  E E D B $\flat$  B $\flat$ <sup>dom7</sup> E $\flat$

V<sup>7</sup> I

In his second article, Aleona searches for a way to describe the “atonal” manner in which the equal divisions of the octave function, and he concludes that these “neutral tonalities” entail a suspension of key perception, comparable to the effect that a fermata has on

meter and rhythm.<sup>72</sup> He then lists various moods or states of being with which these atonal forms have been used to correspond: enchantment, infantilization, desperation, abandon, ecstasy, nightmare, delirium, madness, annihilation, despondency, drowsiness, dream, and bliss. But he eventually decides on one general term that will cover all the emotions displayed by the neutral tonalities, which is—not astonishingly—“astonishment.”<sup>73</sup>

Alaleona viewed the neutral tonalities as atonal because they imply not one key but reference several. Yet he believed that to compose in either an all-tonal or all-atonal idiom robbed the piece of contrast, that the preferred use of atonality is *within* the context of tonality. He even writes that completely whole-tone pieces, for example, are boring and monochromatic: “all the fascination, all the exquisiteness, all the artistic and expressive potential of our systems is in the gradual passage of the sonic arrangements from one to another of the tonalities they could approach”<sup>74</sup> and, “certain pieces rich in beautiful modulations and tone passages produce in me a dazzling, exquisite sensation of colors and nuances. [...] The music of Debussy seems monochrome or nearly so [...] the effect is without doubt characteristic and pleasant, but very [...] monotonous and limited.”<sup>75</sup> Puccini agreed and did so in almost the same terms. Witness his assessment of Debussy’s only opera: “*Pelléas et Mélisande* of Debussy has extraordinary harmonic qualities

<sup>72</sup>Alaleona, “L’armonia modernissima,” 797. “For tonalities and for tonal perception, the neutral tonalities can occupy a position analogous to that of the suspension, called the fermata, for rhythm and rhythmic perception.” [Per le tonalità e per il senso tonale le tonalità neutre possono occupare una posizione analoga di ciò che per il ritmo e il senso ritmico è la sospensione, la cosiddetta corona.]

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 798. “My sentiment has taken me to use the word “astonishment” to embrace largely all these states of being, different from each other, but all reducible to one single fundamental sense; and to call “the art of astonishment” the art based on the neutral tonalities is the typical, natural expression of these states of being.” [Il mio sentimento mi ha portato ad usare la parola stupore per abbracciare largamente tutti questi stati d’animo, diversi tra loro, ma tutti riducendosi ad uno stesso senso fondamentale: ed a chiamare “arte di stupore” l’arte basata sulle tonalità neutre, che di questi stati d’animo sono la propria, natural espressione.]

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 779. [Tutto il fascino, tutta la squisitezza, tutta la potenza espressiva e artistica dei nostri sistemi sta nel passaggio graduale, degli ordini sonori risultantine, da un ad un’altra delle tonalità cui possono accedere.]

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 831. [Certi pezzi ricchi di belle modulazioni e passaggio di tono [...] producono in me una smagliante, squisita sensazione di colori e di sfumature [...] La musica del Debussy a me produce l’impressione di monocromia o quasi [...] l’effetto è senza dubbio caratteristico e simpatico, ma assai [...] monotono e limitato.]

and diaphanous instrumental sensations. It is truly interesting, despite its somber color, as uniform as a franciscan habit.”<sup>76</sup>

Alaleona puts great stock in musical structure, however, not just in the surface use of new harmonies, and he criticizes composers for having a taste for “neolalia,” the search for novelty as an end in itself.<sup>77</sup> In fact, in the one citation of Puccini’s music in Alaleona’s articles, he criticizes the composer for using the equal division of the octave only ornamentally, and not “poetically,” by which he means structurally.<sup>78</sup> In regard to a simultaneous sounding of a whole-tone complex on C from *Fanciulla*, Alaleona writes: “Let Puccini use this chord poetically, instead of in an ornamental, decorative position, and he will see what sort of effect he can draw from it.”<sup>79</sup> If Puccini’s music were to make use of the “neutral tonalities” in a more structural manner, then it would meet Alaleona’s standard and clear his more restrictive hurdle of atonality.

Puccini does indeed utilize these symmetrical, “atonal” elements as structural scaffolding as well as in surface-level inflections, as corroborated here by brief examples spanning his entire career.

<sup>76</sup>Letter from Puccini to Giulio Ricordi, 15 November 1906. Adami, *Epistolario*, 100. [*Pelléas et Mélisande* di Debussy ha qualità straordinarie di armonie e sensazioni diafane strumentali. È veramente interessante, malgrado il suo colore sombre, uniforme come un abito francescano.] During his lifetime, Puccini was often compared to Debussy because both composers made use of whole-tone collections and non-traditional harmonies. One contemporary review of *Fanciulla* from the 1910 première in New York noted:

“It is quite true that Debussy holds no copyright upon augmented intervals, whole-tone melodic progressions, and certain sequences of ‘ninth’ chords; but it is nevertheless a fact, unfortunate for Puccini, that certain harmonic combinations, certain ways of grouping particular chords, certain ways of threading a melodic line, have become unalterably associated in the minds of experienced observers with the original and exquisite genius who gave the world a new order of music.” Lawrence Gilman, “The World of Music: Puccini’s American Opera” *Harper’s Weekly*, 17 December 1910.

<sup>77</sup>Alaleona, “I moderni orizzonti,” 227. Strangely enough, Adorno, writing in 1947, agrees with him: “Generally, all artistic means that were originally conceived for their stimulating effect rather than for their structural significance grow threadbare and obsolete with extraordinary rapidity.” Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler. *Composing for the Films*. London: The Athlone Press, 1994 ed. [original edition 1947], 17.

<sup>78</sup>Alaleona’s verbal opposition of “poetic” and “ornamental” implies that he is using the former term in its sense of “relating to creation,” implying “structural.” This interpretation is seconded in Sanguinetti, “Puccini’s Music,” 231.

<sup>79</sup>Alaleona, “L’armonia modernissima,” 821. [Usi il Puccini questi accordi, invece che in posizione accessoria e decorativa, poeticamente, e vedrà che altro effetto ne trarrà.] Alaleona admits here that he only knows *Fanciulla* from a single, recent hearing at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome.

*Le villi*, I, number 5, contains a shift of a tritone from E-flat major to A minor: a structural use of Alaleona's "biphony." [Ex. 1.9]

Ex. 1.9: *Le villi*, Act I, n. 5, tritone shift

Example 1.9: *Le villi*, Act I, n. 5, tritone shift

The musical score for Example 1.9 is presented in two systems. The first system shows a piano (pp) section in E-flat major, with a tritone shift indicated by a bracket and the label 'Eb'. The second system shows a forte (f) section in A minor, with a tritone shift indicated by a bracket and the label 'A'. The score is in 3/4 time and features a complex harmonic structure with multiple tritones and chromatic movement.

In Puccini's second opera, *Edgar*, first produced in 1889, we can find a composing-out of both an augmented triad (major-third cycle) [Ex. 1.10a] and a diminished seventh chord (minor-third cycle) [Ex. 1.10b],<sup>80</sup> structural instances of Alaleona's triphony and tetraphony.<sup>81</sup>

Ex. 1.10

a) *Edgar*, original version, Act II, sc. 4, major-third cycle E-C-A-flat

The musical score for Example 1.10a is presented in two systems. The first system shows a piano section in E-flat major, with a major-third cycle (E-C-A-flat) indicated by a bracket and the label 'E-flat'. The second system shows a piano section in A-flat major, with a major-third cycle (E-C-A-flat) indicated by a bracket and the label 'C-flat'. The score is in 3/4 time and features a complex harmonic structure with multiple tritones and chromatic movement.

<sup>80</sup>These larger-scale structures are known in Schenkerian analysis as "dissonant prolongations" a term coined by Robert P. Morgan in "Dissonant Prolongation: Theoretical and Compositional Precedents," *Journal of Music Theory* 20/1 (1976): 49-91.

<sup>81</sup>There is another major-third cycle in Act III of *Edgar*, at rehearsal number 45. Here the chromatic music first played in B-flat, rises to D and then to F-sharp.



b) *Edgar*, Act I/37-38, minor-third cycle

Since this minor-third cycle completes the octave, however, it could be considered a prolongation of pitch-class G, an ultimately diatonic structure. The score of *Manon Lescaut*, which had its première in 1893, also makes structural use of the major-third cycle on E-A-flat-C. [Ex. 1.11].

Ex. 1.11: *Manon Lescaut*, II/35/4, major-third cycle

With the 1910 *Fanciulla del West*, Puccini again employs the division of the octave into minor thirds, as well as ending the act on an unresolved C ninth chord. Here, the first iteration of Minnie's sequential theme is supported by a traditional harmonic progression of I-vi-ii-vii<sup>6</sup>/5-V-I. But the second time, it is transposed down by four minor thirds, outlining a complete minor-third cycle C-A-F-sharp-E-flat-C—Alaleona's tetrachord. [Ex. 1.12, next page] Notice again, however, that both the diatonic and “atonal” versions begin and end on C: so, despite the overlay of non-traditional harmonies and structures, this last passage can be seen to function as a prolongation of the tonic, as many traditional codas would.

*Madama Butterfly* contains what Alaleona would consider both tonal and atonal uses of the “neutral tonalities.” In the second act,<sup>82</sup> at II/83/0, there is a structural tritone shift from a D eleventh chord to G-sharp minor [Ex. 1.13a] but at the conclusion of the opera, in

<sup>82</sup>This score indication is in reference to the three-act Paris version of the opera.

Ex. 1.12: *La fanciulla del West*, Act I, conclusion: tonal then “atonal” structures with ninth chords.

The image displays four systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment, arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each system consists of a treble and bass staff. The first system is labeled with 'C: I<sup>o</sup>' below the bass staff, 'vi<sup>9</sup>' below the bass staff, and 'ii<sup>9</sup>' below the bass staff. The second system is labeled with 'vii<sup>9</sup>' below the bass staff, 'V<sup>13</sup>' below the bass staff, and 'I<sup>9</sup>' below the bass staff. A box labeled 'minor-third cycle' is drawn under the final measures of the second system. The third system has no labels. The fourth system has no labels. The notation includes various chords, including triads and dyads, and is connected by slurs.

which Pinkerton’s final cry “Butterfly!” is accompanied by a whole-tone theme, it is quickly “resolved” by the following tonal motion to B minor [Ex. 1.13b].

Yet, it is difficult to imagine what would be more astonishing, more shocking, to the audiences of 1904, than to hear an opera conclude without a definitive resolution to the tonic [Ex. 1.13c]. Although B minor is clearly implied, the final measures of the work show an unresolved 6-5 motion in which the upper G never resolves to F-sharp, which replaces the B minor with what appears to be G major in first inversion. This one unresolved note opens a door to atonality—in today’s sense—and is quite possibly the first opera to take this step.

## Ex. 1.13

a) *Madama Butterfly*, II/83/0, tritone shift D-G-sharp

Musical score for Ex. 1.13a, showing a tritone shift from D major to G# minor. The score is in 3/4 time and features a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The key signature changes from one sharp (D major) to two sharps (G# minor). The bass line shows a tritone shift from D<sup>11</sup> to G# minor.

b) *Madama Butterfly*, final scene, whole-tone resolves tonally

Musical score for Ex. 1.13b, showing a whole-tone resolution to B minor. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The key signature changes from one sharp (D major) to two sharps (B minor). The bass line shows a whole-tone resolution from D major to B minor.

c) *Madama Butterfly*, unresolved conclusion

Musical score for Ex. 1.13c, showing an unresolved conclusion. The score is in 2/4 time and features a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The key signature is B minor. The bass line shows an unresolved 6-5 motion, G to F#.

\*\*\*\*\*

Gay's description of "modernist composer who deliberately violates the traditional rules of harmony and counterpoint"<sup>83</sup> can also fit Puccini quite well. Behaving perhaps like one of the rebellious Bohemians he was depicting, the composer blatantly trumpets empty parallel fifths at the openings of both Act II (in five-bar phrases) and Act III of the 1896 *La bohème*, which had the added benefit of annoying critic Eduard Hanslick, Wagner's nemesis: "In the most diverse scenes arise columns of ascending and descending parallel fifths of such

<sup>83</sup>Gay, *Modernism*, 4.

obtrusive ugliness—preferably blared ‘marcatissimo’ by trumpets—that one asks oneself in vain what the composer wanted to accomplish with these rude monstrosities?<sup>84</sup> [Exx. 1.14a-b].

Ex. 1.14: *La bohème*, parallel fifths

a) Act II, opening

b) Act III, opening

Another characteristic frequently considered Modernist (as in the *locus classicus* of Modernism, Stravinsky’s *Le sacre du printemps*) is bitonality or polytonality. The dissonant pedal shown in Ex. 1.15, an excerpt from *Le villi* at II, number 7, looks forward to bitonality even as it recalls antecedents in tonal works—the dissonant pedal point is a common feature of Baroque keyboard works and can even be indicated with traditional figured bass numeration. It is also, however, a distinguishing feature of Puccini’s early sketch for the 1883 song “Ad una morta,” which he labeled “Alla Wagner” (Ex. 1.1).

Ex. 1.15: *Le villi*, Act II, number 7, dissonant pedal point

<sup>84</sup>[Da erheben sich in den verschiedensten Szenen Kolonnen auf- und niedersteigender paralleler Quinten von so aufbringlicher Hässlichkeit — am liebsten “marcatissimo” von Trompeten geblasen! — dass man sich vergebens fragt, was denn der Komponist mit diesen ungezogenen Scheufälchen bezwecken mochte?] Eduard Hanslick: “*Die moderne Oper*, VIII (Berlin, 1899), 81-3. Quoted in English translation in Groos and Parker, *Giacomo Puccini “La bohème*,” 134-5.

*Edgar* also shows hints of a proto-polytonality,<sup>85</sup> in scene 2 of Act III of the original version.<sup>86</sup> Here a B-F-sharp double pedal point underlies A-minor, G-major and C-major chords [Ex. 1.16a], which will be echoed in a riveting scene of the 1918 *Il tabarro* (rehearsal number 85), in which the main character, Michele, hears a distant trumpet; the quasi-bitonal clash in the second example is between an A-minor pedal and the B-flat major of the trumpet [Ex. 1.16b].

Ex. 1.16

a) *Edgar*, original version, Act III, scene 2, proto-polytonality

B-F# double pedal      A minor G major C major

b) *Il tabarro*, 85, bitonality

Bb major  
[trumpet heard in distance]  
A minor

And Puccini's final, incomplete opera *Turandot*, shows striking bitonality in its opening bars, when D minor clashes with C-sharp minor [Ex. 1.17, next page].

In one section of *Il tabarro*, at rehearsal number 84, we can see three Modernist characteristics almost simultaneously: the section opens with open parallel fourths over E-flat, which abruptly end in a tritone shift to A minor. This then is adorned with a C-major tune in a bitonal combination [Ex. 1.18].

<sup>85</sup>As noted previously, we use the terms “proto-bitonality” and “proto-polytonality” to indicate the superimposition of elements from different diatonic collections, without a larger-scale establishment of those keys.

<sup>86</sup>The revised version of *Edgar*, at the parallel moment (III/22/0), shows the dissonant pedal B below C major, but then moving to F-sharp 7 and B major: in other words, a much more traditional passage of flat-II6-V7-I over a tonic pedal.

Ex. 1.17: *Turandot*, Act I, opening with bitonality

Example 1.17

The musical score for Example 1.17 consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system is marked *fff* and shows a complex bitonal texture with multiple layers of chords and moving lines. The second system continues this texture and includes specific harmonic labels: *C# major*, *E# = F*, and *D minor*.

Ex. 1.18: *Il tabarro*, 84, parallels, tritone shift, bitonality

The musical score for Example 1.18 shows piano accompaniment for *Il tabarro*, Act I, measure 84. The score is characterized by parallel fourths and a tritone shift. The tempo is marked *Lento molto* and the dynamic is *ppp*. Harmonic labels include *Eb major*, *A minor*, and *C major*. The phrase "Bocca di rosa fresca" is indicated in the score.

Despite these Modernist touches, Puccini allies himself with tonal composers when confronted by unambiguously atonal music: after hearing *Pierrot Lunaire* in 1924, he told Marotti: “If one day—who knows how many thousands of centuries from now—the auditory organ and the nervous system that connects it will have undergone a radical transformation, then it may also be that this music will be well accepted, while our tonal system with its related chromatic superstructure, will become repellent.”<sup>87</sup> In short, he knew he was not

<sup>87</sup>[Se un giorno, non sappiamo fra quante migliaia di secoli, l’organo auditivo e il sistema nervoso che vi si connette avranno subito una radicale trasformazione, allora potrebbe anche darsi che cotesta musica fosse bene accetta, mentre quella nostra del sistema tonale, e relativa superstruttura cromatica, potrà diventare repellente.] Marotti, “Incontri”: 56.

wholly part of that future world, and would remain with at least one foot firmly planted in the diatonic system.

And if Modernism entails iconoclasm, one might wonder how to reconcile Puccini's rebellious bent with his pursuit of commercial success (handily achieved). A partial answer comes from examining the nature of contemporary audiences: opera was, and to some extent remains, a popular medium in Italy, whose adherents often thirsted for innovation and eagerly paid for tickets to see the latest opus. As Puccini wrote to Valentino Soldani on 28 June 1904: "One must surprise this blessed public presenting it with a prey more modernly original and with new developments."<sup>88</sup> Put another way, the artist must be heretical because heresy is conventional. Puccini's iconoclasm was thus part of an artistically accepted career path—the Tradition of the New, as Richard Taruskin has disparagingly called it<sup>89</sup>—which Stravinsky, Schoenberg and other acknowledged Modernists have followed.

In the end, then, we are left with complex and compound results. If we judge Puccini by Alaleona's standards, he is sometimes an atonal composer and sometimes not. Further, the Modernism of Puccini's operas complements—and puts into relief—his many traditionally tonal passages. One solution could be to replace the atonal/tonal binary opposition with a graduated scale. As Richard Cohn suggests, "habits of thought tend to obstruct our ability to conceive of a composition as combining segments that are coherently tonal with others that are not. One such habit is the hypostasization of the tonal/atonal binary at the level of the composition," which, he adds, is giving way to "alternate paths."<sup>90</sup>

One of these alternate paths is the one carved out by Andrew Davis, who traces the interplay of Puccini's different "styles" and derives much meaning from their juxtaposition.<sup>91</sup>

But the dichotomy of traditional and progressive elements plays out in almost every parameter of Puccini's output in each of his operas, as we shall soon see—not just in musical styles.

<sup>88</sup>[Bisogna sorprendere questo benedetto pubblico presentando a lui una preda più modernamente originale e di sviluppo nuovo.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 277.

<sup>89</sup>Richard Taruskin, "A Myth of the Twentieth Century: *The Rite of Spring*, the Tradition of the New, and 'The Music Itself'" *Modernism/Modernity* 2.1 (1995): 1-26.

<sup>90</sup>Richard Cohn, "An Introduction to Neo-Riemannian Theory: A Survey and Historical Perspective", *Journal of Music Theory*, 42/2 (1998), 168.

<sup>91</sup>Davis, *Il Tritico*.

In the end, it is the composer himself, in unpublished interview notes written sometime around 1915, who supplies the best description of his aesthetic: “Let us indeed keep in mind all the harmonic and technical progresses that arrive from beyond the mountains and the seas, but let us keep the clarity, the spontaneity and the simplicity that characterize our music.”<sup>92</sup> Almost an echo of his schoolboy dreams.

<sup>92</sup> [Facciamo pure tesoro di tutti i progressi armonici e tecnici che ci arrivano d’oltre monte e d’oltre mare ma conserviamo la chiarezza la spontaneità e la semplicità che caratterizzano la nostra musica.] Frederick R. Koch Collection, Beinecke. Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, N. 734, 5.



## Chapter 2

# Hidden harmonies and pitch resources

“Gli enigmi sono tre”<sup>1</sup>

*Turandot*, Act II, scene 2

The three musical puzzles that most often impede analyses of Puccini’s music (if and when they are attempted) are passages that sound strikingly dissonant (even atonal) and yet seem to cohere in a familiar, even traditional manner; his so-called “bass-less” melodies; and the strings of nonfunctional harmonies linked together by invariant pitch classes. As we examine Puccini’s pitch-related “trademarks” in this chapter, we will find that the “solution” to each of these riddles involves the discovery of hidden or suppressed elements, and the untangling of interwoven traditional and progressive modes of composition. In addition to examining the “what” of Puccini’s musical language, we will also look here at the “how”—that is, his means of combining the more basic elements. And, occasionally, the territory of “why” may be broached, searching for hermeneutic interpretations for particular compositional features.

William Drabkin has written, “the analyst’s task is [...] to penetrate the surface of the score, and to discover the true basis of its musical integrity.” Although he denies in Puccini “a governing system of elements of what one may wish to call a steadily maturing ‘personal style,’”<sup>2</sup> we offer here means of understanding the composer’s pitch-related materials that encompasses all his operatic works. In short, we turn our attention to that which has been “disguised” in the variegated surfaces of the each opus, and attempting to truly penetrate, as Drabkin suggests we do, the inner workings of the composer’s technique— aspects that Puccini, the deft musical magician, employs behind the scenes.

<sup>1</sup>[the riddles are three] The libretto is by Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni.

<sup>2</sup>Drabkin, “The musical language of *La bohème*”, 101.

## riddle 1

When René Leibowitz writes, “Puccini had to be the man in whom the antithetical elements of Verdi and Wagner would have found their true synthesis,”<sup>3</sup> he seems to refer not only to historical influences but to compositional approaches that were, in the context of an Italian Verdi vs. Wagner culture war, often generalized as traditional and progressive. In reality, Verdi was innovative in many respects—as Hepokoski writes, “By pursuing ‘the fusion of genres’ in the 1840s and early 1850s [...] [Verdi] was labouring to erect an image of himself as a Romantic progressive”<sup>4</sup>—and Wagner was no stranger to ancient traditions. One should be cognizant too that the then-current view of music history as artistic “progress” is a questionable axiom at best. Nevertheless, this synecdochal binary opposition had currency in Puccini’s time and can be a useful entry point for exploring the compound nature of Puccini’s music, even as it evolved into a debate over native vs. foreign styles.

Traditional and progressive structures can be found intertwined in Puccini’s music by what we term *direct* and *indirect conflation*.<sup>5</sup> Sub-types of these will be labeled *indossi* and *innesti*. “Indosso,” one of Puccini’s neologisms, is the superimposition of diatonic and non-diatonic elements and will be explored more below; “innesto” means “graft” and is used here to refer to the parenthetical insertion of material in a contrasting context. The term derives from a letter from Puccini to Riccardo Schnabl that reads, “*Turandot* is sleeping. It lacks a big aria in the second act. I need to graft it in.”<sup>6</sup> In this section, we explore various means by which these are employed and how they can work toward creating a sense of quasi-tonal coherence in very dissonant passages—the first riddle.

Let us begin with *indirect conflation*. The clearest juxtapositions of diverse elements occur on the musical surface by the abutment of contrasting styles at the level of the scene. After the rise of the curtain

<sup>3</sup>Leibowitz, “L’arte di Giacomo Puccini”: 7. [Giacomo Puccini doveva essere l’uomo in cui gli elementi antitetici di Verdi e di Wagner avrebbero trovato la vera sintesi.]

<sup>4</sup>James A. Hepokoski, “Genre and content in mid-century Verdi: ‘Addio del passato’ (*La traviata*, Act III).” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1/3 (November 1989): 254-5.

<sup>5</sup>The related concept of *superimposition* has been applied recently to Stravinsky’s music by Dmitri Tymoczko in “Stravinsky and the Octatonic: A Reconsideration” *Music Theory Spectrum* 24/1 (Spring 2002): 68-102.

<sup>6</sup>[*Turandot* dorme: ci vuole una grande aria al secondo, bisogna innestarla.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 530.

at the opening of *Tosca*, for example, we hear extremely dissonant, disconnected harmonies, parallel tritones (at I/1/0), and irregular phrase lengths that illustrate the fear and desperation of the escaped prisoner Angelotti. Just a few moments later, however, at I/6/3, when Angelotti hides and the Sacristan enters, we hear an “Allegretto grazioso” set to a regular 6/8 meter, in pure C major. It is difficult to imagine greater contrast. Davis has examined Puccini’s last four operas in light of this juxtaposition of styles—*stylistic plurality* is his well-chosen term:

Much of Puccini’s late music [...] proceeds according to a series of discrete episodes, each articulated with a discrete style and each contrasting with neighboring episodes in such a way to produce obvious musical seams.<sup>7</sup>

We would add that contrasting discrete episodes occur in the composer’s earlier operas as well.

If we shrink the scrutinized units of *indirect conflation* to more localized ones, we arrive at what has been labeled Puccini’s “mosaic” technique by numerous scholars and critics. Typical is Ashbrook’s statement: “With *La Bohème*, Puccini began to use a lapidary technique, constructing an act of carefully wrought and contrasting details, building up a musical mosaic.”<sup>8</sup> An exemplar of the technique as used in *La bohème* occurs in at I/25/0: the Bohèmes have departed, with a close in the key of G-flat major and, as Rodolfo begins to write, the key changes to B major with a new, graceful tune that might indicate his “flowery” thoughts; but this ends abruptly on the dominant, as he puts down his pen and declares in recitative style “I’m not in the mood.” [Non sono in vena.] Immediately after, Mimì knocks and we hear her motive in D major. In sum, there have been three different musical moments, in three different keys, within a very short space of time, at a distance shorter than a scene. While there are antecedents for this type of quick-change effect in both the Italian and German repertoires, the ubiquitous use of discrete fragments in Puccini’s work is what caught the attention of critics and audiences at the time.<sup>9</sup>

The “mosaic” metaphor has a long and rather critical history, in part because the technique thwarted traditional expectations of

<sup>7</sup>Davis, *Il Tritico*, 21. Davis focuses this observation mostly on formal issues.

<sup>8</sup>William Ashbrook. *The Operas of Puccini* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1968, rev. 1985, 216.

<sup>9</sup>Verdian reminiscence themes and Wagnerian Leitmotifs can both appear as fragments, and brief thematic references are also apparent in many recitatives. One interesting earlier example is Mozart’s incomplete foreshadowing of the theme from “Non mi dir” during the prior recitative n. 23 “Crudele?” from *Don Giovanni*.

clearly defined set-pieces. As Michele Virgilio noted in 1900, “the whole of this first part of *Tosca* makes me feel as though I am looking at a mosaic made by a craftsman without a pre-arranged design!”<sup>10</sup> Even Hanslick complained, about *La bohème*, “The basic feeling of the whole, continually broken up, is thus dissipated in noisy, nervous details.”<sup>11</sup> Puccini was defended in those days by Gino Monaldi, among others, who railed against the charge of mosaicism: “Such a system as Puccini employs [is] never, in any way, the assemblage of small detached pieces, skillfully superimposed and cemented together.”<sup>12</sup> Puccini’s technique clearly does utilize small fragments (but not alone), and it is the flexibility of this “mosaic” technique that allows the score to more closely shadow the swiftly changing dramatic narrative.

Another sort of *indirect conflation* is what we have termed *projection*: a subsequent mapping of a recognizable melodic/intervallic string onto a new pitch-class collection. An elementary—and completely traditional—example of this type of motivic development would be a major theme repeated in the minor mode, as occurs in *Le villi* at I/11/0 and II/47/0 (see Exx. 4.11a-b). More sophisticated types of *projection*, from one collection to another, have been noted in the music of some of Puccini’s near-contemporaries, notably that of Debussy and Stravinsky.<sup>13</sup> In 1943, Béla Bartók described the transformation of chromatic patterns into diatonic ones “extension in range.” As he put it, “the succession of chromatic degrees is extended by leveling them over a diatonic terrain.”<sup>14</sup> In recent years, Matthew Santa has formalized these types of transformation by performing operations on scale degrees, which he terms “step classes,” that can map onto new positions in a destination collection.

<sup>10</sup>Michele Virgilio, *Della decadenza dell'opera in Italia: a proposito di 'Tosca'* (Milan: Gattinoni, 1900), 28. Quoted in Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*, 86.

<sup>11</sup>Hanslick, “*Die moderne Oper*,” 81-3. Quoted in English translation in Groos and Parker. *Giacomo Puccini “La bohème,”* 134-5. [allergewöhnlichsten Dinge] and [Alles zersplittert sich in kleinste Stücke und Stückchen; die überschauende und zusammenfassende Kraft, ohne welche es in der Musik keine echte Wirkung giebt, fehlt gänzlich. [...]] Die Grundempfindung des Ganzen, unaufhörlich zerrissen, zerflattert dergestalt in lauter nervösen Details.]

<sup>12</sup>Gino Monaldi, *Il popolo romano* (24 February 1896). Quoted in English translation in Wilson, *The Puccini problem*, 53.

<sup>13</sup>See David Lewin, *Musical Form and Transformation: 4 Analytic Essays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 97-159, on Debussy’s “Feux d’artifice,” and Matthew Santa, “Defining Modular Transformation,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 21/2 (Autumn, 1999): 200-29. The term “projection” is not used, however.

<sup>14</sup>Béla Bartók, “Harvard Lectures,” in *Béla Bartók Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976), 381. Quoted in Santa, “Defining Modular Transformations”: 200.

Puccini's third opera, *Manon Lescaut*, offers a few examples of *projection*. As seen in Ex. 6.3a, scale degrees  $\hat{3}$ ,  $\hat{4}$ ,  $\hat{5}$ , and  $\hat{2}$  of the original G-major diatonic theme [D-C-B-A] representing the heroine have been projected at IV/4/13 onto the chromatic aggregate, using G as 0, and transposed up two semitones. In Ex. 6.3b, the first three pitches of the original melody have been mapped at IV/17/1 onto the whole-tone collection.<sup>15</sup> Here, scale degrees  $\hat{3}$ ,  $\hat{4}$  and  $\hat{5}$  (step classes 4, 3 and 2) remain unchanged in the destination collection, as E-flat, D-flat and C-flat are step classes 4, 3, and 2 of the whole-tone scale on G. In Santa's terminology, Manon's theme would be transformed in Ex. 6.3a with the operation MODTRANS ( $7^1$ , 12, G) T2, and in Ex. 6.3b with the operation MODTRANS ( $7^1$ , 6, G).

In *Madama Butterfly*, we can individuate several instances of *projection*. At II/2/5, as shown in Ex. 9.3, the second act's opening fugal theme is heard in C-sharp major, and then projected onto the whole-tone scale at the second and third entrances. And at II/18/13, the *Star-Spangled Banner* is projected onto A minor. In *La fanciulla del West*, at III/19/4, we hear a D-minor motive in the orchestra repeated three times before becoming projected (and transposed) onto the whole-tone collection. [Exx. 2.0a-b]

Ex. 2.0

a) *La fanciulla del West*, III/19/4

b) *La fanciulla del West*, III/19/10

<sup>15</sup>In Ex. 6.3b, although all four pitches of the melody alone could also be heard as scale degrees  $\hat{4}$ ,  $-$ ,  $\hat{5}$  and  $\hat{2}$  of E-flat melodic minor, the augmented triads supporting them give weight to the whole-tone interpretation.

As one can see from the above examples, the two (or more) iterations of the pattern do not need to be heard in immediate sequence (which would qualify the *indirect conflation* also as an *innesto*) but they can refer to each other over spans of time: a basic leitmotivic technique.

One manifestation of *direct* (rather than *indirect*) *conflation* is *layering*. No doubt inspired by Wagner's layers of Leitmotivs, this is what Leukel names *Schichten*, and Conati calls "synchronic planes" [*piani sincronici*], in reference to *Il trittico*.<sup>16</sup> Not the layers of a Schenkerian analysis, these usually represent multifocal moments that usually carry implications of bitonality/polytonality, and which extend over time. Any of the examples of polytonality cited previously would show evidence of *layering*.

The Puccinian neologism, *indosso*, derives from an even more localized investigation of the score at the level of individual sonorities or short passages. In some unpublished notes for an interview sometime during the creation of *La rondine*, Puccini attempted to affirm his Italian roots:

In art I always followed a great line of Italianness [...] And those like me who have always felt, and still feel, in an Italian way can only deplore an academic trend or *indosso*.<sup>17</sup>

Looking past the nationalist sentiments—this was written during World War I when Germany and Italy were on opposite sides, and when Puccini had recently been attacked by Fausto Torrefranca for his lack of *italianità*<sup>18</sup>—and the disparaging connotation he gives to the term

<sup>16</sup>Jürgen Leukel *Studien zu Puccinis 'Il Trittico': Il Tabarro-Suor Angelica-Gianni Schicchi* (Munich: Katzbichler, 1983). On pages 65ff, Leukel discusses Puccini's use of layering, pedal point and their relation to bitonality. Marcello Conati, "Lettura del *Tabarro* di Giacomo Puccini," in "*Il tabarro*" di Giacomo Puccini. *Il Maestro a Pescaglia, atti della Prima Giornata Pucciniana: Monsagrati di Pescaglia, Villa Mansi, 15 settembre 2002*, ed. Michele Bianchi (Lucca: Promolucca editrice, 2003), 146-60. A revised version of this was published as "Il *Tabarro* ovvero la "solita" insolita forma," *Studi pucciniani* 3 (2004): 265-81.

<sup>17</sup>Frederick R. Koch Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. [Io in arte ho sempre seguito un grande linea di italianità [...]E coloro che come me Italianamente hanno sempre sentito e sentono non possono che deplorare un andazzo o indosso scolastico.]

<sup>18</sup>Fausto Torrefranca's diatribe against Puccini is entitled *Giacomo Puccini e l'opera internazionale* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1912). Budden describes him as: "chief spokesman for what has become known as the 'generazione dell'ottanta,' a group of composers born in the 1880s comprising Alfredo Casella, Gian Francesco Malipiero, and Ildebrando Pizzetti, who set out to recover the glories of Italy's instrumental past and who regarded the 'giovane scuola' as a millstone around the nation's neck. For Torrefranca opera was by its nature inferior to symphony and sonata [...] reaching its nadir in the works of Puccini, which typify the cynical commercialism of modern bourgeois society." Budden, *Puccini*, 336-7.

“indosso,” the composer is giving us a glimpse of an important aspect of his compositional outlook. The word “indosso” does not exist in the dictionary, but carries the sense of “clothing,” as “indossare” means “to wear.” So, to rephrase Puccini’s statement, foreign harmonic and technical “academic” innovations would be “worn” over Italian [inner] clarity, spontaneity and simplicity.

Here, we interpret Puccini’s “indosso” in a technical way to refer to a type of *direct conflation* of musical elements in which a simple tonal or traditional framework is transformed with complex, even non-tonal, qualities. A compound is then formed in which one is embedded in the other. Sometimes there are multiple levels of conflation, as in Ex. I.0, the prelude from *Tosca*, in which diatonic chords are placed along a whole-tone axis, which itself ultimately resolves tonally. Another instance of this embedded merging can be seen in Butterfly’s entrance music at I/39/0, shown in Exx. 9.8a-d. Here, it is possible to view the passage as a simple sequential schema adorned with “modernisms”: a diatonic 5-6 sequence in A-flat major is *projected* onto the A-flat whole-tone scale, then chromatic passing tones that create secondary dominants are inserted, and finally additional chromatic passing tones are included in the middle voice creating augmented triads.

As time progressed, Puccini’s “indossi” became increasingly prevalent and complex, more like disguises than mere clothing. Thus, in *Turandot* at III/26/15, just before the desperate Liù’s aria “Tu che di gel sei cinta,” a very dissonant, descending passage is heard that contains parallel tritones in the lowest line and complex chordal structures above (half-diminished sevenths, a fully diminished seventh, and a French augmented sixth, connected by passing whole-tone sonorities).<sup>19</sup> To top it off, the chromatic “Sehnsucht” motive from *Tristan* is heard as well before the entire complex resolves to B-flat major. The intermediate chords are also examples of set class (026), which is so common in Puccini that we have termed it his “signature.” [Ex. 2.1a, next page] If we remove these *indossi* and the chromatic passing tones, however, what remains is a simple sequence of diatonic parallel tenths [Ex. 2.1b, next page].

At a similar moment in *Tosca*, at I/4/9, a desperate Angelotti searches for a life-saving key to very similar strains. Here, the surface of the music presents descending parallel dominant 4/2s (on E, D and C) with chromatic neighbor and passing notes, which flow into a whole-

<sup>19</sup>The whole-tone sonorities are laid out in a manner referred to below as Puccini’s “signature”: a tritone plus a whole step—or set class (026) in post-tonal terminology.

tone line, ending on E. This passage can also be seen as an elaborated version of diatonic parallel descending tenths (or a fauxbourdon-like series of parallel 6/3 chords), and the entire motion, from E7 to E, as a prolongation of pitch-class E. [Ex. 2.1c]

## Ex. 2.1

a) *Turandot*, III/26/15

“signature” “signature” “signature” “Sehnsucht” motive

$f^7$   $a^4_3$   $Fr^6$   $Bb$  major

b) *Turandot*, III/26/15, simplified

10 10 10 10 10

c) *Tosca*, I/4/9<sup>20</sup>

$E^4$   $E$  major

Ex. 2.2a (next page) shows a passage in *Turandot*, at II/63/6, where the princess realizes she has been defeated, and begs the emperor to spare her. The surface of the music shows bitonal combination of D-flat minor+F-flat augmented (which could also be read as a D-flat minor-major seventh), followed by the same sonority transposed to B+D augmented, and A minor. The dissonances of the major sevenths

<sup>20</sup>The diamond-shaped note heads indicate the pitches forming the parallel tenths.



are palpable, as are the shifting chord centers. But underlying it is a simple stepwise descending pattern, D-flat (C-sharp) minor - B minor - A minor, with inserted “back-relating” minor dominants.<sup>21</sup> (Puccini’s father Michele, in his counterpoint treatise, gives similar patterns in the section labeled “movimenti del basso.”)<sup>22</sup> The passage also brings to mind an earlier Puccinian moment when another heroine faces a mortal crisis: in *Manon Lescaut*, at IV/9/19, just before “Sola, perduta, abbandonata” we have a similar descending line adorned with minor dominants, but without the Modernist harmonic *indossi* of the *Turandot* selection. [Ex. 2.2b]

Ex. 2.2

a) *Turandot*, II/63/6

The image shows a musical score for Ex. 2.2a, titled "a) Turandot, II/63/6". It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The bass line is the primary focus, showing a stepwise descent from a high note to a lower note. A bracket under the bass line is labeled "stepwise descent". The treble staff contains a melodic line with various ornaments and a long slur over the top.

b) *Manon Lescaut*, IV/9/19

The image shows a musical score for Ex. 2.2b, titled "b) Manon Lescaut, IV/9/19". It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The bass line is the primary focus, showing a stepwise descent from a high note to a lower note. A bracket under the bass line is labeled "stepwise descent". The treble staff contains a melodic line with various ornaments and a long slur over the top.

Puccini’s use of *indossi* is only one of the several ways that he combines the simple and the complex, the traditional and the progressive; occurring at a deep level of construction, *indossi* permit

<sup>21</sup>This is a Schenkerian term indicating the subordinate position of the dominants to the main stepwise motion.

<sup>22</sup>Michele Puccini, *Corso Pratico di Contrappunto* (1846), 3-4. These are transcribed in Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 161. See also Deborah Burton, “Michele Puccini’s Counterpoint Treatise” *Quaderni pucciniani* (1996): 173-81. There is no traditional “movimento del basso” that “rises a fifth and falls a sixth” perhaps because the performer would soon encounter a tritone in diatonic setting, between the seventh and fourth scale degrees. However, there is an ascending version—“rise a fifth and fall a fourth” [sale di quinta e cala di quarta]—that appears in Michele Puccini’s

the composer to employ musical innovations in ways that still follow established schemata, and, in effect, remain nominally within the tonal system.

The composer did leave a written clue that he thought in terms something like *direct* and *indirect conflation*: in a sketch for *Turandot*<sup>23</sup> under the heading “stacco per duettone” [interruption for the great duet], he wrote the following: “Nel villaggio but with chords and harmonized differently and modern movements and reprises and surprises, etc.” [Nel villaggio ma ad accordi e armonizzato diverso e movenze moderne e riprese e sorprese etc.] Here, “Nel villaggio” refers to Fidelia’s very diatonic aria from the third act of *Edgar*. In other words, he was planning to interrupt one passage with another (an *innesto*), and adorn the simple diatonic melody of the earlier work with new harmonies, rhythms, returns—and surprises (an *indosso*)<sup>24</sup> (A hypothetical rendering of this passage is given in Ex. 13.11b.) It is these underlying, simple schemata that, we believe, allow the most dissonant passages in Puccini’s music to be heard as coherent by a tonally oriented listener.

## *riddle 2*

The second of our mysteries, the “bass-less” progressions (that is, passages in which the outer voices move in parallel octaves) can be approached using the Schenkerian notion of prolongation. Especially instructive are cases where the composer reiterates the melody but with a varied, non-parallel bass. For example, at the beginning of the tenor aria “Ch’ella mi creda” from *La fanciulla*, at III/26/0, the outer voices are parallel, with I, III and V filled in with root-position chords. If it were not for the parallel voice leading, this progression would be a standard diatonic one. But at the repetition, Puccini writes a non-parallel, traditional functional bass line (I-vi-ii-V). [Exx. 2.3a-b, opposite]:

treatise and elsewhere.

<sup>23</sup>Ms. sketch 91.A.III.35, probably dating from January 1924. Dieter Schickling, *Giacomo Puccini: Catalogue of the Works* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2003), 377. The sketch is reproduced in Teodoro Celli, “Gli abbozzi per *Turandot*,” *Quaderni Pucciniani* (1985): 56.

<sup>24</sup>For a hypothetical realization of this passage, see Example 13.11b. Puccini regretted the failure of *Edgar*, and remnants of that score turn up in later works. The process of disguising previously written passages in the manner described here is an extension of the self-borrowing that is detailed in Giorgio Magri, “Una ricetta

## Ex. 2.3

a) *La fanciulla del West*, III/26/0

“Ch’el - la mi cre - da...”

parallel outer voices

Gb: I      III      V      I

b) *La fanciulla del West*, III/27/0

Gb: I      vi      ii      V      I

As in Ex. 1.12, the finale to Act I of this same opera, the composer is giving us two alternate paths to the same goal: but this time, traditional voice leading has been suppressed in the first case, while in the second it is present. In both versions of this passage, however, the tonic G-flat can be considered prolonged.

A slightly different case occurs in *Madama Butterfly*'s “Un bel di,” where the outer voices of the main theme are parallel and, in essence, descend a G-flat-major scale. As Baragwanath writes, “The main theme or motivo [...] [is] a vocal variation upon the scale, with the guiding line doubled at the octave below.”<sup>25</sup> At II/16/0 (the end of the aria), the theme is repeated over a tonic pedal point: the addition of the pedal point suggests more audibly that the tonic G-flat has been prolonged throughout the scalar passage. Not all of Puccini's “bass-less” melodies are reiterated in more clearly prolongational guises, but the cases in which they are could be seen to tip the composer's hand.

Many of Puccini's melodies are, like “Un bel di,” based on a simple diatonic scale doubled in the bass. This has been noted by both Drabkin, who, in regard to Mimi's “Sono andati,” invokes the Schenkerian octave (8-line) descent,<sup>26</sup> and Baragwanath, who relates

di Puccini: “rifritture da lavori precedenti” in *Critica pucciniana* (Lucca: Comitato Nazionale per le Onoranze a Giacomo Puccini, 1976) 69-93.

the technique to Puccini's early training in exercises such as the *rule of the octave*<sup>27</sup> and *solfeggi*. Both of these techniques constitute progressions that begin and end on tonic harmony and thus can be regarded as tonal prolongations within their endpoints. In Mimi's "Sono andati," the bass breaks its parallelism with the soprano at the penultimate chord to include an audible dominant-tonic motion, which implies even more of an underlying diatonic framework, and in turn suggests prolongation.

Baragwanath notes scalar patterns in "Sia per voi," and "O soave vision" from *Edgar*, and other arias, as emblematic of this traditional type of schema.<sup>28</sup> There are many other examples, such as in *La bohème*, at I/0/24, where we hear a rising scalar pattern of parallel 6/3 chords in C major—a sort of fauxbourdon—in the orchestra (repeated in F major at I/1/24).

Scale-based passages that would never pass muster as traditional rules of the octave are also prevalent. In *La rondine* at III/14/4 is a scalar passage in E major with parallel 5/3 chords (over a tonic pedal). In *Suor Angelica*, a D-major scale, extending from g<sup>2</sup> down to d<sup>1</sup> in the orchestral part only, is harmonized with parallel seventh chords over a dominant pedal. Earlier in the same opera, at 16/4, we hear two converging—and thus *non-parallel*—E-flat-major scalar passages, moving at different speeds, with one descending in the vocal line, the other ascending in the accompaniment, all over a held E-flat-major tonic pedal. [Ex. 2.4]

Ex. 2.4: *Suor Angelica*, 16/4

The musical score for Ex. 2.4 from *Suor Angelica*, 16/4, is presented in two staves. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (E-flat major), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line features a descending scalar passage, and the piano accompaniment features an ascending scalar passage. The piano accompaniment consists of parallel seventh chords over a tonic pedal.

<sup>25</sup>Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 270-1.

<sup>26</sup>Drabkin, "The musical language," 87-8.

<sup>27</sup>Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 268ff. The *rule of the octave* was a standard tool for theorizing and performing accompaniments, which appeared in Italy in the early eighteenth century and remained in use into Puccini's time. As Baragwanath writes: "It provided not only a series of closely related models for the harmonization of major and minor scales, ascending and descending, but also a hierarchy of scale

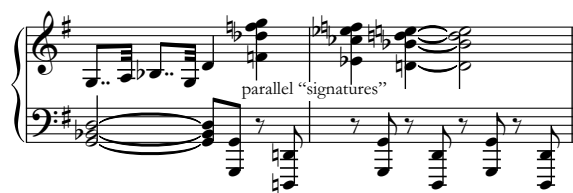
Puccini's parallel constructions, under which more standard musical progressions can often be hypothesized to subtend, are by far the most consistent element of his writing, and he came by them through the multiple roots of his musical ancestry. Puccini had surely absorbed the fauxbourdon technique of parallel 6/3 chords from his early education as an Italian church musician. And both Verdi and Wagner availed themselves of parallel constructions: Verdi wrote parallel 4/2s in *La forza del destino* and *Don Carlos*, and Wagner's "Magic Slumber" Leitmotiv from the *Ring* is formed from parallel triads. Further, motion by parallel chords, often referred to as "planing,"<sup>29</sup> is also seen as a staple of Modernism.

There is an enormous variety of parallels in Puccini's corpus of works. In Chapter 1 we noted examples of parallel triads and empty fifths in *La bohème*, to which we now add a small sampling of the many other sorts of parallels Puccini writes. In *La bohème*, at II/4/29 (and II/6/4), there are parallel half-diminished seventh chords rising chromatically [Ex. 2.5a]. *Madama Butterfly*, at II/65/0, contains a descending pattern of parallel ninth chords, along two whole-tone tetrachords: G-sharp-F-sharp-E-D / C-sharp-B-A-G. Parallel octaves on a whole-tone axis are embedded with parallel tritones at II/31/33 in *La rondine*. In *Il tabarro*, at 77/4 Puccini writes, over a tonic-dominant bass ostinato, a parallel string of whole-tone sonorities forming the set class (026) configuration that we have termed his "signature" [Ex. 2.5b, next page]. And in one remarkable passage of *Suor Angelica* marked "con agitazione" at 48/0, the Zia Principessa's anger grows and grows; as it does so, a single-line pattern (G-F-sharp-F-D-flat) becomes the subject of an almost canonic multiplication of sonorities that transforms the single line into parallel tritones, then parallel half-diminished sevenths, and finally parallel ninth chords—all over a mostly dissonant G pedal.

### Ex. 2.5

#### a) *La bohème*, II/4/29

degrees that, taken as a whole, served to define the key." Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 149.

b) *Il tabarro*, 77/4

Outer-voice parallelism seems essential to Puccini's style. We might conjecture, however, that in this texture a functional bass has been suppressed, and thus any "bass-less" accusations ignore *implied* harmonic function and prolongations.

### *riddle 3*

For all the complexity of Puccini's scores—filled with shifting tonalities, pedal points, and strings of unrelated harmonies—there are moments when all of that stops, and we hear only a clear unison. If layers of sound suggest a plurality of the signified, the unison fixes the attention on a single event or crucial bit of dialogue.<sup>30</sup> Sometimes those moments are solo arias, which Puccini often begins with unisons or single pitches. In these cases, the unisons function on a practical level to create a seamless transition into the opening passages, and to draw attention to the moment; they also have the added advantages of supplying the singer's first note quite audibly, and facilitating any transpositions that may be necessary.

Because unisons focus the audience's attention, some unisonal moments in Puccini's operas—even those without any sung text—are filled with enormous tension, even though the single pitch class is almost universally considered the most stable and restful of the consonant intervals. After Mimi's death in *La bohème*, for example, a single pitch-class A is heard just before the opera's final resolution to C-sharp minor. This note A, as the sixth degree of the C-sharp-minor tonic, hints at possible happiness: through a 5-6 motion, C-sharp minor could become A major. However, the A creates tremendous anxiety,

<sup>28</sup>Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 268ff.

<sup>29</sup>Davis uses this term in connection with Puccini's parallel constructions. Davis, *Il Trittico*, 39.

<sup>30</sup>Puccini once related to Domenico Alaleona that "the word—[...] it is enough that it be perceived at a few essential points [...] in those moments, the music becomes

perhaps because of the tension inherent in the dramatic situation—that Rodolfo does not see Mimì is dead, but the other characters (and the audience members) do.

Other dramatic arrival points that are marked by unisons include Mimì's remembering her room key at I/27/0 to a unison D, which serves as a common-tone pivot from D7 in G major to the third scale degree of B-flat major, and, in an earlier opera, Manon enters at I/22/13 to a unison F. In *Il tabarro*, at 57/0, the tonic of a peaceful A-flat-major passage becomes the tense unison G-sharp dominant of C-sharp minor, which also marks the start of the tragic second half of the opera. [Ex. 2.6]

Ex. 2.6: *Il tabarro*, 57/0

The musical score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff begins with a whole note chord labeled 'Ab=G#'. The bass staff shows a sequence of chords: 'Ab major' (A-flat major) and 'C# minor' (C-sharp minor). The score illustrates the modulation from A-flat major to C-sharp minor, with the common tone G-sharp (enharmonically A-flat) serving as a pivot point.

As we have seen in the example above, unisons functioning as common-tones allow for smooth modulations. Common-tone connections between harmonies usually facilitate movements by third-related keys, as in the major- and minor-third cycles we discussed previously. Such transformations are a striking feature of *Madama Butterfly*, and they are discussed with some detail in Chapter 9.

But not all of Puccini's common-tone shifts result in third-related motion. For example, in *Turandot*, at I/41/0, in what almost sounds like an appoggiatura given the sustained bass, we hear a slide from an enharmonically notated C-sharp major to D minor, both chords sharing the pitch-class E-sharp/F (These two chords form the bitonal pair heard first at the opera's opening.) [Ex. 2.7a, next page] Still, in the same opera, at I/41/6, we also hear a third-related motion from E minor to A-flat (enharmonically the third-related G-sharp) minor, where the common-tone is B/C-flat), then after one bar, a move from E-flat minor to G-flat augmented to G-flat major, all sharing the pitch-class G-flat. And there is a chain of third-related chords at I/25/0, each of which shares at least one pitch with the previous chord: A minor, F major, D major and B major. [Ex. 2.7b, next page]

## Ex. 2.7

a) *Turandot*, I/25/0

b) *Turandot*, I/41/0

One outgrowth of this process is the phenomenon of pitch classes extended at length through different tonalities—in essence, internal pedal points—which is related to the concept of *sonorità*. Pierluigi Petrobelli defines *sonorità* thus: “a specific pitch prolonged by various means of articulation, and considered independently of any harmonic function.”<sup>31</sup> The *sonorita* is tied to vocal tessitura and has associative links to characters. Rothstein follows the lead of Petrobelli, Chusid and others, and argues that Italian nineteenth-century opera places greater weight on the vocal line, differentiating it from bass-centered pieces written in the Germanic tradition.<sup>32</sup>

While Puccini’s harmonies do frequently move by common tone, we would argue that Rothstein’s thesis does not apply in his case for several reasons. First, Puccini’s pitch invariance has often been found to reside in the orchestral parts, not only in the vocal lines, and thus in pitch classes, not individual pitches. And, as noted in the Introduction, Puccini adapted this technique to his own sensibilities, often prolonging invariant *dissonant* pitch-classes. Further, Puccini uses the technique for swift changes in mood, and as we will see in

subdued.” Domenico Alaleona, “Giacomo Puccini” *Rassegna Italiana politica, letteraria & artistica* (XV/LXXX, January 1925), 19. [La parola [...]—basta che si percepisca in alcuni punti essenziali [...] in quei momenti la musica si attenua.]

<sup>31</sup>Petrobelli, “Towards an Explanation”: 132ff.



Chapter 3, the resultant long pitch classes can furnish material for the large-scale motivic parallelism and underlying design of many of the composer's operas.

### *other “trademarks”*

The dissonant pedal point—another means of prolonging a pitch class—is a Puccinian trademark, present from the first measure of his first opera (see Ex. 4.3) to the last act of his final, unfinished *Turandot*, at III/26/0, where a low F-sharp lies under descending triads on C, B-flat and A. As noted in Chapter 1, the dissonant pedal point looks both forward and backward: it is a commonplace in Baroque music and other tonal repertoires, where it often prolongs the dominant or tonic. Yet it can also hint at polytonality. And Puccini uses the device for normative diatonic functions, but also as representative of multifocal dramatic situations. In the latter case, a separate layer of music, a *direct conflation*, can reflect a second narrative thread or event, or a second (or third) state of being.

Three contrasting examples of a *traditional* use of the pedal point can be found in *Edgar* just a few moments apart. At I/17/0, the evil Tigrana laughs, accompanied by an A-flat-minor “Allegro satanico” that opens with three bars of a tonic double pedal on A-flat and E-flat. A few moments later, at I/21/0, Frank sings the loving “Questo amor” in F major, which is also supported by parallel thirds and a double pedal—which lasts almost eleven measures. Finally, at I/24/0, an actual organ, coming from the onstage church, plays a long pedal point on E-flat, topped with 2-3 suspensions, which functions as the dominant to the A-flat-major *andante religioso*, “Dio non benedice.” [Exx. 2.8a-c]

Ex. 2.8

a) *Edgar*, I/17/0

The musical score for Ex. 2.8a is in A-flat minor (three flats) and 2/4 time. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff begins with a dynamic marking of *ff* and a '7' below the first measure. The bass staff is marked 'double pedal' and also has a '7' below the first measure. The music features a constant double pedal point on A-flat and E-flat. The treble staff plays descending triads: A-flat-B-flat-C, G-flat-A-flat-B-flat, and F-flat-G-flat-A-flat. The bass staff plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment on the pedal points. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

b) *Edgar*, I/21/0

The musical score for *Edgar*, I/21/0, is written in bass clef. The left hand features a 'double pedal' consisting of a sustained C major triad (C, E, G) in the bass register. The right hand plays a melodic line with eighth notes and triplets, moving through various chords and intervals. The notation includes a '3' under a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure.

c) *Edgar*, I/24/0

The musical score for *Edgar*, I/24/0, is written in treble clef. It features a complex harmonic texture with multiple layers of notes, including a low A pedal in the bass register. The right hand plays a melodic line with eighth notes and slurs, moving through various chords and intervals. The notation includes a '3' under a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure.

Lest one conclude that Puccini only used pedal points as traditional tonic and dominant prolongations in his early works, one can find the same technique in *Suor Angelica*, where the bass pedal on C at 37/5 underlies many dissonances. But it finally reveals itself to be the dominant of F major (which arrives at 38/6).

Dissonant pedals without obvious tonal functions can often be employed at multifocal narrative points. For example, the proto-bitonal pedal point from the first version of *Edgar* (Ex. 1.16a) shows C major above a B pedal; at this point in the drama, a crowd is shouting at Edgar “Disgrace to him!” [Onta su lui!] while Gualtiero is simultaneously asking his terrified daughter to leave. Similarly, Ex. 1.16b from *Il tabarro* shows Michele’s black mood suggested by an A-minor double pedal, while a distant bugle sounds the “all quiet” in B-flat major. A similar multifocal event occurs in the revised *Edgar*, at II/16/16, where a G-flat pedal underlies the distant A-flat major sounds of an approaching army. And, at the climax of *Suor Angelica*, at 79/4, a low A pedal underlies Angelica’s prayers in D minor, while the off-stage chorus sings their Latin prayers on D major, F major and B-flat major, which in turn outline a B-flat-major triad. Here again we have two simultaneous events in different locations that are literally of another (tonal) world. [Ex. 2.9, next page]

Ex. 2.9: *Suor Angelica*, 79/4

This technique opens the door to full-fledged bitonality or polytonality, which first appears in Puccini's music with the bitonal clash in *La bohème's* second act between E major and B-flat major at II/27 as the parade interrupts a reprise of Musetta's waltz.<sup>33</sup> By 1910, in *La fanciulla del West*, at I/14/0, we hear the "gold" motive, a melody in C-sharp major, over a B-sharp diminished seventh chord. And in *La rondine* (1918), Puccini is using bitonality in a more ironic, Straussian manner: we can see this at II/1/7, where the end of a B-flat-major phrase is punctuated with a *sforzato* B-major chord. Of course in *Turandot*, bitonality is so pervasive it is almost the new norm, proclaimed unabashedly in the opening pages of each act.<sup>34</sup> Despite the pervasive bitonal ambience of Puccini's last opera, however, the bitonal complex of G major and D-flat9 at II/25/3 still seems to indicate a multifocal dramatic situation: here, Ping, Pang and Pong hear the distant trumpets and drums of the ceremony beginning offstage.<sup>35</sup>

Puccini's other pitch-related "trademarks" include various equal divisions of the octave. Among these, tritones—the symmetrical

<sup>32</sup>Rothstein, "Common-tone Tonality," §12-§13. On this point, Rothstein cites Martin Chusid, "Rigoletto and Monterone: A Study in Musical Dramaturgy," in *IMS Report 1972* (Copenhagen, 1974), 325-36, rep. in *Verdi: Bollettino dell'istituto di studi verdiani* 3, no. 9 (1982): 1544-58.

<sup>33</sup>See Ex. 7.0.

<sup>34</sup>Ashbrook and Powers write that, even in *Turandot*, the diatonic style is the Puccinian norm. Ashbrook and Powers, *Puccini's 'Turandot'*, 113.

<sup>35</sup>Whittall notes that bitonality derives from "broader 20th-century concern with the superimposition of complementary textural strata, such as is promoted by Schoenbergian combinatoriality [...] In addition, bitonality's ability to suggest a fractured psyche or diametrically opposed traits of character gives it a particular, small-scale appropriateness." Arnold Whittall, "Bitonality," *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online, accessed 5 January 2012. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.bu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/03161>.

<sup>36</sup>See Chapter 1.

division of the octave in two equal parts (and Alaleona's "bifonia"<sup>36</sup>)—can be the most traditional. As intervals belonging to major and minor scales, tritones exist within many diatonic formations including dominant seventh, diminished sevenths, and half-diminished sevenths chords. In the operatic tradition, exclamations set to a tritone have been heard as early as the birth of the genre, in Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (see Act IV's "Ohimè!"). However, when a tritone becomes the basis for a larger-scale, structural shift, it can signal a break with the traditional.

In addition to the examples of tritone shifts we examined in Chapter 1, one striking occurrence—at the level of individual harmonies—occurs at the moment in *Madama Butterfly* at III/26/4, where D-major chords alternate with A-flat-major ones. Here, Sharpless tells the returning Pinkerton to leave and let him tell Butterfly the sad truth. On a slightly larger scale, in *La bohème*, I/24/0, Puccini alternates the "bohèmes" motive (the opera's opening theme that also serves as its MPI<sup>37</sup>) on D-flat 4/2 and G 4/2, connected by descending chromatic runs, as Marcello, Schaunard and Colline descend the off-stage stairs (where Colline falls). [Ex. 2.10a] And, on an even grander scale, the final tableau of this opera is divided into two halves by a tritone shift at IV/12/31: as a mirthful B-flat-major chord shockingly moves to E minor, the high jinks are over when Musetta enters with news of the dying Mimì. [Ex. 2.10b] As we can see from just these brief examples, Puccini has used a tritone shift to indicate tragedy, humor, and the abrupt change from one to the other: thus, arriving at any single hermeneutic interpretation seems improbable.

Ex. 2.10

a) *La bohème*, I/24/0

D $\flat$ <sup>4</sup>   - tritone -   G<sup>4</sup>   - tritone -   D $\flat$ <sup>4</sup>

<sup>37</sup>Motivo di Prima Intenzione. See Chapter 3.

<sup>38</sup>Another major-third cycle on C-E-A-flat-C occurs in *Edgar* at I/10/0.

b) *La bohème*, IV/12/31

Bb major (tritone shift) E minor

Augmented triads appear frequently on the musical surface of Puccini's operas, often as inflections of diatonic triads. One such instance is in *Madama Butterfly*, where we hear fragments of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in C major altered to (or *projected* onto) a C augmented sonority at II/19/0. [Ex. 2.11a] As a larger-scale organizing plan, expanded augmented triads (major-third cycles) have already been noted in Chapter 1 in *Edgar* (the original version's Act II, scene 4, and III/45 of the revised one<sup>38</sup>), and in *Manon Lescaut* (Act II/35). Ex. 3.13 shows a similar cycle in the Act I prelude to *La fanciulla del West*. One additional striking example occurs in the third act of *Turandot*, from III/18/2 until III/23/8, built upon sometimes-dissonant pedal points C, A-flat and E. The first leg moves from C minor to C9; at III/19/0, A-flat minor takes over, followed by an A-flat9 that leads to E minor.<sup>39</sup> The E-minor pedal extends for a remarkable forty-seven bars, ending on a bitonal combination with F major. [Ex. 2.11b]

## Ex. 2.11

a) *Madama Butterfly*, II/19/0

C<sup>+</sup>

<sup>39</sup>The opening of *Turandot* can also be seen as a major-third interval cycle despite the bitonal clashes: We hear a clear F-sharp minor at I/0/2, D minor in the bass at I/0/4 and B-flat minor at I/1/2. See Chapter 13.

b) *Turandot*, III/18/2ff.

The musical score shows a piano accompaniment for *Turandot*, III/18/2ff. The score is in 3/4 time and features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The chords are indicated by brackets above the staff and labels below the staff. The cycle consists of three augmented triads: C minor (III/18/2), C major (III/19/0), and Ab minor (III/20/0). The score is labeled "major third cycle" at the bottom.

The use of these interval cycles, while not part of a tradition as old as that of pedal points, still has an established pedigree in Italian opera. Rothstein has shown a pattern of C-A-flat-E in the “Largo al factotum” from Rossini’s *Barbiere*; Budden has noted a major-third cycle in Verdi’s *Macbeth* on F-A-D-flat; and Cone individuated another C-E-A-flat pattern in Verdi’s *Simon Boccanegra*.<sup>40</sup>

It seems likely that the employment of augmented triads on the musical surface as altered diatonic constructs predates their general acceptance as subsets of the whole-tone collection (Alaleona’s “esafonia”), which appears in Russian works only in the mid-nineteenth century. Puccini did not make use of the whole-tone collection until his 1893 opera *Manon Lescaut*, with the exception of three whole-tone chords in *Le villi* that replace dominants.<sup>41</sup> Although many assume that Puccini adopted the whole-tone collection from the French Impressionist style, Puccini did not see Debussy’s *Pelléas* until 1903, although he may have had some contact with the French composer’s scores before then.<sup>42</sup> Puccini’s operas, from *Manon* on, are filled with whole-tone sonorities, yet these rarely appear in the vocal lines. One exception is from *Tosca*, I/48/14, when Cavaradossi describes to Angelotti his future hiding place within a deep well to a partial whole-tone scale.<sup>43</sup> [Ex. 2.12a, next page].

<sup>40</sup>Rothstein, “Common-tone Tonality,” §21; Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 1:312; Edward T. Cone, “On the Road to *Otello*: Tonality and Structure in Simon Boccanegra,” *Studi verdiani* 1 (1982): 72–98. All of these are mentioned in Rothstein, “Common-tone Tonality,” §39n, along with Bribitzer-Stull’s “The A-flat-C-E Complex”: 167–90.

<sup>41</sup>They can be found just before II/48/0, at II/48/36 and at II/54/14.

<sup>42</sup>For further information on the relationship between Debussy and Puccini, see Carner, “Portrait of Debussy”: 502–5.

<sup>43</sup>Vito Frazzi complained, inaccurately, that Puccini’s melodies were diatonic even though underpinned with non-traditional chords, that the horizontal element remained diatonic no matter how non-diatonic the vertical. Sanguinetti, “Puccini’s Music,” 240-1: “When Puccini, for example, strings heterogeneous chords (cont.)

A more structural use of the whole-tone scale will be discussed in Chapter 9 in regard to Madama Butterfly's entrance at I/39. Earlier operatic antecedents for the structural use of whole-tone passages do exist however: for example, there are rising keys (C, D, E, F-sharp, A-flat) from measure 389 of the Wolf's Glen scene in Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821). Even in Handel's 1733 *Orlando*, in Act II, scene 11, m. 22, a sequential pattern is repeated along what would now be termed the whole-tone axis of D-C-B-flat-G-sharp—and in 5/8 as well—although the shocking G-sharp is soon disclosed to be the root of a leading-tone diminished seventh moving to an ensuing A minor.<sup>44</sup>

Occasionally, scholars have labeled Puccini's use of the whole-tone scale a form of Exoticism or Orientalism. In fact, when the resource is utilized in a non-structural way (that is, as a reflection of a particular dramatic moment), it seems rather to indicate “disorientalism”—a loss of bearings because of love, fear or another strong emotion. The absence of half steps in this scale fosters that sense of disorientation. This is one reason it has been so frequently called into service by many composers to represent magical, dream-like contexts, in film as well as opera. A typical moment can be found in *La fanciulla del West*, when Minnie is kissed for the first time, at II/27/2. [Ex. 2.12b]

Ex. 2.12

a) *Tosca*, I/48/14

The image shows a musical score for a piano accompaniment. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The treble clef staff contains a whole-tone scale starting on G4 and ascending to G5. The bass clef staff contains a whole-tone scale starting on G3 and ascending to G4. The lyrics "pozzo del giardin" and "L'acqua è nel fondo" are written below the bass clef staff. The word "whole-tone" is written above the treble clef staff and below the bass clef staff.

together with an inexorably tonal melodic line, it is clear that one cannot speak of the surpassing of tonality but, at most, of a confused attempt at surpassing it.” [Quando Puccini—ad esempio—concatena accordi eterogenei con una linea melodica inesorabilmente tonale, non si può parlare ancora, evidentemente, di superamento della tonalità ma, casomai, di un’aspirazione confusa al superamento.] This passage is a counter-example to Frazzini’s thesis, as are the chorus parts from *Turandot* at I/15/0, “Il lavoro mai non langue.”

<sup>44</sup>For a fuller discussion of this *scena*, see Deborah Burton, “Men Who Love Too Much: Operatic Heroes and the Metric and Tonal Disturbances that Follow them,” in *Schenker Studies IV*, eds. Lynne Rodgers and Poundie Burstein, 279-97. New York: Olms, 2012.

b) *La fanciulla*, II/27/2

The musical score shows a piano accompaniment in 3/2 time, marked *fff*. The right hand features a melody of eighth notes over a whole-tone collection of notes (F#, G, A, B, C, D, E, F#). The left hand provides a harmonic foundation with chords and a double pedal of C and G.

This moment contains whole-tone sonorities both vertically and horizontally. The orchestral melody is a *projection* onto the whole-tone collection of a motive from the opera's opening prelude, first presented there, at I/0/6 in C major.

Giacomo Setaccioli, one of the few Italian theorists who wrote about his contemporary Puccini, describes a means for understanding whole-tone sonorities as derivative of traditional structures.<sup>45</sup> He offers explanations for the following whole-tone chords, shown respectively in Ex. 2.13, as a dominant seventh on D with a raised fifth (a), a (French) augmented sixth on C (b), a leading-tone seventh on E with raised third and seventh (c), a dominant seventh on C with a lowered fifth (d), and an incomplete ninth chord on E with raised ninth (e). Interestingly, he also mentions this last whole-tone complex over a double pedal of C and G, as a sonority used often by Debussy (f): similar compound sonorities are readily seen in many Puccini works as well.

Ex. 2.13: Giacomo Setaccioli on whole-tone structures

The score displays six whole-tone chords in the right hand, each with its corresponding chord symbol and description below:

- a) V7 with raised 5<sup>th</sup>
- b) Fr<sup>\*6</sup>
- c) vii<sup>o7</sup> with raised 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>
- d) V7 with lowered 5<sup>th</sup>
- e) V9 with raised 9<sup>th</sup>
- f) with double pedal

This approach enraged Alaleona, who writes that considering symmetrical divisions of the octave “as incomplete forms or alterations

<sup>45</sup>Giacomo Setaccioli, *Debussy è un innovatore?: studio critico estetico corredato da 49 esempi musicali estratti dalle varie opere del Debussy...*, 2nd ed. (Rome: De Santis, 1910), 70-1.

<sup>46</sup>Alaleona, “I moderni orizzonti,” 394. [come forme incomplete o alterazioni di accordi diatonici [...] un gravissimo errore estetico, spiegabile nelle vicende della teoria armonica e nella mentalità delle scuole di armonia che non sa distaccarsi dal passato.] See Chapter 1.



of diatonic chords [is] a very grave aesthetic error, understandable given the vicissitudes of harmonic theory and the mentality of the schools of harmony that do not know how to detach themselves from the past.”<sup>46</sup>

The diminished seventh chord has been a fixture of traditional harmony for centuries. By Puccini’s time—although he does still employ it on the musical surface—it had become a hackneyed signifier of horror or pain. As Casella writes, “It is difficult to calculate how many robberies, rapes, vows, perjuries, assassinations, broken marriages, storms, capital executions and violent deaths of every type, etc., etc., have found their natural expression in this famous chord—for more than a century, until Wagner substituted it with the [half-diminished] seventh.”<sup>47</sup>

Puccini’s most telling instances of the diminished seventh occur in *La bohème*, to illustrate the *mock* horror at the death of a parrot (I/14/15), the arrival of the landlord Benoit (I/17/0) and the parody of a duel with poker and fireplace tongs at (IV/11/0). [Ex. 2.14a] An ironic use of the chord may also be seen at the opening of *Gianni Schicchi*, where a C-sharp diminished seventh appears over an F pedal. But the chord is also used straightforwardly in *Edgar* (I/9/10) and even as late as *Turandot* II/19/10. [Ex. 2.14b]

Ex. 2.14

a) *La bohème*, IV/11/0

“lal - ler - a, lal - ler - a, lal - ler - a bes - tia!”

diminished sevenths

b) *Turandot*, II/19/10

“Il tal - amo le vog - lio pre - par - a - re

diminished seventh

<sup>47</sup>È difficile calcolare quanti furti, stupri, giuramenti e spergiuri, assassini, mancati matrimoni, temporali, esecuzioni capitali e morti violente di ogni genere, ecc., ecc. abbiano trovato in quel celebre accordo—per oltre un secolo—la loro naturale espressione—finché Wagner lo sostituì con quello di settima.] Alfredo Casella, “Problemi sonori odierni,” *La prora* (Feb. 1924), 8-9. English translation: Alfred Casella, “Tone-Problems of Today,” *Musical Quarterly* 10 (1924).

In Chapter 1, we looked at examples of expanded diminished sevenths employed as minor-third cycles in *Edgar* at I/37 and at the end of the first act of *Fanciulla*. Additional minor-third cycles can be found throughout his corpus of works, as early as *Le villi*, II/58/0 [Ex. 2.15a] and as late as *Turandot* (I/15/0). Below is an example from *La rondine* (II/1/14). [Ex. 2.15b]

Ex. 2.15

a) *Le villi*, II/58/0

b) *La rondine*, II/1/14

Symmetrical cycles are generally credited (or blamed) for hastening the demise of diatonicism. If so, then the use of alternate pitch collections dealt another blow. Casella looked to Debussy as a hallowed deliverer from diatonic imprisonment. He writes, “and then came Debussy and the miracle came to pass. The old dogmatic fortress disappeared in an instant—as if touched by a magic wand. [...] The old limitation of scales to only three finally abolished, Debussyan music set about exploiting—with adolescent avidity—the riches, neglected for centuries, of the Greek, Eastern, whole-tone and Far-eastern scales.”<sup>48</sup>

Puccini, whether he learned of these collections from foreign sources or not, makes good use of them as well. The pentatonic scale and the church modes are most common in his works. Roman Vlad has claimed that Puccini also uses the octatonic scale;<sup>49</sup> but, as will be noted

<sup>48</sup>[E venne così Debussy, ed un miracolo si avverò. La vecchia fortezza dommatica [...] si dileguò ad un tratto—come tocca da una magica bacchetta. [...] Abolita finalmente l’antica circoscrizione delle scale a tre sole, la musica debussista si pose a sfruttare—con adolescente avidità—le ricchezze—per secoli neglette—della scale greche, orientali, esafonica, estremo-orientali.] Ibid., 5–18.

<sup>49</sup>Roman Vlad, “Esordi di Puccini,” *Quaderni Pucciniani* (1992): 5-37.

in Chapter 4, the passage Vlad cites from *Le villi*, at II/52/13, is more readily interpreted as three tonal motions from tonic to dominant (G-flat to D-flat/C-sharp; B to F-sharp and E to B). [See Ex. 4.12].

The pentatonic scale, traditionally associated with an Asian ambience, is indeed used in *Madama Butterfly* (and is evident in the borrowed Japanese tunes “Miasan” and “Suiryo-Bushi”<sup>50</sup>) and *Turandot* (Liù’s “Signore, Ascolta”). However, a pentatonic melody can also be identified in the thoroughly Western *La rondine* at II/43/0. [Ex. 2.16] If a hermeneutic interpretation were to be attempted here, the pentatonic would most likely suggest a quality of innocence: the off-stage song in *La rondine* is sung by a simple street singer, while the melodies sung by Butterfly and Liù could imply naiveté.

Ex. 2.16: *La rondine*, II/43/0

The musical score for Ex. 2.16 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melody with the lyrics "Nella trepida luce d'un mattin...". The melody is identified as a pentatonic melody. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major). The time signature is 4/4.

Among the church modes, it is the Lydian mode, sharing a raised fourth degree with the whole-tone scale, that has been used by Puccini most frequently. In *La bohème*, we hear B-flat Lydian at II/28/3, when crowd cries out for the approaching parade, and E Lydian in *Tosca*, at III/3/2, in the evocative pre-dawn shepherd song “Io de’ sospiri.” [Ex. 2.17] Again, the use of this collection seems to invite an interpretation of rustic simplicity and innocence.

Ex. 2.17: *Tosca*, III/3/2

The musical score for Ex. 2.17 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melody with the lyrics "Io de' sospiri". The melody is identified as Lydian mode. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line. The key signature has three sharps (E major). The time signature is 4/4. The melody starts with a *ppp* dynamic marking and includes triplet markings (3) over the notes.

<sup>50</sup>For examinations of authentic Japanese tunes in *Madama Butterfly*, see Kunio Hara, *Puccini's Use of Japanese Melodies in "Madama Butterfly"* M.M. Thesis (College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati, 2000), Duiti Miyasawa, “*Madama Butterfly's* Original Melodies,” *Opera News* 16, no. 13 (1952): 7–9, and Kimiyo Powils-Okano, *Puccini's "Madama Butterfly,"* Orpheus-Schriftenreihe zu Grundfragen der Musik, no. 44 (Bonn: Verlag für systematische Musikwissenschaft, 1986), 9–10, 44–62.

Common to many of these various collections is a certain adaptable interval pattern that, as mentioned previously, we have considered Puccini's "signature": a tritone plus a whole step, or set class (026). This configuration can belong to the whole-tone scale, the Lydian mode, the dominant seventh, or the half-diminished seventh chord. As such, it is found implicitly in every one of the scores. But prominent examples where the interval pattern itself is highlighted as a linear string can be identified in the B-flat-A-flat-E bass line of the opening motive of *Tosca* [Ex. I.0], and in the openings of the first two acts of *Turandot* [Exx. 1.4j and 2.18a], the latter of which contains the pattern at two bitonal levels. These intervals also appear linearly at the Sheriff's mention of death in *Fanciulla* (I/31/7) [Ex. 2.18b], in the outer-voice ostinato that accompanies Suor Angelica's swoon (56/1-3 and 56/10-13) [in the first two measures of Ex. 12.12b], as well as in many other locations. Attraction to this set class may have also influenced Puccini's choice of authentic tunes for *Madama Butterfly*: the "Echigo-Jishi" contains the melodic string C-E-F-sharp when based on A, and "Sakura," or "Cherry Blossom Song," when based on D contains E-D-B-flat.

## Ex. 2.18

a) *Turandot*, II/0/0

b) *La fanciulla del West*, I/31/7

The extended chords of which Puccini was so fond were in evidence from the start.<sup>51</sup> Although the composer had a natural inclination toward these more complex sonorities, the Milan

<sup>51</sup>See Chapter 4 for a discussion of these in *Le villi*.

conservatory he attended already had a tradition in place that included eleventh and thirteenth chords, derived from Bonifacio Asioli, the school's first director.<sup>52</sup> As Baragwanath writes:

In agreement with Rameau's theory that all chords were derived from root position triads, by inversion or by the addition of extra thirds, Asioli arranged his harmony examples in a graded series starting with "generators" (*generatori*), or root position triads upon the degrees of the scale, and progressing through the "first addition" (*addizione*) or seventh chord, the "second addition" or ninth chord, the "third addition" or eleventh chord, and the "fourth addition" or thirteenth. Each stage in the series was supplemented with additional examples involving chordal inversions (*rivolti*).<sup>53</sup>

This, then, is another example of a seemingly modern technique with traditional roots.

Another "trademark" chord with both traditional and progressive pedigrees is the half-diminished seventh. Considered from the former standpoint, the half-diminished seventh chord can be derived from the upper four pitches of a complete major ninth chord. However, its fame and influence in much of late-nineteenth-century repertoire stem from its identity as Wagner's *Tristan* chord. Puccini employed this chord in hundreds of contexts; but it takes center stage, so to speak, at climactic moments. For example, in *Tosca*, we hear a half-diminished chord, on E, at the moment of Scarpia's stabbing (II/60/4), which reappears at Cavaradossi's "Muio disperato!" [I die without hope!] at III/12/12. In *Suor Angelica*, when the heroine cries "la morte è vita bella!" [Death is life made beautiful] at 17/4, we hear the same chord once more, again on E. By this era, the chord had superseded the clichéd diminished seventh as a signifier of extreme emotion, as Casella has noted.

The half-diminished seventh chord can also be found expanded as a non-symmetrical dissonant prolongation in this repertoire. Puccini uses such an organization at the end of his first opera, *Le villi*: from a starting point in D-flat minor, at II/57/20, we hear the "tregenda" theme, followed by motions to E minor, G major and B

<sup>52</sup>Bonifacio Asioli (1769-1832) was born in Coreggio to a family of artists, and was known for singing and playing at a young age. He studied in Bologna with Padre Martini and in 1799 moved to Milan. His best known theoretical works are *Il trattato d'armonia* (Milan, 1813) and *Il maestro di composizione* (op. posth., Milan, 1832). *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 4 (1962), s.v. "Asioli, Bonifacio."

<sup>53</sup>Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 154.

major, at II/57/28, where the harmony stabilizes until II/58/0. In *Madama Butterfly*, as well, an expanded inverted version of an A# half-diminished seventh (E-C-sharp-B-flat (A-sharp)-G-sharp) can be traced. At I/102/0, with the appearance of the Bonze, an E half-diminished chord begins a motivic passage; ten bars later the same passage is transposed to C-sharp; at I/104/0, the process is repeated on B-flat, and occurs once more on G-sharp before the pattern ends at I/106.

\* \* \* \* \*

In 1922, Puccini wrote to his friend and colleague Arturo Buzzi-Peccia, and included a poem, part of which refers to the lack of clarity among the music of his contemporaries:

Poveri crioli  
 Fanno pietà  
 Fanno armonie  
 Piene di nebbia<sup>54</sup>

[Those poor devils / Are pitiful / They make chords / Full of fog.]

We have attempted in this chapter to pierce through some of the conceptual “fog” that obscures Puccini’s own pitch-related constructions—one aspect of his technique. Many mysteries still remain.

<sup>54</sup>Arturo Buzzi-Peccia, “The Composer of *Turandot* Writes to Buzzi-Peccia,” *The Musical Courier*, November 18, 1926, 18.

## Chapter 3

### Motivic Elaboration and the MPI<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty for me is beginning an opera, finding, that is, its musical atmosphere. Once the beginning is fixed and composed, there is nothing more to fear: the opera has been determined and it goes.<sup>2</sup>

To this quote from Puccini, which Adami notes he repeated many times, let us add a statement from Carner: “nearly always Puccini begins with what he called ‘il motivo di prima intenzione,’ the motto theme embodying the work’s essential spirit.”<sup>3</sup> In most of Puccini’s operas, these opening musical statements appear before the curtain opens and thus focus the listener’s ear on the aural landscape before any visual cues are given.<sup>4</sup>

One could argue that Puccini’s “motivo di prima intenzione” [motive of first plan, hereafter MPI] is simply a form of the traditional Verdian *tinta* (literally, “tint”), a concept resistant to translation.<sup>5</sup> In

<sup>1</sup>Parts of this chapter were published in: Deborah Burton, “A Journey of Discovery: Puccini’s ‘motivo di prima intenzione’ and its applications in *Manon Lescaut*, *La fanciulla del West* and *Suor Angelica*,” *Studi Musicali*, 2001/2: 473-99, and in Burton, “An Analysis of Puccini’s *Tosca*.”

<sup>2</sup>Giuseppe Adami, *Puccini* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1935), 103. [La difficoltà è, per me, cominciare un’opera, trovare cioè la sua atmosfera musicale. Quando l’inizio è fissato e composto, non c’è più da aver paura: l’opera è decisa e cammina.] Greenwald discusses both this Puccini quote (and the next that Carner reports) in “Dramatic Exposition,” 1-30. Her study compares all the opening curtains in light of many parameters including whether they are tonally open or closed, and the tonal relationships between the initial gestures and the first scenes.

<sup>3</sup>Carner, *Puccini*, 286.

<sup>4</sup>Puccini uses pre-curtain preludes in nine of his twelve operas: *Le villi*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly*, *La fanciulla del West*, *La rondine*, *Suor Angelica*, *Gianni Schicchi* and *Turandot*.

<sup>5</sup>Weaver writes that *tinta* is “simply untranslatable” and Chusid calls it an “elusive concept.” William Weaver, review of *Verdi’s Aida: The History of an Opera in Letters and Documents*, Collected and translated by Hans Busch, in *19th-Century Music* 3/2 (November 1979): 174, and Martin Chusid, *Verdi’s middle period, 1849-1859: source studies, analysis, and performance*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 344n. Greenwald has used the term *tinta* to indicate the key of C minor in “*Il tabarro*”: 533. Budden, in comparing two musically related themes in *La bohème* also refers to the *tinta*. “no dramatic significance in the likeness [of the two themes]; it is merely an element in the “tinta” of *La bohème*, comparable to the four-note motive [...] in *Manon Lescaut*” Budden, *Puccini*, 164.

recent opera scholarship, however, “tinta” has been utilized to a large extent to indicate a general coloration (such as “modal” or “chromatic”) rather than a specific musical structure or texture. Even Abramo Basevi, Verdi’s contemporary and authority on that composer’s early and middle works, describes “tinta” or “colorito” [coloring] in general terms: “a center toward which the different pieces that compose the opera converge.”<sup>6</sup>

Puccini’s MPI, as proposed here, is a different sort of creature. The word “motive” carried some weight for this composer: although “motivo” is often best translated as “theme” in earlier Italian works (implying at least a complete phrase), by Puccini’s era—thanks to the Wagnerian *Leitmotiv*—it could also mean a short melodic cell.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Basevi writes, “In the general concept of the drama, however, music finds a foothold, a center toward which the different pieces that compose the opera converge, more or less, according to the ingenuity of the maestro; and then that which is called *coloring* or the general *tint* is obtained. But the attainment of this *coloring* is not the musician’s resolved goal, but rather the means for conveniently associating, with respect to the drama, the various pieces of which the opera is composed [...] the *coloring* of the music, responding to the subject, although happily appropriate, will also be always too vague to belong to one oratory or another [...] Without doubt the general *coloring* of an opera reveals more than anything else the ingenuity of the maestro, because it shows a synthesis of his nature. When the maestro is ready to imagine that which is necessary to impart to the music, through the arrangement of notes, the use of harmonies, the choice of instruments, etc., the sought-after coloring, then he created like a type, a rule, an element to which he easily relates the individual pieces, the motives, the accompaniments, etc. From this results a *whole* that surprises and irresistibly attracts the listener, who is enthralled, and must deem the opera of great talent.” Abramo Basevi, *Studio sulle Opere de Giuseppe Verdi* (Florence, Tofani, 1859), 114-5. A critical edition of this work has been edited by Ugo Piovano (Milan: Rugginenti, 2001). [La musica trova però nel concetto generale del dramma un punto d’appoggio, un centro verso cui convergono più o meno, secondo l’ingegno del maestro, i vari pezzi che compongono l’Opera; ed allora si ottiene ciò che chiamasi il *colorito* o la *tinta* generale. Ma il conseguimento di questo *colorito* non è il fine che il musicista si propone, bensì il mezzo per associare convenientemente, rispetto al dramma, i vari pezzi di cui l’Opera si compone [...] il *colorito* della musica rispondente al soggetto, quantunque felicemente appropriato, pure sarà sempre troppo vago per appartenere ad uno anziché ad un altro Oratorio [...] È indubitato che il *colorito* generale di un’Opera rivela meglio d’ogni altra cosa l’ingegno del maestro, perchè ne mostra l’indole sua sintetica. Quando il maestro sia giunto ad immaginare quel che è necessario ad impartire alla musica, mediante la disposizione delle note, l’uso delle armonie, la scelta degli strumenti ec., il tanto desiderato *colorito*, allora egli ha creato come un tipo, una regola, un termine a cui agevolmente riferisce i pezzi particolari, i motivi, gli accompagnamenti ec., onde risulta un *tutto*, che sorprende, e attrae irresistibilmente l’uditore, il quale pieno di meraviglia è costretto a riconoscere l’Opera d’un grande ingegno.]

<sup>7</sup>Baragwanath writes, “*Motivo* may be translated literally as “motive” and understood to encompass a similar variety of meanings as the English word. But only very occasionally, and usually in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, did it (cont.)



And when Puccini states that he needs the opening of an opera to be “fixed and composed,” it seems likely that he is referring to specific notes, rhythms and harmonies, not a general ambience. Moreover, if we read Puccini’s statement closely, we find that he is implying two different sorts of beginnings: that of the opera itself, and the start of the compositional process. In short, he starts to compose at the very beginning.<sup>8</sup>

What if we were to take Puccini at his word, and explore his works by considering the opening motives of his operas (or “preludes” as he often labeled them) both as the first sounds heard, but also as representative of the initial schemata upon which he built his musical structures? In attempting this, we make no claim of authenticity, but rely only upon our own observations and “analytical fantasies”<sup>9</sup> in acting as *ciceroni*.<sup>10</sup>

Tracing the MPI could not, of course, explain every nuance of a completed and complex operatic score, if only because Puccini’s word “prima” implies that there might be second, third or more plans, developed perhaps in response to the exigencies of the drama, to accommodate bits of added local color (such as borrowed pre-existing tunes), or even practical considerations, such as transpositions for singers. Certainly the pull of dramatic factors would lead to accommodations for various harmonic and leitmotivic effects and interpolations, which in some cases might seem as inexorably tractional as a patch of quicksand.<sup>11</sup> Despite these musical detours, however, an original itinerary might still be uncoverable.

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signify what would now be commonly understood as a musical motive: that is, a short melodic or harmonic cell that underlies the construction of larger units. *Motivo* nearly always referred to an opening melody of at least four measures and may be most accurately translated as ‘principal theme (or subject).’” Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, xviii.

<sup>8</sup>For *Tosca*, we know that Puccini composed the “prelude” (that is, the opening motive) first, as he dated it and the rest of the opera’s large formal units upon completion. See Ex. 8.0.

<sup>9</sup>This is a reference to Heinrich Schenker, who called his works “New Musical Theories and Fantasies”: the three volumes were *Harmonielehre* (1906), *Kontrapunkt* (1910/1922) and *Der freie Satz* (1935, posthumous). The Schenkerian concept of motivic parallelism (also called “hidden repetition”) will be utilized in this chapter. It refers to a surface-level series of pitch classes restated on a deeper structural level.

<sup>10</sup>[guides]

<sup>11</sup>As Schoenberg has written, “Deviation into remote [harmonic] regions often occurs in descriptive music.” Arnold Schoenberg, *Structural Functions in Music*, ed. Leonard Stein (New York: Norton, 1969), 80.

Such an investigation would be contingent on conceiving the score as a *layered* creation that has developed depth over time, entailing an analytical process more like an archaeological dig. Given this, any two-dimensional listing of key areas (without aural “depth perception”) for such a multi-dimensional score, would only add to the confusion: there could be background keys, for example, upon which a short section is grafted like a parenthetical statement (the *innesti* discussed in Chapter 2). Indeed, this analytic conceit would extend the notions of *conflation* and *prolongation* over the entire work; that is, the initial schema upon which temporary tonalities or set-pieces, say, were overlaid, would function as a conceptually prolonged backdrop at a very deep level, sometimes audible, sometimes not.

Often Puccini’s musical layerings can be tied to the narrative. For example, in *Tosca* (just before II/3), the score shows a D-major chord over an E pedal. When a window is opened in Scarpia’s room and we hear an off-stage gavotte in pure D major: the E pedal disappears. Then, when the gavotte is over, the E pedal returns, bringing us back into the internal world of Scarpia’s room. Later, at II/19, after another off-stage event *sans* E pedal (the cantata), the police chief violently shuts the window and we hear the E pedal resume immediately.<sup>12</sup> In sum, the external, off-stage music is also “outside” the musical space, inserted like a parenthetical statement: the E, while not always audible, can be considered still conceptually “present” throughout.

In the analyses below (some of which go into in more detail than others), the effects of the MPI are writ both large and small. In several operas the MPI will be seen to function microcosmically as the source of “thematic cells” from which much of the opera’s melodic content derives.<sup>13</sup> But it can also exhibit influence macrocosmically as the large-scale design, the musical “itinerary” of the musical odyssey of each opera. Or—*Tristan*-like—it can adduce a tonal “problem,” usually a lack of resolution or the appearance of an anomalous note, that resolves only at the end of the opera.

<sup>12</sup>Scarpia’s aria “Ha più forte sapore” is also inserted parenthetically into this scene as an *innesto* or *indirect conflation*.

<sup>13</sup>This or similar terminology is employed in analyses by: Burton, “An Analysis,” Ferrari, “Il linguaggio melodico,” Girardi, *Puccini*, and Titone, *Vissi d’arte*. Several other writers also mention the interrelationship of the motivic material in Puccini’s operas, such as Ashbrook, *The Operas of Puccini*. Jürgen Maehder, “Roma anno 1800. Riflessioni sulla struttura drammatico-musicale dell’opera storica in Puccini,” in *490 Maggio Musicale fiorentino* (1986) Program of Teatro Comunale di Firenze (1986), 1037-55; Parker, “Analysis.”

As Webster wrote more than twenty years ago, “The hunter of motivic correspondences and derivations is a familiar figure on the analytical scene, who, after a period of ostracisation, is making something of a comeback.”<sup>14</sup> Yet to embark in the current intellectual climate on an expedition of this type—to search for motivic coherence and parallelism—is still to risk criticism for betraying “an atavistic urge toward the calmer waters of earlier generations’ critical battles.”<sup>15</sup> To summon up Schenker’s *motivic parallelism*, Schoenberg’s *Grundgestalt* or Réti’s *prime thought*<sup>16</sup> is often thought to blindly adhere to the organicist and structuralist thinking of the early twentieth century.

But organicist analytic inquiries, deriving from Germanic traditions, had currency in Puccini’s milieu. In an article published shortly after the composer’s death, Alaleona discusses Puccini’s “gestural motives” [motivo-gesti] in such terms: “There are entire pages that arise, like iridescent reflections in a mirror, from the multiplication of infinite facets of the same mother-cell; and with what naturalness the secondary and relative motives grow from the fundamental gestural motive.”<sup>17</sup> A similar outlook was expressed by one of Puccini’s closest friends and colleagues, Carlo Clausetti, in his analysis of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*, a publication Puccini admired:<sup>18</sup> “in *Tristano* few notes are required to sustain an expressive part, thanks to the alternative predominance of rhythm and harmony. The new designs [...] derive from the decomposition of the primordial themes.”<sup>19</sup>

Despite Wagner’s strong influence, Puccini’s use of motivic material does not seem nearly as deeply embedded as the German’s at first hearing. The Italian composer’s motivic development appears to occur more in the creation from small cells of different themes that

<sup>14</sup>James Webster, “Mozart’s Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity” *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 2/2 (July 1990): 211.

<sup>15</sup>Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, “Introduction,” *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>16</sup>See Arnold Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, eds. Gerald Strang and Leonard Stein, (London: Faber and Faber, 1970) and Rudolph Réti, *The Thematic Process in Music* (1951; reprint, New York: Macmillan, 1978).

<sup>17</sup>[Sono pagine intere che nascono dalla moltiplicazione, come riflesso iridescente in uno specchio dalle infinite sfaccettature di una stessa cellula-madre; e con quale naturalezza germogliano sul motivo-gesto fondamentale dei motivi secondari e collaterali] Domenico Alaleona, “Giacomo Puccini”: 18.

<sup>18</sup>Clausetti, *Tristano*. As noted in Chapter 1, note 72, Puccini said the publication was “very beautiful.”

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 52. [Nel *Tristano* poche note sono chiamate a sostenere una parte espressiva, in grazia al predominio [sic] alternativo del ritmo e dell’armonia. I disegni nuovi [...] derivano dalla scomposizione dei temi primordiali.]

remain relatively stable—more like Verdian reminiscence motives—rather than in the constant varying of identifiable Leitmotifs throughout the work, even though there is some of that transformation as well.<sup>20</sup> Setaccioli writes that Puccini's motives (in *Gianni Schicchi*) are substantially different than Wagner's Leitmotifs, and should be labeled “dominant motives” [motivi dominanti]; yet the techniques he describes (augmentation and diminution of themes, rhythmic displacement, fragmentation, and altered harmonizations) would also apply to Wagnerian Leitmotifs.<sup>21</sup>

Development and manipulation of “primordial themes” does seem to occur in Puccini. These microcosmic thematic cells are often immediately perceptible on the surface of the composition, even though the same motivic bits are given new “contextual clothes”: altered rhythm, direction, harmony or dynamics.

But “hunting motivic correspondences” is a treacherous undertaking. Too many analyses, including those of Réti, find thematic connections in unlikely places and, ultimately, fail to convince. Some criteria for limiting the connections suggested must be in place, since, as Lerdahl and Jackendoff note, “Given any two sets of pitches and durations, it is possible logically to ‘transform’ one into the other, and to do so in any number of ways.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the following discussion is limited to exact repetitions of intervallic patterns (including inversions and retrogrades) that can be altered only by *projection* onto a different pitch-class collection (for example, a whole-tone version of a diatonic melody, or a minor third transformed into a major third). Further, in the first part of the discussion, there will be no search for concealed repetitions: all of the examples discussed in this section exist completely and uninterruptedly on the musical surface. (The nature

<sup>20</sup>Drabkin states that Puccini's use of Leitmotiv is diverse than Wagner's because the former's themes are more extensive: “the leitmotifs of [Wagner] are too short for early, isolated statements of them to be felt as leading up to their main use [...] the extensiveness of the ‘Latin quarter’ theme enables Puccini to present it in Act I [...] in circumstances under which it will be understood as a premonition of a later statement of the theme.” Drabkin, “The musical language”, 94. While the full “Latin Quarter” theme is indeed reproduced wholesale later on in *La bohème*, Drabkin does not explore the multifaceted quasi-Wagnerian manner in which Puccini manipulates appearances of thematic cells on which the longer motives are based. See also Steven Huebner, “Thematic Recall in Late Nineteenth-Century Opera” *Studi Pucciniani* 3 (2004): 77-104.

<sup>21</sup>Giacomo Setaccioli, *Il Contenuto Musicale del Gianni Schicchi di Giacomo Puccini: con la esposizione e la illustrazione dei motivi tematici* (Rome: De Santis, 1920), 29.

<sup>22</sup>Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), 286.

of thematic transformation, however, precludes the elimination of possible connections on the basis of a different harmonic or rhythmic context: creating new and clever contexts for the same patterns would seem to be the *point* of these transformations.)

In addition to superficial motivic elaboration, Puccini's quote also points to something more structural: once the MPI has been set, "the opera has been determined and it goes." That is, a plan for the entire opera would seem now to somehow have been engaged. For the purposes of the following discussion, let us imagine that this could be taken literally. If so, to see a clearer picture of the whole, let us examine the musico-dramatic arrival points in several of his operas and determine if there is any connection on a large scale to the MPI. To take this analytic step extends the Schenkerian notion of *motivic parallelism* to a point where Schenker himself would not have gone, a superstructure spanning more than one movement or act. But since Schenker termed his concepts "fantasies," we see no harm in extending his ideas to fit our own visions.

### ***Manon Lescaut***

Puccini's first operatic success, this 1893 third work was called "symphonic" by George Bernard Shaw, a label that, at the time, suggested an interrelated "motivic web." As Shaw wrote in his review of the London première, "The first act [...] is also unmistakably symphonic in its treatment. There is genuine symphonic modification, development, and occasionally combination of the thematic material, all in a dramatic way, but also in a musically homogeneous way."<sup>23</sup> Ex. 3.0 shows the first section of the opera's prelude.<sup>24</sup> In A major, the opening gesture consists of an arpeggiation of that harmony: E-A-E-C-sharp (imitated in the second bar). Both this arpeggio figure and the opening interval of the perfect fourth can be seen as sources for development of prominent surface material. In these first eleven bars, however, there is also a peculiar emphasis on the pitch class F-sharp

<sup>23</sup>George Bernard Shaw, *Music in London 1890-94* (London: Constable, 1931; rep. Edinburgh: Clark, 1932), III, 219. A more recent use of the word "symphonic" in regard to *Manon Lescaut* is employed by Leibowitz, who outlines out a sonata form (although he labels it A—B—A') in the first scene of the opera. René Leibowitz, *Histoire de l'Opéra*, Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1957. Italian ed., *Storia dell'Opera* (Milan: Garzanti, 1966), 382-4.

<sup>24</sup>The curtain is raised after 28 bars of the prelude, which then recapitulates the opening strain. Puccini also used a version of this theme in his "Minuet n. 2" from *Tre Minuetti* (1884). See Chapter 6.

in bars 6, 7, 8 and 10: as we shall see, the anomalous note F-sharp is used prominently in this work, and will be the concluding tonic of the opera.

Ex. 3.0: *Manon Lescaut*, opening of the prelude, I/0/0

**Allegro brillante**

A major

In the next examples, we locate motivic elements of the opening gesture on the easily perceptible, surface musical level. Exx. 3.1a-c show prominent instances of the rising-falling perfect fourth (the first intervals heard in the opera) and Exx. 3.1d-f contain retrograde versions of the arpeggiation figure.<sup>25</sup> While it could be argued that these patterns are not unusual and certainly common to many musical works, even other Puccini operas, the numerous and prominent occurrences of these particular figures within this single work do not seem randomly chosen.

Ex. 3.1: *Manon Lescaut*, perfect fourths, and arpeggio figures in retrograde  
a) I/58/10-16

b) III/11/0-2

<sup>25</sup>See Girardi, *Puccini*, 91, for a similar discussion.

c) IV/9/21-10/3

< perfect fourths >

*ff*

*pp*

So - la... per - du - ta ab-bando na - ta!

< perfect fourths >

d) I/16/0-3

< arpeggiation figure >

*ff*

Tra voi bel - le brune e bion - de si na - sconde

e) II/9/3-5

< arpeggiation figure >

*ff*

Per - me tu lot - ti

f) II/20/12-21

< arpeggiation figure >

*p*

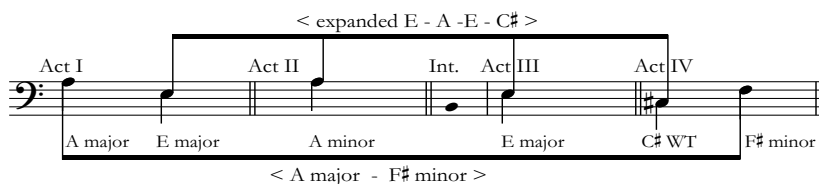
L'or - a o Tir - si, è va - ga e bella

Now let us take a bird's eye view of *Manon's* landscape (and let's hope we see it more accurately than Puccini's librettists did!). There is no Louisiana desert here, but we can make out an itinerary whose arrival points—the final tonics of the first three acts—are E major, A minor and E major, a giant expansion of the opening gesture, E-A-E.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Budden notes that the original version of the first act ended in B-flat, not E: “so much for Puccini’s concern for long-range tonal architecture!” Budden, *Puccini*, 117. However, the whole structure of the opera was altered after Puccini completed that early Act I: Act I was expanded, the first half of Act II was eliminated, and its second half became Act III. It is possible that Puccini was forced by these alterations to start afresh.

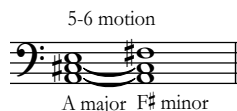
Further, if we combine this pattern with the whole-tone complex on C-sharp at IV/25/6, which substitutes for the dominant of the final F-sharp-minor tonic, the result is the full arpeggio pattern, E-A-E-C-sharp. Ex. 3.2 shows a diagram of the opera in which this itinerary is laid out.<sup>27</sup>

Ex. 3.2: *Manon Lescaut*, global expansion of E-A-E-C-sharp



If one were to condense the tonal motion of this opera even further, to just the beginning and end points of the entire musical trajectory, the result would be a transition from the opening A-major tonality to the closing F-sharp-minor one, in essence a 5-6 motion, E-F-sharp, over A. [Ex. 3.3]

Ex. 3.3: *Manon Lescaut*, overall harmonic motion



This shows a juxtaposition of E and F-sharp that can be related to the many contiguous appearances of those two pitch classes. As the opera progresses, unusual moves from E to F-sharp, or F-sharp to E, take center stage. Examples 3.4a-c show prominent appearances of F-sharp-E at the end of Act III and at the opening and closing of Act IV. The F-sharp-minor seventh chord heard near the close of Act III contains all the pitch classes of both A major and F-sharp minor—F-sharp, A, C-sharp and E—and the final motion from F-sharp 7 to E bypasses the dominant (B major), an elision that emphasizes the motivic F-sharp-E connection even further. In Act IV, at both the opening and the conclusion, the plaintive descending second, F-sharp-E, with parallel harmonies and voice leading, recalls

<sup>27</sup>The diagrams included here are not traditional Schenkerian graphs, although they display some Schenkerian graphing apparatus. While fully formed Schenkerian graphs with complete Ursätze may be traceable in Puccini's operas, that is not the primary purpose of these illustrations.



the heroine's first name "Manon": when she first appeared in Act I, Manon's full four-syllable name was associated with, and later sung to, a descending stepwise fourth.<sup>28</sup> But by the last act we are on a first name, two-note basis with her. The conclusion of the opera also contains the whole-tone complex on C-sharp at IV/25/6, replacing a true dominant. This sonority (G-A-C-sharp-E-sharp) includes the pitch class of the dominant, C-sharp, and that of the leading-tone, E-sharp, but also the motivically significant note A.

Ex. 3.4: *Manon Lescaut*, appearances of F-sharp-E

a) conclusion of Act III

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F# E major

b) opening of Act IV

Andante sost. < F# - E >

pp ff pp ff pp

< F# - E - F# - E - F# >

c) conclusion, Act IV

< F# - E >

pp ff pp ff

C# whole-tone F# minor E minor

< F# - E - F# - E - F# >

rall. .

<sup>28</sup>This occurs at I/22/14 at Manon's entrance, and at I/34/0, during the aria "Donna non vidi mai."

## *La bohème*

The beginning of Puccini's next opera was borrowed from the *Capriccio Sinfonico*, his 1883 graduation exercise at the Milan Conservatory. The opening gesture consists of two rhythmicized strands: in the bass a chromatic descent on three pitches, G-F-sharp-F, and above it a diatonic ascent also on three notes, G-A-B, with horn-call accompaniment. [Ex. 3.5]. The combination of the two creates an unresolved G dominant 4/2 chord—a unresolved tonal “problem”—that finally arrives at its tonic, C major, twenty-five bars later at I/0/25 (but without the third scale degree E in the bass, which the dominant inversion leads us to expect.) When that C major appears, in fact, the lack of a true resolution is made more conspicuous by the upper melodic line jumping from F—the dissonant note that should resolve down to E—directly to C.

Ex. 3.5: *La bohème*, opening

The musical notation shows a bass clef staff in 3/8 time. The first measure contains a descending chromatic line: G4, F4, E4. The second measure contains an ascending diatonic line: G4, A4, B4. Below the staff, the chord C major is indicated, and the chord V<sub>2</sub> (G dominant) is indicated below the second measure.

This motto is heard in keys related by descending fifth: G7, C7, then F7, which points to a resolution in the B-flat-major tenor aria “*Nei cieli bigi.*” At I/ 3, the sequential pattern continues and we hear E-flat7, then A-flat7. After coming thus far around the circle of fifths, the music of the B-flat tenor aria is reprised at I/4/8 and, after a sequence of parallel augmented triads, returns once more at I/5, now in C major, the implied original key. Finally, after much dizzying chromatic wandering, an arrival point is reached at I/8/4 in the key of G-flat, with striking parallel triads (hinting at the many prominent parallel triads and open parallel fifths to come in this work). When D major arrives at I/10, along with the entrance of two other *Bohèmes*, the G-flat becomes reinterpreted as F-sharp. Soon after, at I/11/0-2, the bass line, as if in passing, has F-F-sharp-G, a retrograde of the opening motive. [Ex. 3.6, opposite]

Ex. 3.6: *La bohème*, I/11/0-2

The musical notation for Ex. 3.6 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. It contains a melodic line with eighth notes and rests. The lower staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It contains a bass line with eighth notes and rests. A bracket under the first three notes of the bass line (F, F#, G) is labeled with the text "< F - F# - G >".

The next strong arrival point comes at I/16/0, with an F-major theme, associated with the Café Momus, that contains more parallel triads. An unexpected knock at the door brings in the landlord Benoit and a fortissimo E in the bass, supporting a dissonant ninth chord.

To take a synoptic view of the bass motions heard thus far, then, we have the first bass G, then G-flat/F-sharp, followed by F and then E, an expansion of the opening motive plus its resolution, an example of motivic parallelism. [Ex. 3.7]

Ex. 3.7: *La bohème*, I/0-16

The musical notation for Ex. 3.7 is a single bass staff in bass clef. It shows a sequence of notes: G, F#, G, F, G, F#, G, F, G, F, G, F, G. Above the staff, five boxes contain chord symbols: I/0, I/8, I/10, I/16, and I/17. Brackets connect these symbols to the notes below them: I/0 covers the first three notes (G, F#, G); I/8 covers the next three notes (F, G, F#); I/10 covers the next two notes (F, G); I/16 covers the next two notes (F#, G); and I/17 covers the final two notes (F, G).

A full analysis of the opera along these lines requires more space than can be provided here. Such a discussion would show the expansion of this motive across the entire work, with the final, long-sought E arriving at the end as the third degree—not of C major (as in Act I)—but as the (minor) third degree of C-sharp minor, the tragic concluding tonality.

The surface motives of *Bohème* can be related to the opening as well, but since that motto is a combination of chromatic and diatonic scale fragments, almost any melody could conceivably be traced to it. Nevertheless, there are several passages where the resemblance seems too close to pass over. In Ex. 3.8a (next page), the music at II/6/6 accompanying the children's laughter outside the Café Momus, just happens to be written with the pitches G-F-sharp-F-E-F-F-sharp-G in the soprano. The complete four-note motive can also be found as an accompanying figure at I/27/4-6, on the original pitch classes—no small feat in the key of B-flat major—just after the bass line shows an ascending diatonic stepwise third. [Ex. 3.8b, next page]

In essence, the opening motive can be broken down into two versions of three step-wise notes—one line chromatic the other diatonic—the sources of many themes from this opera. Examples 3.8c-f offer a few examples of these three-step gestures, incorporated into I/17/5, I/25/11 (Mimi's entrance and theme), I/41/0 ("O soave fanciulla") and II/21/0 ("Quando m'en vo").

Ex. 3.8: *La bohème*

a) II/6/6

< G - F# - F - E - F - F# - G >

b) I/27/4-6

< stepwise rising third >                      < G - F# - F - E >

c) I/17/5

< stepwise thirds >

d) I/25/11

< chromatic version >

< diatonic version >

e) I/41/0

< diatonic stepwise thirds >

f) II/21/0

< stepwise third >                      < stepwise thirds >

## *La fanciulla del West*<sup>29</sup>

*La fanciulla del West* begins with the melodic interval of a rising major third, C to E.<sup>30</sup> Further, the endpoints of each act trace a large-scale, ascending C to E motion composed out in a manner similar to that which we have noted in *Manon Lescaut*: the first act begins and ends in C, the second moves from D major to E-flat minor, and the last act, while beginning in a tonally ambiguous manner, ends in E major. [Ex. 3.9]<sup>31</sup>

Ex. 3.9: *La fanciulla del West*, macrocosmic expansion of C-E

whole-tone C major      C<sup>major</sup>      D major      E<sup>b</sup> minor      E major

Intervals of a major third are presented both vertically (stacked) and horizontally (rising) in the opening measure of the prelude as part of a whole-tone complex that, when it returns at the end of the opera, resolves to E major, at III/44/9. [Exx. 3.10 and 3.11, next two pages] So, although the major third is an important component of the MPI, it is the entire whole-tone complex C-E-G-sharp-B-flat that would appear to be the MPI—the “problem” that must be solved.

<sup>29</sup>For a discussion of the MPI in *Tosca*, see Chapter 8, as well as Burton’s “An Analysis” and “*Tristano, Tosca e Torchi*”: 127-45.

<sup>30</sup>Girardi sees the theme of “love pushed towards redemption” as represented by the prelude as a whole. Girardi, *Puccini*, 286.

<sup>31</sup>One might interpret the opera’s theme of redemption, as stated by the composer himself, as in some way emblemized by the rising third. Puccini, quoted in an interview with Giacinto Cottini, *Gazzetta di Torino*, 11 November 1911: “In Belasco’s drama [...] a very small share was devoted to the redemptive element of the protagonist: it was I who wanted from the librettists a greater development of it so that this desire for purification, this difficult yearning towards a peace gained through love and action, would be more evident, more sincere.” Quoted in Michele Girardi’s “Il finale de *La fanciulla del West* e alcuni problemi di codice,” *Opera & Libretto II* (Florence: Olschki, 1993), 435, and in *Puccini*, 285. [Nel dramma di Belasco [...] era stata data assai piccola parte all’elemento redentore della protagonista: io fui che volli dai librettisti uno sviluppo maggiore di esso, onde apparisse più evidente, più sincero questo desiderio di purificazione, questo anelito affannoso verso una pace conquistata con l’amore e l’operosità.]

Ex. 3.10: *La fanciulla del West*, prelude, with thematic cells

Musical score for the prelude of *La fanciulla del West*, showing thematic cells. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of six systems of piano accompaniment. The first system includes the vocal line with the lyrics "< do - mi - re - do >" and dynamic markings *ff* and "< M3s + M2 >". The second system has a dynamic marking *f*. The third system has dynamic markings *ff* and *p*. The fourth system has dynamic markings *ff* and *p*. The fifth system has dynamic markings *v* and *3*. The sixth system has a dynamic marking *v* and a measure with a *3* over a triplet. The score is in G major and 4/4 time.

The first system of the score shows a treble clef with a melodic line of eighth notes and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. The second system shows a more complex texture with a treble clef containing a melodic line and a bass clef with dense chordal accompaniment. Dynamics include *ff* and *fff*.

Ex. 3.11: *La fanciulla del West*, coda, III/44/9-end

The first system is marked *Lentamente* and *pp*, with annotations "whole-tone on C", "E major", and "WT". The second system is marked *ppp* and *rit*. The third system is marked *ppp* and *ritando*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

The construction of the prelude merits a closer look. As noted, the first sonority is comprised of the augmented triad C-E-G-sharp over a B-flat bass. Two of the three thematic cells discussed herein are intervallic subsets of this combination: the major second (B-flat-C, or G-sharp (A-flat)-B-flat) and the open (usually major) third (C-E, E-G-sharp, or G-sharp (A-flat)-C). The third thematic cell is derived from a combination of these two: an ascending leap of a major third followed by two descending whole steps, hereafter the “do-mi-re-do pattern”: we hear this pattern in the first four melodic pitch classes, C-E-D-C.

On the musical surface of the opera, even the “local color” Puccini borrows, in fact, exhibits bits of this primary thematic material: he includes, for example, the textual refrain from Stephen Foster’s “Camptown Races” (“doo-dah”), which in the original is set to a descending major second.<sup>32</sup> (The first part of the pentatonic tune, unquoted in the opera, is also a combination of thirds and seconds.) With seeming irony, Puccini quotes the refrain in inversion, as an *ascending* major second. Below, in Examples 3.12a-c, are several selections of *La fanciulla del West* foreground material based on the major second. Exx. 3.12d-e and 3.12f-g show material derived from the other two thematic cells.<sup>33</sup>

Ex. 3.12: *La fanciulla del West*, major seconds, open thirds, do-mi-re-do patterns

a) I/2/0-3

b) I/6/2-3

<sup>32</sup>Several non-American scholars have erroneously identified this song as “Dooda Dooda Day.”

<sup>33</sup>Girardi also has a similar discussion. Girardi, *Puccini*, 292ff.



c) I/17/5

d) Act I finale

e) II/0/5

f) I/21/9

g) I/99/6-7

The construction of the entire thirty-five-bar prelude itself can be seen as deriving from the division of the octave into equal parts, and its related cyclic constructions. The whole-tone collection built on C (WT0) can be divided into two augmented triads: C-E-G-sharp and B-flat-D-F-sharp. The first of these, C-E-G-sharp, is heard synchronically or “vertically” at the outset over the bass note B-flat; the other, B-flat-D-F-sharp, is presented “horizontally,” distributed diachronically over the length of the prelude.<sup>34</sup> Puccini has placed each “leg” of the B-flat-D-F-sharp triad in the bass, at distances of approximately twelve measures, which divides the introduction roughly into thirds. The first of these sections begins with the initial B-flat as a bass note; at I/1/0 the opening sonority recurs but now with F-sharp in the bass. Lastly, at I/1/11, we have a pure D-minor triad, with pitch class D in the bass. From this point, both the soprano and bass lines move through arpeggiations of the minor seventh D-F-A-C, to return to pitch class C at 1/17. [Ex. 3.13]

Ex. 3.13: *La fanciulla del West*, prelude, expanded motivic structures

< do - mi - re - do >

augmented triad B $\flat$  - F $\sharp$  - D      D minor—m7      C major

In the larger design of this prelude, we can find each of the three thematic cells, also shown in Ex. 3.10. The vertical major ninth C-D at I/1/13 and (on a deeper level) the move from D minor through the minor seventh chord to C, derive from the major second neighbor motion, the first of the thematic cells. We can also trace the expansion of our third motivic cell, “do-mi-re-do” (C-E-D-C), here. C is reasserted over F-sharp at I/1/0, and, seven bars later, the motion C-E is repeated twice in the soprano, accentuating pitch class E. This is followed by D in the soprano (emphasized with fermatas at I/1/11 and I/1/13) and then, finally, C at I/1/17. Immediately after the prelude, as the curtain opens, we hear E major; thus, a larger-scale motion from C to E can be traced here, an enlargement of the second motivic cell, the major third.

<sup>34</sup>Puccini has also used the complementary whole-tone hexachord (C-sharp-D-sharp-F-G-A-B) as a type of dominant substitution, at I/0/3 and I/1/3.

These motivic resources are exploited throughout the first act of the opera, which is, in many aspects, a composing-out of the prelude's construction. Like the prelude, the act is divided roughly into three sections, reflecting musical (and dramatic) divisions. Those musico-dramatic units span from the end of the prelude to the entrance of Minnie, the Girl herself (I/42, punctuated by a pistol shot);<sup>35</sup> from there to the entrance of Johnson-Ramerrez, the bandit with a heart (I/72); and from there to the end of the act, when the two fall in love. At each of these articulation points, pitch class C is reasserted and thus C can be seen to be (conceptually) prolonged throughout: when Minnie enters, we hear her theme, which will return to close the act and which begins and ends in C;<sup>36</sup> at Johnson's entrance, we hear the "cakewalk" theme in C,<sup>37</sup> and the act ends on a surprising and evocative C major ninth.

The stunning conclusion of the first act of *La fanciulla*, on a pianissimo major ninth chord was daring for an Italian opera composer of his time (even though several years earlier, in 1904, Puccini had ended both acts of the original version of *Madama Butterfly* with unresolved harmonies).<sup>38</sup> The theatrical effect produced here can only be described as "ethereal," reflecting Minnie's recall of Johnson's words, "the face of an angel" and possibly the theme of redemption. Motivically, it recalls the D-C major second interval we saw in the prelude, and the first thematic cell. The presence of an unresolved D over the act's tonic C also looks ahead to the opening D-major key of the next act and to the completion of the opera's rising major third key plan.

## *Suor Angelica*

A delicate miniature set in a seventeenth-century Italian convent, *Suor Angelica*, the middle member of Puccini's *Il trittico*, exhibits organizing musical techniques similar to those discussed above, but brought to a new level of sophistication. Here as well, the surface motivic material springs from the opening motive: off-stage bells that commence with the pitches F-D-E-C. [Ex. 3.14, next page]

<sup>35</sup>As with the cannon blast that marks the middle of the first act of *Tosca*, Puccini has not made his articulation points difficult to spot.

<sup>36</sup>See the discussion of this passage in Chapter 1 above.

<sup>37</sup>After Johnson's entrance, the harmony moves directly to E major by way of the augmented triad C-E-G-sharp (sung by Johnson as E-C-G-sharp). Both the augmented triad and the move from C to E are motivically related to the MPI.

<sup>38</sup>Verdi's 1893 *Otello* begins with a dominant eleventh chord on C, but there are no unresolved dissonances at the ends of the opera's acts.

Ex. 3.14: *Suor Angelica*, prelude

There are two basic motivic contours to which the opening pre-curtain prelude (the MPI) of *Suor Angelica* gives rise. The most obvious intervallic shape, suggested by the first four pitch classes F-D-E-C, is a pair of thirds; the second is the double-neighbor figure (F-D-E) formed by the first three notes only. (The double-neighbor contour can be even more directly linked to the first four notes of the second measure of the prelude, F-E-D-E.)<sup>39</sup> With these two primary shapes in mind, one can track their incarnations in the surface melodic contours of this opera. In addition, Puccini has enhanced the cohesive effect of this procedure by setting many of these thematically related bits to a shared dotted rhythm.<sup>40</sup>

Exx. 3.15a-b show two of the most striking motivic derivatives of the third pattern, which appear at the central dramatic climax of the opera, the confrontation between Angelica and her Princess aunt. The first of these reflects the ominous shift in mood by presenting the motivic shape in *minor mode* and in *retrograde*. The second is Angelica's solo aria "Senza mamma" whose opening gesture is an elaborated version of the same pattern. The same figure can also be heard in the theme first played at 10/5 [Ex. 3.15c].

Ex. 3.15: *Suor Angelica*, thirds

a) 42/0



<sup>39</sup>Although the second pitch class of this pattern, E, is initially presented as a passing tone, Puccini uses the entire surface shape as a source for the primary motivic material. When this material is developed, the passing E can be transformed into a primary note in a double-neighbor figure. It is precisely this possibility for multiple musical meanings that lends the interrelationship of motives its creative flexibility.

<sup>40</sup>Girardi covers similar ground in Girardi, *Puccini*, 399ff.

b) 60/1-3

**Lento grave** < falling 3<sup>rd</sup>s >

Sen-za ma-mma, o bim-bo, tu sei mor-to

c) 10/5

< falling 3<sup>rd</sup>s >

The second of the opera's thematic cells, the double neighbor, is shown in its surface guises in Exx. 3.16a-c:

Ex. 3.16: *Suor Angelica*, double-neighbor patterns

a) 25/7

a) 25/7 < double neighbor >

b) 26/6-8

**Andantino** < double neighbor >

c) 39/1-2

< double neighbor >

(In 3.16a, the dotted rhythm is replaced by a close rhythmic approximation using rests.)<sup>41</sup>

Like each of the other operas we have examined so far in this chapter, *Suor Angelica* can be seen to have a large-scale design derived from its expanded MPI, the first four pitch classes, F-D-E-C. (The pitch classes of the second measure, F-E-D-E-C, will also have an important role to play in this regard.) Both initial fragments fill in the interval of a perfect fourth F to C, and, on the largest scale, the opera moves from F major at the start down a fourth to C major at the close. Thus the plagal nature of the overall structure—the essential thrust of the harmonic plan of this religious work—could be seen to symbolize a grand “Amen.”

One might stop here, using just the final point of arrival of this one-act opera as a guide. But it is possible to explore further. In the Introduction to this book, a brief section of *Suor Angelica* was presented in Ex. I.1 that seemed to make no functional harmonic sense: it traversed the keys C-sharp minor, E major, C major, an F-sharp half-diminished chord and the key of E minor seemingly without any harmonic logic. But, as noted there, almost every vertical harmony contains pitch class E. Like an “internal” pedal point, then, E is conceptually invariant throughout this scene, even though the harmonies can seem randomly dispersed, or led astray by fleeting textual references. [Ex. 3.17]

Ex. 3.17: *Suor Angelica*, prolongation of E, 52/0-53/0

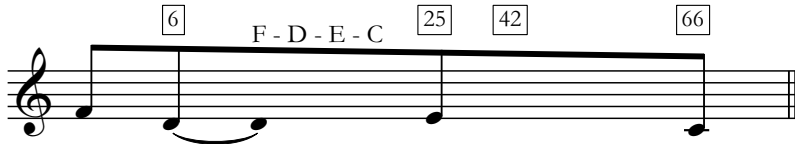
C# minor E major C major<sup>6</sup> F#<sup>7</sup> E minor

In many of his operas—but nowhere as succinctly as in *Suor Angelica*—Puccini uses extended pitch classes, such as this E, to make their way through the maze of foreground harmonies; they appear as either tonicized notes, consonant common tones connecting harmonies, or dissonant pedal points. These long notes can contribute to the “map” of the work, in an expansion of the MPI.

<sup>41</sup>For further prominent examples of dotted rhythms, see 8/1, 15/1, 17/0 (the so-called “death” motive) and 50/3.

As noted previously, in the second act of *Tosca*, sometimes these long pitch classes are interrupted by an expressive or parenthetical “grafting” (*innesto*, a type of *indirect conflation*) such as a solo aria. These arias, notoriously, could be transposed at whim by singers; but after the interruption, the background key would resume immediately. So, in order to trace the expansion of the MPI over larger spans of this opera, we must recognize this more complex layering technique, and not look only at harmonic arrival points, although, as tonicized pitch classes, cadences will play a part as well. Space limitations prohibit a detailed exegesis of this process in *Suor Angelica*, which can be found elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> Let it suffice here to sketch an outline of the expanded MPI. [Ex. 3.18]

Ex. 3.18: *Suor Angelica*, expansion of F-D-E-C



As noted previously, the extended invariant pitch classes observed in this opera bear something of a family resemblance to what Pierluigi Petrobelli has termed *sonorità*: a vocal pitch (not pitch class) that is harmonized by a series of consonant chords or key areas. As Rothstein writes, “Petrobelli argued that Azucena’s music in *Il trovatore* centers around a single melodic pitch, B4, which is alternately harmonized by the keys of E minor and G major. At about the same time, [Martin] Chusid demonstrated the centrality of the pitch C4 to the music sung by two baritone characters in *Rigoletto*, Monterone and *Rigoletto* himself.<sup>43</sup> In Puccini’s case, however, these invariant notes are pitch classes are carried mostly by the orchestra, and often present in dissonant elements, such as pedal points.

The E in *Suor Angelica*’s design is supported by A minor, E major, C-sharp minor, E minor, and the series of seemingly non-functional chords that contain E, as described above, as well as an E (bass) pedal

<sup>42</sup>See Burton, “An Analysis,” Chapter VI.

<sup>43</sup>Rothstein, “Common-tone Tonality”: §12.

point from 43/10 to 44, and from 46/9-11.<sup>44</sup> The other three pitch classes that constitute the MPI are crowned by full cadences: F at 3/2, D at 10/4 and C at 66/0.<sup>45</sup> [Exx 3.19a-c]

Ex. 3.19: *Suor Angelica*, motivically related arrival points

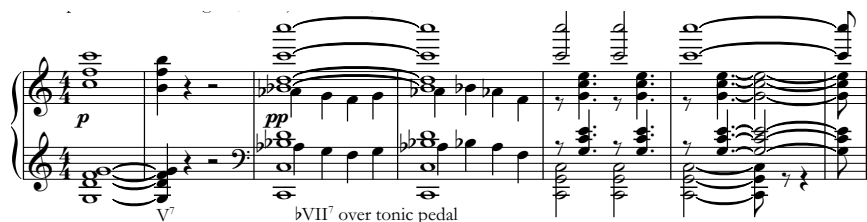
a) F-major cadence, 3/0-2



b) D-major cadence, 10/2-4



c) C-major cadence, 65/9-66/0



<sup>44</sup>E initially receives consonant support from A minor (39/0) A major (41/0), and the unusual key of C-sharp minor (42/0), symbolic perhaps of the dark heart of this opera. After the arresting juxtaposition of C-sharp minor and C minor that opens this section (Ex. 3.22), E appears as a pedal point at 43/10-44/0, after which it remains active through assorted harmonies. At 46/0, E minor once again takes over and the E pedal point returns at 46/9-11. Pitch class E continues, after an interpolation at 47 of G-flat major, through A major and C-sharp minor to appear, from 52/2, as a consonant member of several chords as seen above, and of A minor at 53/2. When the Princess tells Angelica that her son has died, at 56/0, a whole-tone section with ostinato C-B-flat-E commences, with E as the (emphasized) lowest pitch. The dramatic confrontation is now over, but E remains: through a C-sharp minor seventh at 57/0, E major four bars later and finally, in a repetition of the music opening this scene, an E pedal point, first under B-flat major and then, at 58/5, unadornedly alone.

<sup>45</sup>Greenwald hears a major arrival point a little earlier: “because there are few points of arrival in *Suor Angelica*, the event of closure at the end of ‘Senza mamma’ is a dramatic landmark.” Greenwald, “Verdi’s Patriarch,” 231.



The final member of the expanded opening motive, C is fully established with a cadence in C major at 66/0, which seems curiously like a final resolution, except that the bass note falls away, leaving the less stable fifth scale degree in the bass, a 6/4 inversion. For although Puccini writes a perfect authentic cadence on the tonic—set to an “Amen” and followed by a “pausa lunga,” creating a strong sense of completion—the tonal “door” is left open: still to come are Angelica’s suicide and the miracle.<sup>46</sup>

An almost identical C-major resolution is heard at the end of the work, but with two important changes: there will be no true dominant, and the tonic note will remain in the bass at the end. The harmony in the final measures moves directly from a cadential 6/4 at 84/0/5, presented again with double-neighbor figures, to the same complex sonority before the C tonic that occurs in Ex. 3.19c, a dominant 7 on flat  $\sharp$ , over a tonic pedal. While this harmony contains D and F, which could suggest a dominant (G7) feeling, it is noteworthy that the actual dominant, and the leading tone, have been omitted the second time around.<sup>47</sup> The dominant pitch G is present beneath the cadential 6/4, from 84/0-5, but the expected resolution to G major never comes. [Ex. 3.20]

Ex. 3.20: *Suor Angelica*, 84/4 - conclusion

The musical score for Ex. 3.20 is presented in a grand staff format. The bass clef part (piano) features a G pedal (indicated by a bracket and the text 'G pedal') that spans the entire duration. The piano part begins with a cadential 6/4 chord (C major triad over F) and moves to a complex sonority (C major triad over F with a dominant 7 on flat). The vocal line (treble clef) features double-neighbor figures. The score is marked with 'PPP lamentoso' and 'PPPP'.

<sup>46</sup>Hepokoski discusses the rotational aspect of much of this opera, from rehearsal numbers 61 to 66: “The cyclic repetition of this music, with some variants and interpolations, begins immediately and continues to the end of the opera, which thus closes with an enhanced restatement of the music that has led us into rehearsal no. 66. Such an obvious double-cycling at the close can trigger the suspicion that a more generalized impulse toward circularity and rotation might also have been at work, albeit less self-evidently, in earlier portions of the opera.” He relates this to the “obsessively circular madness and suicide of Angelica.” Hepokoski, “Structure, Implication”: 243, 264.

<sup>47</sup>Since the first cadence at 66 contained a true dominant with leading tone, it seems unconvincing that this final, abridged cadence should be considered “modal” for its lack of a leading tone (B-flat not B), as some authors have written.

It is possible to conjecture that the overall construction of *Suor Angelica* is scaffolded upon two arpeggios of the triad F-A-C that support large-scale expansions of the opening motive. The first of these arpeggios is distorted by an initial move to C-sharp minor, temporarily creating an expansion of the augmented triad F-A-C-sharp, but which resolves to C at 66/0.

Rehearsal number 66/2 is the moment in the score parallel to 36/1 where, as we have seen, there began a large-scale arpeggiation of the augmented triad F-A-C-sharp that heralded the arrival of the Zia Principessa: now the Virgin Mary is approaching, and the remaining music outlines, on a background level, F-A-C instead. After the initial F major (supporting pitch class F), the score stays parallel to the former version, including a move to A minor supporting E at 69/0, until 75/0 where, although A remains as a bass pedal, the tonality is D major. This change is significant: in the first version, a prolonged D had preceded the prolongation of pitch class E. Here, it is interpolated within it. The motive, then, that we can see expanded now is F-E-D-E-C, the pitch classes of the *second* measure of the prelude. [Ex. 3.21<sup>48</sup>]

Ex. 3.21: *Suor Angelica*, diagram of opera with structural bass arpeggios

The appearance of the C-sharp minor section occurs at the moment of greatest dramatic conflict, the confrontation between Suor Angelica and her Princess Aunt, as Greenwald has discussed.<sup>49</sup> At this moment, the psychological dissonance of the dramatic situation has a parallel in the dissonance of the C-sharp, which has taken the place of C and thus warped the major triad into an augmented one. Puccini has

<sup>48</sup>The harmonic support for D, seen at rehearsal number 6, represents a verticalization of an expanded augmented triad: at 4/0, D minor appears, followed by a sixteen-bar D major section at 5/0, which ends with an “Amen” over a D chord (F-sharp in the bass); at 6/0, a B-flat major section commences, but is interrupted at 6/8 by a Leitmotiv, most probably representing the Virgin Mary, which alternates between E-flat minor and G-flat major. Both of these tonalities support pitch classes G-flat (F-sharp) as well as B-flat; pitch class D is soon re-asserted at 8/0, with an A major “andante” section that resolves to D major at 10/4, as seen in Ex. 3.20b above.

<sup>49</sup>Greenwald, “Verdi’s Patriarch”: 232-3. See also Chapter 12 of this volume.

shown this C-sharp-C struggle quite clearly on the foreground level as well, as seen in Ex. I.1 and in Ex. 3.22 below.<sup>50</sup>

Ex. 3.22: *Suor Angelica*, C minor and C-sharp minor, 45/0-4

C# minor                      C minor                      C# minor

\* \* \* \* \*

Is the MPI then the secret code to Puccini's compositional technique that will solve all his mysteries? Hardly. Each of Puccini's operas is a unique creation, often written after years of creative rumination, and each demonstrating a new complexity in his creative abilities. The individuality of the operas' identities makes it improbable that all would be constructed in exactly this way. Puccini's first opera, *Le villi*, for example, has not yielded any clear use of the MPI, and it is impossible to determine for his last, unfinished *Turandot* whether any large-scale motivic expansion would have been played out in the final score. In the case of *Madama Butterfly*, both acts begin with fugal counterpoint, which both begin with rising thirds, but which so far have yielded no parallelism to the overall structure. *Edgar* also seems to display little evidence of the MPI, although in the revised version that Puccini completed in 1905, the last act ends in B minor, possibly reflecting a connection with the anomalous B minor that appears as the third chord of the opening D-major passage. On a slightly larger scale, before the first return of the opening material at I/2/0, the *dominant* of B minor is reached, but no resolution is present. It is unlikely but conceivable that this sort of tonal "problem" could have been set up to be musically "solved" by Puccini's retroactive decision to end the opera in B minor.

<sup>50</sup>The scene between Angelica and her aunt comes exactly at the temporal mid-point of the opera, and also marks the end of the dramatic exposition and the first of two "arrivals" at the convent, one shadowy and cruel, the other luminous and loving. Therefore, it is tempting to link this dramatic bifurcation point with a musical one, an option Greenwald chooses. *Ibid.*, 232. But, although Puccini's musical scheme is indeed bipartite, this moment does not mark the end of the first half of the deep musical structure: that does not occur until the resolution of the C-sharp to C, at 66/0, and the first expanded MPI is complete.

The beginning of *Il tabarro* suggests something along these lines as well since the first sonority is a dissonant ninth over G: the anomalous A must somehow resolve, if all is to end tonally. In fact, at the C minor close of the opera the melodic pair A-G is repeated three times, displacing a standard melodic close on the tonic note C. It seems as though Puccini goes out of his way to use A here, and not A-flat, the normative sixth degree of C minor, played only one bar before. [Exx. 3.23a-b]

Ex. 3.23: *Il tabarro*

a) opening, with G and A juxtaposed

Musical notation for Ex. 3.23a, showing the opening of *Il tabarro*. The score is in 3/8 time. The bass line starts with a G note, and the treble line starts with an A note. The two notes are juxtaposed, creating a dissonant ninth interval. The notation includes a treble clef, a bass clef, and a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

b) conclusion, A resolves to G

Musical notation for Ex. 3.23b, showing the conclusion of *Il tabarro*. The score is in 4/4 time. The bass line starts with a G note, and the treble line starts with an A note. The two notes are juxtaposed, creating a dissonant ninth interval. The notation includes a treble clef, a bass clef, and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The A note in the treble line resolves to a G note in the final measure.

If indeed the MPIs of these works relate to the overall organization, they would function like the Baedeker guides of the past, suggesting general itineraries as well as useful details to note along the way. But reading such a *vademecum* can in no way take the place of an actual visit, replete with all the sensory intoxication live experiences bring. And so no claim is being made that the immanent interrelationships proposed here, both small and large, speak for the entirety of the compositions. Whatever insight this discussion of the MPI may bring, it should only entice us to explore farther and deeper into this musical terrain.

## **PART TWO**



## Chapter 4

# An individual voice: traditional and progressive elements in *Le villi*

“A work out of the ordinary.”

“In his music there is always an individual, original stamp.”

“Artistic individuality [...] a laudable aversion to the conventional.”

“Singular talent and such original, masculine beauty, for a public that was completely unprepared for it.”<sup>1</sup>

These reactions, written after the première of Puccini’s first opera to a libretto by Ferdinando Fontana,<sup>2</sup> may seem odd to today’s listeners: of

“Un lavoro fuor del comune” [*Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, XL/5, 1 febbraio 1885]; “Ma nella sua musica c’è sempre un’impronta individuale, originale” [*Gazzetta Ferrarese*, reported in *Il Teatro Illustrato* XII/13, 4 February 1892]; “individualità artistica [...] una lodevole avversione al convenzionale.” [*Gazzetta del Popolo* (Turin), reported by *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, XL/1 4 January 1885]; “singolari attitudini e così maschie, originali bellezze, ad un pubblico che non vi era per nulla preparato.” [Filippo Filippi in *La Perseveranza* (Milan) 26 January 1885, reported by the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* XL/5, 1 February 1885, 45]. These reviews were for the revised two-act version, which carried the name *Le villi*. (The subtitle was also changed from “legend in one act and two parts” to “Opera ballo in two acts.”) The original one-act work, entitled *Le willis*, had also received similar responses after its première on 31 May 1884 at the Teatro dal Verme in Milan. In *Il Mondo Artistico*, XVIII, 24-5, 10 June 1884, Milan, 2-3, the reviewer elaborated further: “The event that has attracted all the public attention in these last days was the performance at the Dal Verme of the operetta in one act by Puccini: *Le Willis*. The first ones who something of this composition quickly noted merit in the young maestro that was out of the ordinary.” [L’avvenimento che ha assorbita tutta l’attenzione del pubblico, in questi ultimi giorni, è stata la rappresentazione al Dal Verme dell’operetta in un atto del Puccini: *Le Willis*. I primi cui fu dato di udire qualche cosa di questa composizione, accennarono subito ad un valore nel giovane maestro fuori dal comune. [...] Quoted in Marco Capra, “Tra wagnerismo, sinfonismo e giovane Scuola: gli inizi della carriera di Puccini nel racconto della stampa periodica” in *Giacomo Puccini: L’uomo, il musicista, il panorama europeo: Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi su Giacomo Puccini nel 70o anniversario della morte*, eds. Gabriella Biagi Ravenni and Carolyn Gianturco. (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1997, 31, 37-8.

<sup>2</sup>Ferdinando Fontana (1850-1919) was a poet, journalist and librettist. In addition to collaborating with Puccini on his first two operas, he also suggested the subjects of *Manon Lescaut* and *Tosca* to Puccini. Fontana also wrote libretti for Ponchielli, Franchetti, Buzzi-Peccia, and Burgmein (Giulio Ricordi’s pseudonym) among others. In his youth, his mother’s death forced him to quit school and help provide for his two younger sisters. He did menial work, and worked at the *Corriere di Milano* as a (cont.)

all of the composer's theatrical works, *Le villi* seems the most traditional. At first glance, it appears to be a "numbers" opera with traditional prelude and introductory chorus, and the chorus serves as narrator, a conventional device with which Puccini soon dispensed.<sup>3</sup> There are solos and duets as well (without traditional recitatives, however.) In comparison with his later works, the diatonicism is much clearer and there is no trace of the MPI.<sup>4</sup>

A closer look at the score reveals something even more unusual: two different numbering systems, both original to the autograph score.<sup>5</sup> There are indeed individual set-pieces (numbered 1 to 10) but there are also sequential rehearsal marks (1 to 59) that traverse both acts. The second system betrays the fact that the musical score is almost completely continuous, with a strong reliance on instrumental sections.<sup>6</sup> Because of these latter two features, given the cultural milieu of Italy at the time, the score was considered "symphonic"; that is, Wagnerian and progressive, despite its traditional elements.<sup>7</sup> The two numbering systems are emblematic of the stylistic duality that pervades this piece.

Indeed, the "symphonic" aspect of *Le villi* is mentioned most in the contemporary reviews: "Puccini is distinguished essentially by

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proof-reader; he later wrote poems and plays in Milanese dialect, and was a member of the literary *scapigliatura*. For more information see Biancamaria Longoni, "Vita e opere di Ferdinando Fontana," *Quaderni Pucciniani* (1992): 237-46.

<sup>3</sup>Also noted in Greenwald, "Dramatic Exposition," 103.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter 3.

<sup>5</sup>The rehearsal numbers in *Le villi* are sequential through all individual numbers and acts. Therefore score locations might have been indicated by those alone; however, as an aid to the reader, we have added a Roman numeral indicating the act.

<sup>6</sup>Elphinstone notes that the symphonic intermezzi were written in the original version to be heard during onstage scenes, in the single-act opera. Michael Elphinstone, "*Le villi*, *Edgar*, and the Symphonic Element," in *The Puccini Companion*. William Weaver and Simonetta Puccini, eds. (New York: Norton, 1994), 82. Mascagni adopted the technique of including a symphonic intermezzo, which soon became known as "intermezzo mascagnano." Puccini complained, in a letter to Carlo Clausetti of 9 August 1895: "*Le villi* initiated the type that today is called 'mascagnano' and no one gives me credit for it." Gara, *Carteggi*, 117. [*Le villi* hanno iniziato il tipo che oggi si chiama 'mascagnano' e nessuno mi ha reso giustizia.]

<sup>7</sup>There was also a growing attraction, especially in northern Italy, to instrumental music. Witness Fontana's statement, "Pure instrumental music gains proselytes every day." [la musica pura instrumentale guadagna proseliti ogni giorno.] Ferdinando Fontana, *In Teatro* (Rome: Sommaruga, 1884), 29. Baragwanath writes, "Puccini's first opera, *Le villi* (1883-85), bears witness to the influence of these decades of reform in its "Romantic" subject matter, its extended orchestral interludes, its loosening of traditional verse structures, and, not least, in its quotation (in m. 15) of the head motive of the Last Supper theme from *Parsifal*" Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 37.



his instrumental colors,”<sup>8</sup> and “symphonism abounds and gives *Le villi* a new, pleasing expression, apart from the usual, conventional lyric opera.”<sup>9</sup> Verdi himself chimed in: “I have heard much good of the musician Puccini. [...] It seems, however, that the symphonic element predominates in him! No harm in that. Only that one must do this cautiously. Opera is opera; symphony is symphony, and I don’t believe that in an opera it is nice to put in a symphonic passage just so the orchestra can play away.”<sup>10</sup> In sum, *Le villi* is Janus-faced, a mixture of old and new, of Italian tradition and the *wagnerismo* of the (then) future—and as such, emblematic of all Puccini operas to come.

In fact, Puccini’s first opera was written for a competition (the first Concorso Sonzogno, which he lost) the rules of which required *precisely* this double trait. The contest announcement reads: “The music must be inspired by the fine traditions of Italian opera, but without renouncing the fruits of the science of contemporary sounds, whether domestic or foreign.”<sup>11</sup> These last few words indicated that at least some of the judges (there were five, two of whom were Puccini’s professors at the Milan Conservatory)<sup>12</sup> were open to the modern, Wagnerian trends, but adapted to Italian sensibilities—a compromise forged in the overheated Verdi-Wagner culture wars of the times. In essence, then, Puccini was simply completing the task at hand.

This raises the question as to how Puccini could have been perceived as “original” when many young composers were following the same leads—enough, indeed, to compete in this public contest. But

<sup>8</sup>*Il Mondo Artistico*, XVIII, 24-5, 10 June 1884, 2-3. Quoted in Capra, 37. [Il Puccini si distingue essenzialmente per i suoi colori di istrumentale.]

<sup>9</sup>Filippo Filippi, *La Perseveranza*, 26 January 1885, as reported by the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* XL/5, 1 February 1885, 45. Quoted in Capra, 41. [abbonda il sinfonismo e che dà alle Villi un aspetto nuovo, per me aggradevole, all’infuori del solito melodramma lirico convenzionale.]

<sup>10</sup>Gara, *Carteggi*, 12. [Ho sentito a dir molto bene del musicista Puccini. [...] Pare però che predomini in lui l’elemento sinfonico! Niente di male. Soltanto bisogna andar cauti in questo. L’opera è l’opera: la sinfonia è la sinfonia, e non credo che in un’opera sia bello fare uno squarcio sinfonico, pel sol piacere di far ballare l’orchestra.]

<sup>11</sup>Mario Morini, Nandi Ostali, Piero Ostali, Jr., *Casa musicale Sonzogno: cronologie, saggi, testimonianze* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1995) vol. 1, 259. [La musica dovrà essere ispirata alle buone tradizioni dell’opera italiana, ma senza rinunciare ai portati della scienza dei suoni contemporanea, così nostrale che straniera.] The announcement for the second incarnation of the competition, which Mascagni won to great acclaim with *Cavalleria Rusticana* in 1890, omitted the final four words. *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>12</sup>The judges were Amilcare Ponchielli, composer and teacher; Pietro Platania, organist for the Milan Duomo; Franco Faccio, conductor and author; Cesare Dominiceti, composer and collaborator with Boito; and Amintore Galli, musicologist, professor of aesthetics, and composer.

even amidst the popularity of current musical trends, Puccini apparently stood out. He had made a strong impression of individualism on the Milanese musical community, almost from the first day he arrived. His entrance test at the conservatory already shows a predilection for extended chords. After the exam, Puccini wrote to his mother telling her the test had posed no difficulty at all for him. He had had to complete a parallel period<sup>13</sup> using the given D-major phrase thus:<sup>14</sup> [Ex. 4.0]

Ex. 4.0: Puccini's entrance exam solution

The pitch B on the last quarter of the second measure, which begins Puccini's consequent phrase, implies an A dominant ninth chord. A less imaginative student might have filled out the period in more obvious ways, such as: [Exx. 4.1a-b]

Exx. 4.1a-b: hypothetical exam solutions

<sup>13</sup>“Parallel period,” also known as “antecedent-consequent phrase,” is sometimes referred to in the Schoenbergian *formenlehre* tradition as simply “period”: its standard form consists of two four-bar or eight-bar phrases in which both begin with the same material, but the first phrase ends on a weak, usually half, cadence and the second ends on a stronger cadence to close the theme. For further discussion of Classical period design and terminology, see William Caplin, *Classical form: a theory of formal functions for the instrumental music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>14</sup>Gara, *Carteggi*, 1. [November 1880] “My exam was a joke because they had me accompany a very easy one-line, unfigured bass, and then they had me develop a melody in D major [...] It went even too well.” [l'esame mio fu una sciocchezza perchè mi fecero accompagnare un basso scritto di una riga, senza numeri e facilissimo e poi mi fecero svolgere una melodia in re maggiore [...] è andata anche troppo bene.] The original text in the example reads [soggetto dato / di qui in giù è mia].

Bonifacio Asioli, the first director of the Milan Conservatory whose texts were used there, included eleventh and thirteenth chords in his *regola dell'ottava*, considering them “third and fourth additions.”<sup>15</sup> Still, for an entering student to use these extended chords with facility would have been impressive.

Puccini's penchant for extended chords made its way into *Le villi* as well, in some striking ways.<sup>16</sup> In the first example, the melody begun in the vocal line is completed by the orchestra, another symptom of “symphonism.” [Exx. 4.2a-c]

Ex. 4.2: *Le villi*, extended chords

a) D11 at I/14/26

b) E11 at I/22/3

c) D13 at I/18/4>

<sup>15</sup>Asioli, *Il maestro di composizione*. See also Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 154.

<sup>16</sup>This is also noted in Girardi, 28-9.

It would be another three years before Verdi would open his *Otello* with a C eleventh chord, re-asserting with this progressive gesture his place, at the advanced age of seventy-four, as the still-vibrant leader of the Italian operatic school. And another C eleventh, which opens Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and paves the way for that opera's other extended chords, would not be heard until 1890, six years after its composer played contrabass at the première of *Le villi*.<sup>17</sup>

It was not only Puccini's progressive sonorities that had won him support. His skills at traditional musical techniques were also well developed. The requirements of the Istituto Musicale of Lucca had been stringent, and very conservative. As Baragwanath writes, "By the time he enrolled at the Milan Conservatory [...] he was, by Lucchese standards, already a fully-trained musician."<sup>18</sup> Students of counterpoint and composition at the Lucca Conservatory (known then as the Istituto Musicale "G. Pacini") learned figured bass, simple, imitative and double counterpoint, canon, fugue, and periodology (the joining of melodic phrases into periods) among other subjects.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, Puccini arrived in Milan the scion of four generations of *maestri di capella* (a position also destined for young Giacomo), whose father had been the director of the Istituto Musicale in Lucca, from 1852 until his early death (Michele Puccini *père*, was a composer who also compiled two practical theoretical treatises).<sup>20</sup> Puccini placed highest on the entrance exam to the Milan Conservatory (a test that Verdi had failed)<sup>21</sup> and went on to win honors there, writing scholarly

<sup>17</sup>There are many similarities between *Le villi* and *Cavalleria Rusticana*, beyond the fact that they were both written for the Sonzogno competition (in different years). In a letter from Alfredo Catalani to the critic Giuseppe Depanis of 26 January 1893, the former quotes composer Alberto Franchetti as saying, "At Hamburg when *Cavalleria* was produced there, they found that it derived from *Le villi*." Carner, *Puccini*, 31.

<sup>18</sup>Baragwanath. *The Italian Traditions*, 47, 55: "During Giacomo Puccini's time at the Istituto Musicale, eight years of study was the norm. Four years of rudiments were followed by a further three years of advanced studies, the whole course being rounded off with a final year of 'composition.'"

<sup>19</sup>See Giulio Battelli, "Giacomo Puccini all'Istituto Musicale 'G. Pacini'" in *Giacomo Puccini: L'uomo, il musicista, il panorama europeo. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi su Giacomo Puccini nel 70o anniversario della morte*, eds. Gabriella Biagi and Carolyn Gianturco. (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1997), 5-6.

<sup>20</sup>See Burton, "Michele Puccini's Counterpoint Treatise" and Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*.

<sup>21</sup>Puccini wrote home to his mother, 10 November 1880: "This morning I was at the Conservatory and I saw that I was the best of everyone, modesty apart." [stamattina sono stato al Conservatorio e ho veduto che sono stato il migliore di tutti, modestia a parte.] Arnaldo Marchetti, *Puccini com'era* (Milan: Curci, 1973), 15. Verdi was never admitted to the Milan Conservatory, an institution that now bears his name.

fugues along the way. This image of Puccini as a highly trained composer and contrapuntist is still not generally known today.

The support he gained proved quite useful. Although Puccini lost this competition, sponsored by the publishing house Sonzogno,<sup>22</sup> his opera was bought by the rival publishing house run by Giulio Ricordi, to whom the young composer was introduced by none other than his own professor of composition, Amilcare Ponchielli, one of the judges of the competition.<sup>23</sup> There are some today who see in this a conspiracy to bring together Puccini and the Ricordi firm,<sup>24</sup> a collaboration that eventually produced all of Puccini's works, save *La rondine*. Whatever the truth of the situation, Puccini would gain sympathetic public acclaim for having been overlooked by the judges and Ricordi would hire a rising star.<sup>25</sup>

*Le villi* also already shows Puccini's trademark dissonant pedal points.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, *Le villi* opens with a pedal point of G that lasts

<sup>22</sup>The composer Arturo Buzzi-Peccia explained a possible reason for the competition: "At that time the public used to remain at performances which lasted four, even five hours [...] Grand opera was in great favor, but, unfortunately, the grand operas of young composers were not successful except in very rare cases, and also then they had a demi-success it lasted the life of a new moon, sometimes with a little crescent, almost full success, then waning down into the darkness of oblivion. Sonzogno, the publisher, said: 'If they are not able to make a good opera in four acts, they may be able to make a short one in one act, or two parts of one act.'"

Arturo Buzzi-Peccia, "The Young Puccini": 8, 33. Sonzogno was also responsible for bringing *Carmen* to Italy, at Naples in 1880.

<sup>23</sup>Ponchielli (1834-1886) studied at the conservatory in Milan, the city where he gave his first opera, *I promessi sposi*, in 1856. He is best known for his opera *La Gioconda*, which had a triumphal première at La Scala in 1876. He became professor of composition at the Milan Conservatory in 1883. *La Nuova Enciclopedia della Musica* (Milan: Garzanti, 1983, rep. 1991): s.v. "Ponchielli."

<sup>24</sup>See Girardi, *Puccini*, 22-3.

<sup>25</sup>In a review of *Le villi* (in the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, XL/5, 1 February 1885, 44) publisher Giulio Ricordi praised the young composer, while tossing in some gratuitous anti-Wagner sentiments: "Puccini, in our opinion, has something else, and this something else is perhaps the most precious of gifts [...] to have in one's own head (or in one's gut, as the French say) IDEAS: and these one has or one does not [...] neither are they acquired studying notes, counterpoint, harmonies, disharmonies, or sweating for hours over those hieroglyphics full of science and poison that are Wagnerian scores." [Puccini, a parer nostro, ha qualche cosa di più, e questo qualche cosa è forse la più preziosa delle doti, [...] di avere nella propria testa (ou dans son ventre, come dicono i francesi) delle IDEE: e queste si hanno o non si hanno, [...] nè si acquistano studiando e ristiudiando punti, contrappunti, armonie, disarmonie, e sudando lungamente su quei geroglifici pieni di scienza e di veleno che sono le partiture Wagneriane.]

<sup>26</sup>As noted in Chapter 2, the history of this compositional device is long, extending from Renaissance chansons to Beethoven concerti to late nineteenth-century academic fugues and Wagnerian operas.

six measures and acts ultimately as a dominant to C major. Before it resolves, however, that low G is paired with pitches D and A, creating a dominant ninth in the bass. And there is additional dissonance as well: triads of F major, C major, and D dominant seventh, ornamented with suspensions, float above. In sum, Puccini's first operatic notes form a *direct conflation*,<sup>27</sup> albeit it a simple one. [Ex. 4.3]

Ex. 4.3: *Le villi*, Act I, opening with pedal point



A variation on this sonority, with D-minor seventh chords above the G pedal, occurs at II/32/16 during the symphonic interlude “La Tregenda” before resolving to G major. [Ex. 4.4] The double pedal point on E and B at II/33/4 is surmounted by the clashing triads of D major, C major, B minor and A minor, written as parallel 6/4 chords, which ultimately return to E minor, prolonging that harmony. [Ex. 4.5] The pedal point on C at II/40/21 underlies mostly parallel 6/4 chords, creating a soprano line that slides chromatically from the fifth scale degree to the second, which then moves to the tonic. [Ex. 4.6] Thus, while the variety of dissonant pedal points may seem innovative, all of these pedals ultimately serve tonal functions.<sup>28</sup>

Ex. 4.4: *Le villi*, pedal point, II/32/16



<sup>27</sup>See Chapter 2.

<sup>28</sup>Other instances of pedal points occur at I/21/23, I/25/14, II/32/24, II/34/6, II/36/20, II/45/8, II/47/0, II/53/0, II/55/6, II/56/0, II/56/13, II/57/4, and II/58/0.

Ex. 4.5: *Le villi*, double pedal point, II/33/4Ex. 4.6: *Le villi*, pedal point, II/40/21-28

Not everyone acknowledged Puccini's originality, however. In fact, amid the accolades of individuality that greeted *Le villi*, another sentiment also appeared in the press: "I must note that here and there in the music of *Le villi*, not very often however, there are some hints, some half-phrases, some orchestral effects, some harmonic combinations, that recall other works."<sup>29</sup> Indeed, composer and fellow Lucchese Alfredo Catalani<sup>30</sup> claimed privately that *Le villi* was derivative of his own two operas *Elda* (1876, premiered 1880) and *Dejanice* (1883).<sup>31</sup>

One aspect of all three of these works is the use of open fifths—the very sonority to be considered emblematic of Puccini's scores,

<sup>29</sup>*Gazzetta del Popolo* (Turin), reported by *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, XL/1, 4 January 1885, 5–6. [mi corre obbligo di notare, che qua e là nella musica delle Villi, non molto spesso però, c'è qualche accenno, qualche mezza frase, qualche effetto orchestrale, qualche combinazione armonica, che ricorda altri lavori.]

<sup>30</sup>Catalani (1854–1893) was born in Lucca to a family of musicians; he entered the Istituto Musicale Pacini and studied with Puccini's uncle and first teacher, Fortunato Magi (as did Alberto Franchetti). Like Puccini a few years later, Catalani attended the Milan conservatory studying composition with Bazzini, from where he graduated with a one-act opera *La falce* (1875) to a libretto by Arrigo Boito.

<sup>31</sup>Harvey Sachs, "Manon, Mimì, Artù," in *The Puccini Companion*. William Weaver and Simonetta Puccini, eds. (New York: Norton, 1994), 125. Catalani quotes Alberto Franchetti saying, [Puccini's *Le villi*] derives from the old *Elda* from which he took, amongst other things, the theme of the Funeral March, and from *Dejanice*." Catalani goes on to say "It pleases me that it should have been he who said it, because I myself, though thinking the same, did not have the courage to say it [...] For twelve long years have I been working and fighting: should I now sit still and watch the ground being taken away from under my feet?"

especially after *La bohème*. In *Le villi*, open fifths are used as the motive of the Villi, the female spirits themselves. (These, however, are not parallel fifths, a development that will come later.) In Catalani's *Elda*, the open fifths appear only in brief, transitional passages, as in Ex. 4.7. But in *Dejanice*, the opera opens with blatant open fifths (which return later in the opera). These open fifths are in B minor, the same key as Puccini's open fifths in *Le villi*. But while Puccini may have echoed Catalani's opening musical statement (and we know that he saw and admired this opera),<sup>32</sup> the spirit of Wagner's open fifths, as in the prelude to *Der fliegende Holländer* or the "Ride of the Valkyries" (also in B minor), haunts both later works. [Exx. 4.8a-b]

Ex. 4.7: Catalani, *Elda*, open fifths



Ex. 4.8: open fifths

a) *Le villi*, I/13/47

b) Catalani, *Dejanice*, prelude

<sup>32</sup>Puccini wrote, "Last night I went to Catalani's new opera. It doesn't throw the public into raptures, but artistically speaking I think it's a fine work, and if they do it again I shall go back and see it." [Ieri sera fui all'opera nuova del Catalani; generalmente la gente non va in visibilo. Ma io dico che, artisticamente parlando, è una bella cosa e se la rifanno ci torno.] Carlo Paladini, *Giacomo Puccini: con epistolario inedito* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1961), 33.



Catalani's assertion that Puccini borrowed from his operas might have rested not only on the use of open fifths, but also on the inclusion of a waltz, the occasional dissonant pedal point, some parallel octaves and triads (Catalani even has a passage with parallel augmented triads), and the use of unisons as common-tone transitions.<sup>33</sup> However, Puccini's choice of a libretto about supernatural female spirits, like *Elda*, was one that reflected current trends in Italy, and most probably not directly influenced by the Catalani work.<sup>34</sup>

More than anything else, though, it was the Wagnerian influence that affected both composers.<sup>35</sup> In this period, both Catalani and Puccini frequently and ostentatiously used the Wagnerian half-diminished seventh chord (the *Tristan* chord).<sup>36</sup> Some prominent instances in *Le villi* are: [Exx. 4.9a-b]

Ex. 4.9: half-diminished chords

a) *Le villi*, I/17/6

b) *Le villi*, II/36/0

<sup>33</sup>Alfredo Catalani, *Elda: dramma fantastico in 4 atti* di Carlo D'Ormeville (Milan: Lucca, 1880). These characteristics can be found on the following pages of the score: waltz (74); pedal points (52, 56, 75, 104); parallel octaves and triads (7, 52, 101, 135, 136); the unison as transition (54).

<sup>34</sup>*Elda* is a story of the Lorelei, and indeed *Loreley* became the name of the work when revised in 1890.

<sup>35</sup>After writing how Puccini was *not* like Wagner, critic Filippo Filippi continues, "Wagner is a huge mine, and I don't deny that Puccini has taken some colors, some expressions from him, as do all—even those who claim to despise him." Filippo Filippi, *La Perseveranza*, 2-3 June 1884. Quoted in Elphinstone, "Le villi," 80.

<sup>36</sup>Catalani was known for being a Wagnerian, and it shows in his scores. In *Elda*, for instance, "Valhalla" is even mentioned in the text, and there are many prominent uses of the half-diminished seventh [*Tristan*] chord. In one chorus, sailors sing "Ohè," like the mariners in *Tristan*, after a stream of E half-diminished sevenths. (cont.)

The half-diminished chord is also seen in an expanded form at II/57/23 [Ex. 4.10]

Ex. 4.10: expanded half-diminished chord, II/57/23

Db - E - G - B

In addition, there are echoes of the Act III prelude of *Tristan* in Guglielmo's scene (at II/42/15), a strong reliance on the orchestra to carry the melody (see Ex. 4.2a, I/14/26) and a rudimentary use of Leitmotifs. At II/47/0, for instance, in Roberto's solo *scena*, just before giving voice to his remembrance of happier times ("Torna ai felici di"), we hear a *projection* onto minor of the second waltz tune, which had been played at I/11/0 when the elderly Guglielmo dances with a young girl, to the laughter of the crowd. But this altered reprise can also be seen as a Verdian *reminiscence motive*. [Exx. 4.11a-b]

Ex. 4.11

a) *Le villi*, I/11/0

b) *Le villi*, before II/47/0

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In *Dejanice*, the end of the prelude to Act I contains a phrase so close to the "Love of the Wolsungs" motive from the *Ring*, that it is almost plagiarism. Giving a politic nod to Verdi's *Aida*, however, he starts one aria from *Dejanice* with "O patria mia." Further, Catalani retained traditional recitatives, even as late as *La Wally*.

And later in the same scene, at II/49/0, when Roberto wonders whether Anna still lives, we hear the theme from “L’abbandono,” now accompanied by a half-diminished seventh, indicating the answer given by an omniscient orchestral narrator, which is thus apparently “no.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The musical community in Milan at this time was entranced not only with Wagner’s musical ideas and myth-based operas, but with Weber’s *Der Freischütz* and other works with fantastic stories in northern European settings.<sup>37</sup> Thus were produced such works as *Le villi*, *Elda*, and *Floria Mirabilis* (by Spyros Smaras).<sup>38</sup> Salvetti notes, in regard to these libretti, that “in the [Italian opera world of the] 1880s, ‘Wagnerism’ was limited to the choice of Nordic and fabulous subjects, which were accompanied by subtleties of timbre and ample symphonic settings.”<sup>39</sup> One of the winners of the first Concorso Sonzogno was Guglielmo Zuelli whose opera, *La Fata del Nord*, had a similar subject and ambience.

The source for *Le villi* was a French story by Alphonse Karr, “Les Willis,” published in 1852,<sup>40</sup> which inspired the *scapigliato* writer Fontana to make a libretto from it. Originally titled *Le tradite* [the deceived women], Fontana originally promised the libretto to composer Francesco Quaranta<sup>41</sup> who renounced the rights in August 1883.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup>Critic Filippi found explicit connections among *Le villi*, Weber and Wagner: “[*Le villi*] is very close to those fantastic subjects that Weber prefers, exactly because he too was the powerful colorist of whom Wagner admitted being a follower and imitator.” Filippo Filippi, *La Perseveranza*, 26 January 1885, reported by the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* XL/5, 1 February 1885, 45. Quoted in Capra, 41. [si avvicina molto a quei soggetti fantastici tedeschi che il Weber prediligeva, appunto perchè anche lui è stato quel potente colorista, del quale si è confessato seguace, imitatore, lo stesso Riccardo Wagner.]

<sup>38</sup>Maehder names several other works of this period with Nordic subjects: Catalani’s *La Wally* (1892), Smareglia’s *Cornill Schut* (1893) and Mascagni’s *L’amico Fritz* (1891), *I Rantzau* (1892) and *Guglielmo Ratcliff* (1895). Jürgen Maehder, “*Manon Lescaut* e la genesi delle strutture drammatico-musicali nel primo Puccini.” *Teatro alla Scala: Manon Lescaut*, concert program. (Milan: Edizioni del Teatro alla Scala-Rizzoli, 1992): 40.

<sup>39</sup>Guido Salvetti, “*Edgar* di Puccini nella crisi degli anni Ottanta,” *Quaderni Pucciniani* (1992): 71. [Negli anni Ottanta il ‘wagnerismo’ può dirsi limitato alla scelta di soggetti nordici e favolistici, a cui far corrispondere finzze timbriche e ampie ambientazioni sinfoniche.]

<sup>40</sup>Julian Budden, “The Genesis and Literary Sources of Giacomo Puccini’s First Opera,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1/1 (1989): 79-85.

<sup>41</sup>Francesco Quaranta (1848-1897) was born in Naples but established himself in Milan. “Quaranta” means “forty” and Fontana and Puccini slyly referred to a “N. 40” in their correspondence.

<sup>42</sup>Elphinstone, “Le villi,” 72.

Puccini met Fontana at the pensione run by Antonio Ghislanzoni (poet, journalist and sometime librettist for Verdi) where various members of the *Famiglia Artistica Milanese* were gathered.<sup>43</sup>

It seems that Fontana was interested in collaborating with Puccini precisely because of his “symphonism”: “With the success of his *Capriccio sinfonico* still fresh in my memory, I thought the young composer would need a fantastic subject, and I explained to him the plot of *Le villi*.”<sup>44</sup> And Puccini reacted in a similar vein: “I truly like it a great deal because there is much room for symphonic-descriptive work, which really pleases me because I think I could be successful with it.”<sup>45</sup>

Fontana came by his attraction to German sources through direct exposure: he had lived in Berlin from 1878-89, where he was a correspondent for the *Gazzetta Piemontese*. It was there, he said, that he first sketched *Le villi*.<sup>46</sup> And he could have been attracted to the story’s musical references and promising spots for thematic or leitmotivic reminiscences, such as the recurring mentions of a breeze and a waltz in the following passage:

The girls and boys waltzed joyously; the young people played, one on violin, the other on horn. The forest became still more silent; a light breeze, which had been rustling the foliage, stopped shaking the trees. [...] This breeze also carried a breath of some charming and singular measures of a song that was not unfamiliar to him [...] quite distinctly, they were some measures of the waltz he had composed earlier [...] it was the voice of women, pure, smooth, fleeting; he stopped and held his breath to listen. It was again the waltz that was sung.”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup>The “Famiglia Artistica Milanese” was a society founded in 1873 by the artist Vespasiano Bignami, which originally had its seat in the Piazza della Scala. “Lettere a Giacomo Puccini: 1884-1919” *Quaderni Pucciniani* (1992): 46n.

<sup>44</sup>Marchetti, *Puccini com'era*, 37n. [Vivo nella memoria il ricordo del successo del suo *Capriccio sinfonico*, mi parve che per il giovane maestro ci volesse un argomento fantastico e gli spiegai il canovaccio delle Villi].

<sup>45</sup>Gara, *Carteggi*, 6. [mi piace molto davvero, essendoci parecchio da lavorare nel genere sinfonico descrittivo, che a me garba assai perchè mi pare di doverci riuscire.]

<sup>46</sup>Sergio Martinotti, ““Torna ai felici di’: il librettista Fontana,” *Quaderni Pucciniani* (1992): 63.

<sup>47</sup>Alphonse Karr, “Les Willis” in *Contes et Nouvelles* (Paris: Hachette, 1858), 227, 233. [Des filles et des garçons valsaient joyeusement; des jeunes gens jouaient, un du violon, l'autre du cor. La forêt devenait encore plus silencieuse; un vent léger, qui faisait de temps en temps frissonner le feuillage, avait cessé d'agiter les arbres [...] ce vent apportait aussi par bouffées quelques mesures vagues et singulières d'un chant qui ne lui était pas inconnu [...] c'étaient quelques mesures bien distinctes de la valse qu'il avait autrefois composée [...] c'étaient des voix de femmes, des voix pures, suaves, fugitives; il s'arrêta et retint son haleine pour écouter. C'était toujours la valse qu'on chantait.]

If *Le villi* is not a success today it may be because of its lack of inherent dramatic structure.<sup>48</sup> Fontana did not do much to transform Karr's tale into a visually striking, theatrical work. His theories of the theater, also betraying a quasi-Wagnerian stance, proposed doing away with conventional opera and replacing it with "scenic, symphonic poems":<sup>49</sup> instead of a libretto, the audience would simply be given a poem that would provide an outline of the story.<sup>50</sup> Fontana's verses, added to the symphonic intermezzi in the opera's revision, are along these lines.<sup>51</sup>

Fontana had radical political ideas as well: he spoke at political meetings, ran unsuccessfully for office and, accused by the authorities of being an instigator in 1898, he fled to Switzerland where he remained until his death.<sup>52</sup> Some lines in *Le villi* express anti-clerical—indeed blasphemous—statements, such as, "Doubt God but not my love"<sup>53</sup> from the Act I duet, and the final "Hosanna," sung by spirits.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, a token of someone's anti-clericalism even appears on the autograph score of *Le villi* in the Morgan Library, where the words "Death to the priests" are scribbled in an unidentified hand.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup>Wakeling Dry reported in 1906 that "[Puccini] maintains that the choice of librettos has more to do with [dramatic instinct] than anything else, and from the first he has worked a good deal in this way by more than the usual amount of consultation and exchange of ideas that goes on between a composer and the writer of the book." Wakeling Dry, *Giacomo Puccini* (London: John Lane, 1906), 28. Although Puccini may have worked closely with Fontana on the libretti for *Le villi* and *Edgar*, he expressed his wishes much more in collaborating on later works, starting with *Manon Lescaut*.

<sup>49</sup>*Le villi* contains verses to be read during the two instrumental pieces; these were written by Fontana for the revised version.

<sup>50</sup>Fontana, *In Teatro*, 110. "Opera aims to be transformed into a scenic, symphonic poem, it aims that is to be a spectacle that is theatrical, yes, but in which the theatricality should not impose upon art, but rather the latter on the former; the musical spectacle, then, aims to become symphonic par excellence, that is, to be shaped as the best form of musical art." [Il melodramma tende a trasformarsi in poema sinfonico scenico, tende a diventare cioè uno spettacolo, teatrale sì, ma nel quale la teatralità non dovrà avere il sopravvento sull'arte, bensì questa su quella; lo spettacolo musicale, insomma, tende a diventare sinfonico per eccellenza, cioè a sagomare sulla forma migliore dell'arte musicale.] As Budden writes, "[Fontana felt that] the public's growing taste for symphonic music would transform conventional opera into a 'poema sinfonico scenico', of which each act would form a movement and in which scenery, costumes, libretto and singers would function like individual instruments within an orchestra." Budden, *Puccini*, 40-1.

<sup>51</sup>Budden describes Fontana's poetry as typical of the *scapigliatura*, in that it breaks down the barriers between art forms. Budden, "The Genesis," 84.

<sup>52</sup>Longoni, "Vita e opere," 238-9.

<sup>53</sup>[Dubita di Dio ma no dell'amore mio non dubitar!]

<sup>54</sup>Budden also notes this. Budden, "The Genesis," 83-4.

<sup>55</sup>[Morte ai preti] Other politically related scribbles in this document include "W Garibaldi" and "W V.E.R.D.I." It is unclear, however, if these are in Puccini's (cont.)

Whatever his political tendencies, the question remains as to whether Puccini was a *musical* revolutionary. Roman Vlad sees in *Le villi* foreshadowings of impressionism, atonality, modal constructions, and even octatonicism.<sup>56</sup> He gives an example of this last in the passage just before the final “Gran Scena e Duetto Finale” at II/52/13: while it is true that octatonic collections can be found here, one could also read the passage as three ornamented tonal motions from passing tonics to their dominants (G-flat to D-flat/C-sharp; B to F-sharp, and E to B). This forms an overarching, traditional sequence of descending fifths, G-flat/F-sharp-B-E, an example of *direct conflation*. [Ex. 4.12] Again, Puccini’s ambiguous identity as either an innovator or a traditionalist is the issue at hand.

Ex. 4.12: *Le villi*, II/52/13

The image shows three octatonic scales in mode 2, each on a single staff in bass clef. The first scale is labeled "C octatonic scale, mode 2" and has a bracket underneath with the interval "Gb - Db/C#". The second scale is labeled "F octatonic scale, mode 2" and has a bracket underneath with the interval "B - F#". The third scale is labeled "C octatonic scale, mode 2" and has a bracket underneath with the interval "E - B". The notes are connected by a dashed line, indicating a sequence of three scales.

The balance and interpenetration of traditional and progressive elements that Puccini achieves in *Le villi* are fundamental to his compositional style and technique. This first opera epitomizes that dichotomy—one that will last until his final, incomplete creation.

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hand. Giacomo Puccini, sketches for *Le villi*: autograph manuscript, Mary Flagler Cary Music Collection, the Morgan Library, New York. Music Mss (Bound), P9774. V751. Provenance of the autograph is the library of Carlo Ginori-Lisci. The cover reads, “Lucca Nbre a Xbre [18]83.”

<sup>56</sup>Vlad, “Esordi”: 5-37.

## Chapter 5

### The scattered jewels of *Edgar*

The French nobility—believing [...] that the conquest of Flanders would be like a celebration, or at least a hunting party—had brought with them bags of luxuries and jewels, and even a great number of courtesans. The spurs, which were worn only by the knights, and many jewels were gathered from the battlefield by the victors.<sup>1</sup>

Ferdinando Fontana, *Edgar*, libretto, note to Act III

Puccini's first full-length opera, *Edgar*, is set in Flanders in the year 1302, the scene of the Battle of Courtray,<sup>2</sup> unlike the play upon which it was based. That earlier work, Alfred de Musset's *La coupe et les lèvres* [The cup and the lips] (1832), is set in the Tyrol, and its title refers to the saying "there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip." Indeed, many a "slip" occurred in the creation of this opera, which was a disheartening debacle.

*Edgar* actually arose from several failures: Musset's play was written following the disaster of his *La nuit vénitienne* (1830), after which he withdrew from presenting plays in public and wrote dramatic works intended to be read at home. *La coupe* was one of several plays collected in his ensuing *Armchair Theater* [*Un spectacle dans un fauteuil*], and is prefaced by a long poem that, in part, reflects the pain of his artistic spurning:

<sup>1</sup>[la nobiltà franca, la quale credendo [...] di andare alla conquista della Fiandra come un festino o, per lo meno, a una gran caccia, aveva portato seco equipaggi di lusso e gioielli, e persino gran numero di cortigiane. Gli sproni (distintivo dei cavalieri) e i molti gioielli raccolti sul campo di battaglia dai vincitori.]

<sup>2</sup>Fontana claims in his libretto note that the battle is known as "the day of the spurs" [giornata degli sproni] and also "the day of the jewels" [giornata dei gioielli]. In most historical accounts, there is no mention of jewels, but the battle is known as "the battle of the golden spurs" ["Guldensporenslag" in Dutch and "la bataille des éperons d'or" in French.]

But to think one holds the golden apples of Hesperides,  
 Yet press tenderly to heart a turnip!  
 That, my dear friend, will lead an author straight  
 To suicide or to infanticide.<sup>3</sup>

Ferdinando Fontana<sup>4</sup> chose Musset's *La Coupe* for his new libretto, and perhaps was also inspired by the Frenchman to write his own diatribe against contemporary theater, *In Teatro*.<sup>5</sup> Fontana called it his "tirade" [sfuriata] and in it described his antipathy toward contemporary theater, inveighing against its predictability and lack of naturalism:

Round and round, over and over, on the stage, in general, it is always the same song [...] the theater is reduced, as it had to happen, to a potion made of a known recipe. [...] But art means daring, it means freedom of thought without limits, naturalness without restrictions, candor. [...] The old operas now appear, in general, a hodge-podge of common sense so broken-up, so incoherent, a bloodbath so pitiless and ridiculous at the same time, an exchange of vulgarity and shameless cheap tricks, a heap of such colossal foolery and imbecilic pettiness.<sup>6</sup>

Despite these impassioned words, Fontana filled his libretto for *Edgar* with the most clichéd stereotypes and events: even though the protagonist Edgar rebels against society at the beginning of the story, Fontana sticks to a tried-and-true operatic recipe, ultimately having Edgar torn between the good girl and the exotic temptress (an addition to the original, in the manner of *Carmen*), adding a dose of fatherly love, and topped off with (by then) hackneyed choral exclamations of "maledizione" and "orror."

<sup>3</sup>[Mais croire que l'on tient les pommes d'Hespérides / Et presser tendrement un navet sur son coeur! / Voilà, mon cher ami, ce qui porte un auteur / A des auto-da-fés,—à des infanticides.]

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter 4, note 2.

<sup>5</sup>Fontana, like Musset, began his libretto for *Edgar* with a long poem. Fontana's begins, "We are all Edgar, since Fate leads each of us on a vital path, with regular vicissitudes—darkness and light, Love and death." [Edgar siam tutti, — poiché conduce / D'ognun sul tramite — vital la Sorte, / Con vece assidua, — tenebra e luce, / Amore e morte.]

<sup>6</sup>Fontana, *In Teatro*, 16-22. [Gira e rigira, volta e rivolta, sulle scene, in generale, è sempre la stessa canzone. [...] il teatro è ridotto, come doveva avvenire, ad una pozione fabbricata su ricetta nota. [...] Ma arte vuol dire ardimento, vuol dire libertà di pensiero senza limiti, naturalezza senza restrizioni, ingenuità. [...] Il melodramma vecchio appare oramai, in genere, un raffazzonamento così spaccato e così slegato, una carneficina così spietata e ridicola al tempo stesso del senso comune, un mercato di volgarità e di mezzucci così spudorato, un ammasso tale di corbellerie colossali e di piccinerie imbecilli.]



Fontana argued for the novel concept that opera audiences should receive an explanatory poem to read instead of a libretto, and the not very novel idea that the orchestra (*alla Wagner*) should carry much of the narrative thread. In short, opera should become a “scenic symphony,” with fewer vocal set-pieces:

The theatrical musical work, then, is becoming symphonic *par excellence*, that is, shaping the rest of the production to the form of the best musical art, the symphony. This work then can be of two types: the *fantastic symphonic*, and the *scenic symphonic*. The first is entrusted now purely to the orchestra.<sup>7</sup>

But Fontana managed to thwart his own professed desires in this as well: his correspondence with Puccini betrays that the librettist was thinking in terms of the same clichéd, crowd-pleasing arias, duets, etc., he had derided. He writes the composer several letters discussing the placement and efficacy of various standard set-pieces, and includes this admission, on 21 April 1885, of artistic self-betrayal: “but if Tigrana has no aria, even if it works for me artistically, I am afraid that it will not go well in the theater.”<sup>8</sup>

Fontana’s progressive ideas for theatrical reform, in which the audience has limited access to textual reference, almost guaranteed failure. In *Edgar*, important details about the Battle of Courtray are mentioned only in a libretto note, for example. As Giulio Ricordi wrote to Puccini, ““Your good Fontana has shown himself to be an eloquent orator, but a cavilling one. More of a philosopher-lawyer than a poet: the subtleties of his reasoning are admirable but they do not convince, they do not persuade.”” Puccini took this advice to heart and never again allowed a librettist (or even a team of librettists) to divert him from his theatrical and musical instincts.

In the end, Fontana gave up writing libretti, though without accepting any responsibility for his failures: “I am decisively convinced

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 110-2. [lo spettacolo musicale, insomma, tende a diventare sinfonico per eccellenza, cioè a sagomare sulla forma migliore dell’arte musicale, la sinfonia, il resto dello spettacolo. Questo spettacolo potrà essere adunque di due specie: lo *spettacolo sinfonico fantastico* e lo spettacolo *sinfonico scenico*. Il primo, affidato ora puramente all’orchestra.]

<sup>8</sup>[ma Tigrana senz’aria se mi va molto artisticamente ho paura che non vada teatralmente.] Ferdinando Fontana, “Lettere a Giacomo Puccini: 1884-1919,” *Quaderni Pucciniani* (1992), 17.

<sup>9</sup>Quoted in translation in George Marek, *Puccini* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), 68.

that I bring bad luck [...] The life of the poor operatic poet no longer seduces me.”<sup>10</sup> In the last decade of the century, Fontana turned more to radical politics, which eventually forced him into exile in Switzerland.<sup>11</sup> (Perhaps it was his revolutionary bent that attracted him so forcefully to the Battle of Courtray, a “people’s” rebellion.) It was Fontana, however, who suggested the subjects of *Manon Lescaut* and *Tosca* to Puccini; but the composer fortuitously chose to work with other librettists for these works.<sup>12</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The score of *Edgar* can also be seen as a sort of battlefield, in that Puccini revised it over and over, with lapidary attention, after almost every performance, in addition to the large post-premiere transformation from four acts to three. The current edition<sup>13</sup> is from 1905, sixteen years after the opera’s première at La Scala on 21 April 1889,<sup>14</sup> and there is some evidence that the composer planned to revise it again as late as 1914. He later called the opera a “blunder” [cantonata]<sup>15</sup> and famously annotated its title in a score given to his English muse Sybil Seligman to read “E Dio ti Gu A Rdi da quest’opera!” [May God protect you from this opera!].<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup>[Decisamente sono convinto che io porto sfortuna [...] La vita del *povetta* melodrammatico non mi seduce più.] Fontana, *Lettere*, 208 (18 August 1889).

<sup>11</sup>Longoni, “Ferdinando Fontana,” 238-9.

<sup>12</sup>In a letter of 23-24 March 1885, Fontana writes to Puccini, “I will send you that drama based on Manon Lescaut” [ti manderò quel tal dramma su Manon Lescaut] Fontana, *Lettere*, 10. Fontana and Puccini went twice to see Sarah Bernhardt in Sardou’s *La Tosca*, once in Milan at the Teatro dei Filodrammatici in February 1889, and once in Turin at the Teatro Carignano on 17 March 1889. Years later, when Puccini was working on *Tosca*, Fontana claimed to Illica that it was his idea: “When I heard you were working on *La Tosca*, I hoped that you would have turned to me since, as everyone knew—above all Puccini—that that subject was first suggested by me, and I had already exchanged letters with Sardou. Instead, you would have Giacosa!” [Quando seppi che tu prendevi a trattare la *Tosca*, speravo che ti rivolgesti a me, poichè a saputa di tutti—il Puccini per il primo—quell’argomento era state da me primissimamente indicato, e già erano corse lettere fra me e Sardou. Invece, scegliesti Giacosa!] Deborah Burton, “The Creation of *Tosca*,” *Opera Quarterly* 12/3 (Spring, 1996): 27-34.

<sup>13</sup>Unless otherwise noted, score references will be to this edition.

<sup>14</sup>This was Easter Sunday, which probably augmented the offensiveness of some of the opera’s more blasphemous moments, such as Tigrana’s “You dreamed of fiery voluptuousness, ardent kisses” [Tu voluttà di fuoco, ardenti baci sognavi] set to an organ prelude (“Andante Religioso Sostenuto”) and sung in front of a church.

<sup>15</sup>Carner, *Puccini*, 316.

<sup>16</sup>Vincent Seligman, *Puccini Among Friends* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 19.

But Puccini was not casting only pearls before this *porcheria*<sup>17</sup>: some responsibility for its failure must lie with the composer. There are many hackneyed diminished sevenths<sup>18</sup> and a too-obvious chromaticism, usually associated with the villainess Tigrana (such as at I/13/11-18, where we also get an evil laugh, or at II/17/2). For every seamless, common-tone transition (see I/1/9 or III/5/0), there are bombastic, four-square shifts, such as Tigrana's entrance at I/12/0 or the fortissimo choral condemnation of her "D'ogni sozzura" at I/34/0, a D-flat-major march tune, parts of which could have been written by John Philip Sousa. And in contrast to the less predictable phrase structure of melodies such as Frank's "Quest'amor" at I/21/2 or Edgar's "Nell'abisso fatal dove caduto io son" at II/9/7, we can also hear Tigrana's "Dal labbro mio" at II/14/0, which has a succession of four-bar phrases and a melody that (yes, Joseph Kerman) truly does sound like banal café music.

Nevertheless, like the jewels reportedly left strewn on the field of Courtray, some well-wrought musical ideas can also be found scattered throughout this score. Like Verdi's *Otello*, which had its premiere two years earlier in 1887, the opera manages to both use Leitmotifs and retain quasi-numbers identifiable within the continuous texture. The set-pieces in *Edgar* that are separable arias, such as "Quest'amor" or Fidelia's "O fior del giorno" and "Addio, mio dolce amor," are gems that might (and should) survive on their own in vocal collections.

Less likely to sustain interest as an independent piece, but equally deserving, is Edgar's Act II "Orgia, chimera dall'occhio vitreo," a scena that begins in a recitative-like manner with leitmotivic references to Fidelia (at II/5/11 and later at II/8/0), followed by an arioso, and then a ternary aria beginning at II/9/0. At the start of the aria's middle section, at the text "Nell'abisso fatal," we hear a strange three-beat accompanimental figure, displaced rhythmically from the downbeat to the upbeat and which, when paired with a twelve-beat vocal phrase, creates an increased sense of unease through metrical dissonance. When this passage is reiterated, transposed up a minor third, Puccini shows off his traditional training by treating it canonically. The same theme opens the Act III prelude, along with its canonic imitation,

<sup>17</sup>[trash].

<sup>18</sup>As we have seen in Ex. 1.10b, Puccini also used an expanded diminished seventh (minor-third cycle) to organize the passage at I/37-38.

alternating with a foreshadowing of the melody from Fidelia's "Addio, mio dolce amor" (starting from III/10/4).<sup>19</sup>

Puccini also uses canonic imitation in the first-act *Andante religioso*: here, the use of strict counterpoint—a fine canon at the second—is appropriate to the church setting, and in fact was borrowed from the "Kyrie" of his *Messa di Gloria* (1880).<sup>20</sup> In Act III, there is imitative counterpoint in the requiem (from III/4/3), and Fidelia's aria employs canon at III/8/8 at the text "Nell'ombra ove discendi." Puccini's mastery of strict imitative style was never banished from his technical repertoire, no matter how progressive his compositions became: the fugal exposition at the opening of the 1904 *Madama Butterfly* is a case in point.

In what could be seen as a progressive twist on the traditional "rule of the octave" which Puccini had studied, several musical moments in *Edgar* are constructed upon innovative harmonizations of the scale. Baragwanath explains that improvisation on a scale was a component of Puccini's early training in *soffeggio*: the maestro would play the guiding *canto fermo* in octaves at the piano, so that the students could hear it while improvising either *vocalizzi* or *soffeggi*.<sup>21</sup>

The melody of Tigrana's Act I "Sia per voi" outlines a composed-out descending E-flat-major scale, while also showing the Puccinian trademarks of parallel triads and an open-fifth double pedal on E-flat and B-flat. An example of *direct conflation*,<sup>22</sup> this passage layers traditional and progressive elements, a combination that leads Roman Vlad to call this passage "Debussian," but Baragwanath to see it as based on an actual *vocalizzo*.<sup>23</sup> In the final analysis, though, the passage (like many others) serves the traditional role of prolonging the tonic. [Ex. 5.0]

<sup>19</sup>Originally, Fontana and Puccini considered including an instrumental piece at this point that would have aurally depicted the Battle of Courtray, and would even have employed real gunfire. Fontana offered to supply the composer with a few explanatory verses that most likely would have appeared only in the libretto (as in *Le villi*). While there is some chance for the current prelude to survive as an independent piece, a Puccinian "Wellington's Victory" would probably have not been as fortunate.

<sup>20</sup>Puccini borrowed from several works for *Edgar*: the *Largo Adagietto* in F major (1881-1883), the *Preludio sinfonico* (1882), used in first version of *Edgar*, the song "Storiella d'amore" (1883), the *Capriccio sinfonico* in F major (1883), and the *Capriccio sinfonico*, which supplied thematic material for the requiem, first heard in the opera at III/5/1.

<sup>21</sup>See Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, chapter 4.

<sup>22</sup>See Chapter 2.

<sup>23</sup>Vlad, "Esordi," 18 and Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 271.

Ex. 5.0: *Edgar*, I/29/0, composed-out descending scale, with parallel chords and double pedal

The musical score for Ex. 5.0 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in the treble clef and shows a descending scale in E-flat major, starting on G4 and ending on G3. The scale is composed of parallel chords, with each chord containing the notes of the scale. The lower staff is in the bass clef and shows a double pedal, consisting of two sustained notes: E-flat and B-flat. The text "Sia per voi..." is written in the treble staff. Above the treble staff, the text "descending Eb major scale" is written. Below the bass staff, the text "Eb/Bb pedal" is written.

Fidelia's Act III "Edgar, la tua memoria," at III/10/4, is built upon a rising line spanning an octave that prolongs pitch class F, the dominant of B-flat major. [Ex. 5.1] There are also underlying scalar patterns at I/4/5, Fidelia's "O for del giorno," where the melodic line descends stepwise, and at I/5/12, where it rises again; we find a descending scale at Tigrana's *Allegro satanico*, I/17/0 and a rising one at III/30/3, above an open fifth pedal, when she enters; and, at the end of Act II, a rising scale soars upward, with bombastic patriotic fervor, to the dominant before returning to the tonic.

Ex. 5.1, *Edgar*, III/10/4, composed-out ascending scale

The musical score for Ex. 5.1 consists of two systems of staves. The upper system shows a rising melodic line in the treble clef, starting on F4 and ascending stepwise to F5. The line is composed of parallel chords. The lower system shows parallel chords in the bass clef. The text "Edgar, la tua memoria" is written in the treble staff. Above the treble staff, the text "ascending scale" is written.

In *Edgar*, Puccini uses pedal points for conventional purposes; the "standing on the dominant" at I/15/0 is an example of this. Yet he also writes dissonant pedal points, such as at II/3/0, where D underlies E major and C-sharp diminished seventh chords, or at III/53/0, where we find F-sharp beneath C-sharp half-diminished.

But while this score is in dialogue with some time-tested compositional strategies, it could not have been mistaken at the time of its première for a traditional work. Perhaps *Edgar's* composer battled

with himself over just how far he could push the harmonic language, since a revision he later made to the score eliminated what could be interpreted today as bitonality. In scene 2 of Act III of the original version, a B pedal point underlies A minor, G major, and C major chords (see Ex. 1.16a above). In the later revised version, however, at III/22/0 where the clash between the B pedal and C major occurs, C major is now interpreted simply as an overlaid Neapolitan sixth chord, followed by an F-sharp dominant 7, which resolves immediately to B major—a standard progression. [Ex. 5.2]

Ex. 5.2: *Edgar* III/22/0, revised version of B/C clash

Puccini's employment in *Edgar* of his trademark parallel constructions is sometimes innovative, sometimes much less so.<sup>24</sup> Pushing the boundaries of diatonicism, he uses parallel augmented triads at I/35/17, parallel 4/2 chords at I/48/4, and, in *Edgar's scena* at II/5/2, parallel half-diminished ["*Tristan*"] chords, while still reiterating them sequentially along a simple, rising chromatic bass, another instance of *direct conflation*.<sup>25</sup> [Exx. 5.3a-c, opposite]

<sup>24</sup>Several writers have referred to Puccini's "Ponchiellian" use of parallel octaves: while Puccini's one-time teacher, Amilcare Ponchielli, does employ parallel octaves in some vocal parts, such as the final scene of Act III of *La gioconda*, the underlying harmonies are much more traditionally constructed. See Ashbrook, *The Operas of Puccini*, 26-7 and Girardi, *Puccini*, 54.

<sup>25</sup>Other parallel constructions can be found in *Edgar* at: I/8/4, I/8/9, I/10/0, I/17/3, I/26/0, I/27/4, I/29/0, I/32/11, I/38/0, I/43/12, III/0/14, III/23/20, III/33/24, III/34/7, III/36/0, III/5/18, III/50/8.

Ex. 5.3: *Edgar*, parallel constructions

a) I/35/17, parallel augmented triads

Musical score for Ex. 5.3a, showing parallel augmented triads in I/35/17. The score is in 3/4 time and features two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The lyrics "tu la difendi?" are written above the vocal line. The piano accompaniment consists of parallel augmented triads in the right hand and single notes in the left hand, creating a rhythmic and harmonic pattern.

b) I/48/4, parallel 4/2 chords

Musical score for Ex. 5.3b, showing parallel 4/2 chords in I/48/4. The score is in 4/2 time and features two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The piano accompaniment consists of parallel 4/2 chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand, creating a rhythmic and harmonic pattern.

c) II/5/2, parallel half-diminished sevenths

Musical score for Ex. 5.3c, showing parallel half-diminished sevenths in II/5/2. The score is in 3/4 time and features two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The piano accompaniment consists of parallel half-diminished seventh chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand, creating a rhythmic and harmonic pattern. A bracket under the piano accompaniment is labeled "chromatic motion".

A more primitive use of parallels occurs at III/52/8, where open octaves simply climb up chromatically, as Edgar discards his disguise to reveal that he is actually alive. [Ex. 5.4]

Ex. 5.4: *Edgar*, III/52/8, rising chromatic melodic line

Musical score for Ex. 5.4, showing a rising chromatic melodic line in III/52/8. The score is in 3/4 time and features two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The vocal line features a rising chromatic melodic line. The piano accompaniment consists of single notes in the left hand. The lyrics "Si... poi-ché Ed - gar vive!" are written below the vocal line.

In the score he later gave to Sybil Seligman, Puccini annotated the text here (“Edgar lives” [Edgar vive]) with the comment “a lie!” [menzogna!]²⁶

But in a sense, the music of *Edgar* does live on. To listen to *Edgar* is to hear foreshadowings of many of his later works—jewels scattered into the future, or rather, scavenged by the composer from this nearly forgotten work to serve other purposes, but usually for moments of similar narrative import.

There is, of course, the well-known borrowing from *Edgar*'s Act IV scene 4 (cut from the revised version) that Puccini used in *Tosca*. Both scenes depict moments of loving intimacy between the two main protagonists, using the same parallel seventh, eleventh and thirteenth chords, although supporting different melodies: [Exx. 5.5a-b]

Ex. 5.5: *Edgar*, self-borrowing

a) *Edgar*, original version, Act IV, scene 4

Ab, nei tuoi ba - ci - io vo - glio tut - to - di - men - ti - car!

b) *Tosca*, III/24/0

A - ma - ro sol per te m'era il mo - ri - re Da te la vi - ta pren - de og - ni splendore

When the editor Ricordi complained about this recycling to Puccini,²⁷ the composer replied, “As the passage is, forgetting that it

²⁶Carner, *Puccini*, 54.

²⁷“[the section] is a piece *talis et qualis* from *Edgar*!! It would be stupendous if sung by a Tirolese farmer’s wife!! but out of place in the mouth of a *Tosca* or a *Cavaradossi*.” [un pezzo *talis et qualis* dell’*Edgar*!! Stupendo se per la sua essenza vien cantato da una contadina tirolese!! Ma fuori di posto in bocca ad una *Tosca*, ad un *Cavaradossi*.] Gara. *Carteggi*, 177.



is derived from an idea in another work (the abolished fourth act of *Edgar*), it seems to me to be full of the poetry that emanates from the words. Oh, I am sure of this, and you will be convinced when you hear it in place, that is, onstage.”<sup>28</sup>

For the most part, when Puccini pilfers *Edgar*'s musical moments for later works, the ideas are revised and often improved. For example, the closing moment of *Edgar* is a perfect authentic cadence in B minor, with a common-tone half-diminished seventh chord interpolated before the final tonic arrival. While this half-diminished chord contains the tonic note B, it also sounds the dissonant tones of C-sharp, E and G natural, all of which resolve to the home key at the end. [Ex. 5.6] However, when a nearly identical cadence, in the same key, occurs at the end of *Madama Butterfly* (1904), the interpolation of the non-chord tone G natural occurs *after* the tonic arrival, leaving the dissonance unresolved—a much more striking gesture. [Ex. 1.13c]

Ex. 5.6: *Edgar*, conclusion

The musical score for Example 5.6, titled "Edgar, conclusion," is presented in two staves (treble and bass clef) with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a time signature of 8/8. The piece concludes with a cadence in B minor. The score features a half-diminished seventh chord (F#7b9) that contains the tonic note B, which is used as a common-tone chord before the final tonic arrival. The bass line includes a "F# dominant" chord and a "1/2 dim 7" chord. The treble line includes a "B minor tonic" chord. The score is annotated with "F# dominant", "1/2 dim 7", and "B minor tonic" below the respective chords.

The parallel half-diminished sevenths shown above in Example 5.3c, which occur at a moment when Edgar reveals his emotional distress over the dissolute life he has been leading with Tigrana, can also be considered a precursor to a similar passage in *Suor Angelica*, written almost thirty years later. Here Angelica, also in crisis, first encounters her cruel aunt and this dark passage heralds the tragedy to come. In the later work, however, the parallelisms are offset by contrary motion in the bass and the number of chordal repetitions is limited. [Ex. 5.7, next page]

<sup>28</sup>[Così com'è, togliendosi dall'idea che appartiene ad altro lavoro (4° atto Edgar abolito) mi sembra pieno di quella poesia che emana dalle parole. Oh, di questo ne sono sicuro, e si convincerà quando lo sentirà a posto e cioè sulla scena.] *Ibid.*, 179.

Ex. 5.7: *Suor Angelica*, 43, parallel half-diminished 7ths and augmented triad

In *Edgar*'s third act, there is a short exotic-sounding theme played in parallel octaves, to which Edgar sings, “perfido suo cuor fra poco io leggerò”<sup>29</sup> based on the half-diminished seventh G-sharp-B-D-F-sharp, which finishes a bit too neatly in F-sharp minor. Puccini's last opera, *Turandot*, uses a similar theme (sometimes called the “Enigma motive”), also based on half-diminished and diminished sevenths, for the moment when the Unknown Prince tries solve the fateful riddles and indeed read *Turandot*'s heart, at II/50/1. However in the later work, the harmonies do not resolve soon to any key. [Exx. 5.8 a-b]

Ex. 5.8:

a) *Edgar*, III/33/24

b) *Turandot*, II/50/1

Puccini employs another figure with repeated parallel octaves that is also echoed years later in *Turandot*: in *Edgar*, at III/34/7, three F-sharps, doubled at several octaves and alternating with D and C-sharp, ring out on the downbeats of their respective measures,

<sup>29</sup>[I will soon read her wicked heart]

underlining Fidelia's exclamation, "Ti seconderò! va! va!"<sup>30</sup> These repeated F-sharps slowly dissolve into the only pitch class heard, after which follows a chromatic rise to G, G-sharp and A. The striking repeated octave pattern serves as a transition to the ensuing duet "Bella signora." [Ex. 5.9]

Ex. 5.9: *Edgar*, III/34/7, repeated octaves as transition

The musical score for Ex. 5.9 is presented in two systems. The first system shows a treble clef staff with a melody of eighth notes (F#, G, A, B, C, D, E, F#) and a bass clef staff with a similar eighth-note pattern. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment, ending with a final chord in the right hand.

In *Turandot*, Puccini does not waste such a memorable musical gesture: repeated B-flats toll like funeral bells at Liù's "Tu che di gel sei cinta" (III/27/0), and throughout the scene of her death, and at III/35/0, they reappear with open fifths at Calaf's "Principessa di morte!" The repeated pounding of these perfect consonances integrates a large swath of music, and even conjures up the insistent thrusting of the opening bitonal chords, which sound a remarkable sixty-one times after the opening curtain before the texture changes at I/2/7.

\* \* \* \* \*

For Puccini, *Edgar* was a first attempt at a full-length opera from whose failure he would learn much. His next opera, *Manon Lescaut*, shows a newly found mastery of the medium and a talent—no longer rough-hewn and unpolished—that sparkles like a gem.

<sup>30</sup>[I will support you! Go! Go!]



## Chapter 6

### Towards a new country: form and deformation in *Manon Lescaut*

“When you come to Puccini, the composer of the latest *Manon Lescaut*, then indeed the ground is so transformed that you could almost think yourself in a new country.”

- Bernard Shaw, 1894<sup>1</sup>

For Shaw, Puccini’s “new country” was “the domain of Italian opera [...] enlarged by an annexation of German territory.”<sup>2</sup> But Puccini’s journey toward the startlingly new musical landscape we find in *Manon Lescaut* was not just by way of Bayreuth. Rather, Puccini’s third opera breaks new ground in many other respects: *Manon Lescaut* (1893) is his first opera to have a libretto created with the active input of the composer, the first to demonstrate a specific *couleur locale* (here, eighteenth-century France), and the first to involve librettists Luigi Illica<sup>3</sup> and Giuseppe Giacosa<sup>4</sup> (the eventual collaborators for his most successful works, *La bohème*, *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*). Musically, *Manon Lescaut* begins the process in Puccini’s operas of exhibiting a continuous musical texture, extensive leitmotivic manipulation, the motivic parallel-

<sup>1</sup>George Bernard Shaw, “Born-Again Italian Opera,” *The World* (23 May 1894). Reprinted in *Music in London*, 3 vols (London: Constable: 1932, 1950), 219.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Luigi Illica (1857-1919) librettist and playwright, was part of the Milanese *scapigliatura* that revolved around Arrigo Boito; he wrote more than 80 libretti for Puccini, Franchetti, Giordano, Mascagni and Catalani. *La Nuova Enciclopedia della Musica* (Milan: Garzanti, 1983, rep. 1991): s.v. “Illica.”

<sup>4</sup>Giuseppe Giacosa (1847-1906) was an important dramatist, known mostly for his plays *Una partita a scacchi* (1871), *Tristi amori* (1887) and *Come le foglie* (1900), and director of the Società degli Autori from 1895. *La Nuova Enciclopedia della Musica* (Milan: Garzanti, 1983, rep. 1991): s.v. “Giacosa.” His plays were interpreted by, among others, Eleonora Duse and Sarah Bernhardt, the latter of whom brought him with her on a tour of his play in America. He wrote his reminiscences of his voyage to the United States in *Impressioni d’America* (Milan: Cogliati, 1902; reprint Padua: Muzzio, 1994).

ism of the MPI (“*motivo di prima intenzione*”<sup>5</sup>) and utilization of the whole-tone collection.<sup>6</sup>

### *into the wild*

In this chapter we will examine the establishment and ultimate deformation of formal schemata in *Manon Lescaut*, and how these resonate with important aspects of the narrative. But, in order to do so, a brief look at the libretto and how it was constructed will be useful.

Abbé Prévost's *Histoire du chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*, the seventh, final volume of his *Memoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité qui s'est retiré du monde* (1731),<sup>7</sup> also begins with a voyage to a new country. When we first see Manon she is in chains, a prisoner shackled to prostitutes, and bound for exile to America. Yet a “man of quality,” the Marquis de Renoncour, takes pity on this *belle fille* and, despite her condition, imagines that she seems a person of high birth.<sup>8</sup> Soon, Renoncour meets her lover, Renato Des Grieux, to whom he lends money. Manon and Des Grieux depart together for America, with no regrets at leaving Europe: Des Grieux felt “the nearer we approached America, the more did I feel my heart expand and become

<sup>5</sup>*Motivic parallelism* is a Schenkerian concept in which a series of pitch classes or intervals is restated on one or more structural levels. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of this as an aspect of the MPI.

<sup>6</sup>There are a few whole-tone sonorities in Puccini's first opera *Le villi* but they can be considered dominant substitutions.

Hesdin d'Antoine François Prévost (1697-1763) was sent to study with Jesuits after the death of his mother, but by the age of 16 was a volunteer in the army. After writing an anti-Jesuit publication in 1721, he was ordained a priest in 1726 in Rouen. The next year he was transferred to Paris where he began to write the *Mémoires*. Defrocked and wanted by the police, he fled to Holland and then England. Prévost published a separate edition of Manon Lescaut's story in 1733, and a revised edition in 1753. Flore Galtayries, *Abbé Prévost: Manon Lescaut* (Rosny-sous-Bois: Bréal, 1999), 13-4.

<sup>8</sup>It is Manon's beautiful appearance that instigates Renoncour's narrative, and indeed all the events in her life: we get very little information about who she is beyond what Des Grieux relates through Renoncour to us. Manon is constantly seen as a reflection in someone else's eyes, mostly those of Des Grieux, who, having fallen in love with her at first sight, is so blinded by love that Manon's often cruel actions often seem a mystery to him, and so Manon remains a cipher. The tale is probably based on true events in Prévost's own life involving his long-term liaison—and exile—with a Dutch woman named Lenki Eckhardt. Engel has suggested that Prévost derived his story from Penelope Aubin's *The Illustrious French Lovers* (1727). Claire-Eliane Engel, *Figures et Aventures du XVIIIe Siècle: Voyages et Découvertes de l'Abbé Prévost*. (Paris: Editions ‘Je Sers’, 1939).

tranquil.”<sup>9</sup> Instead of happiness, though, the lovers find in their new land only tragic separation through Manon’s death. Two years later, Des Grieux and Renoncour meet again, and the former relates the story of his adventures with Manon, which constitutes the remainder of the book. Thus, the novel is written as a narration of a narration—twice removed from a first-hand account.

In turning this almost picaresque novel into an opera, a great deal had to be deleted for the sake of concision, and, in addition, a new narrative path had to be carved out distinct from the one Massenet had made for in his 1884 *Manon*. This process, about which much has been written,<sup>10</sup> resulted in a work of four discontinuous acts. After Manon and Des Grieux run away together at the end of the first, we next see Manon living the gilded life of a woman kept by Geronte, the man from whom she has just escaped. (Omitted during the compositional process was a half-act showing the lovers living happily together in poverty, which was deemed too much like Massenet’s opera, and another proposed act, suggested by the composer but ultimately rejected, which would have shown the two at play in a garden.) Further, between Manon’s arrest at the end of the current second act and her departure for America in the third, Des Grieux’s desperate attempts to free her are known only to those who have read the description in the score, where a near-quote from the novel mentions them. At the Intermezzo, the score reads:

How I love her! My passion is so ardent that I feel I am the most unhappy creature alive. What have I not tried in Paris to obtain her release!...I have implored the aid of the powerful! I have knocked at every door as a suppliant! I have even resorted to force! All has been in vain. Only one thing remains for me and that is to follow her! Go where she may!...Even to the end of the world!<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup>[Plus nous avançons vers l’Amérique, plus je sentais mon coeur s’élargir et devenir tranquille.] Abbé Prévost, *Histoire du chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* (Paris, Aux dépens de la Compagnie, 1731, rep., Paris: Dentu, 1892), 290. According to a letter by librettist Illica, Manon and Des Grieux see America as their “new and true country [where] there is love” Illica, letter to Giulio Ricordi, Milan, 24 April 1892. Gara, *Carteggi*, 71.

<sup>10</sup>See, for example, William Weaver, “Puccini’s Manon and his other Heroines,” *The Puccini Companion*, eds. William Weaver and Simonetta Puccini (New York: Norton, 1994), 113: “the libretto...could with justice have been entitled *Scènes de la vie de Manon Lescaut*. As in [*La bohème*], these scenes, with huge narrative gaps between them, do not aim to tell a story in a traditional form; they illustrate a world.” Also see, Budden, *Puccini*, 91ff, and Girardi, *Puccini*, 62ff.

<sup>11</sup>Puccini, *Manon Lescaut* (Milan: Ricordi, 2007), 221. The original from the Prévost reads, “Je l’aime avec une passion si violente, qu’elle me rend le plus infortuné (cont.)

The orchestral interlude, however, does wordlessly suggest something of Des Grieux's passion and pain. By the fourth and final act, the two lovers are dying in the desert of Louisiana, with no explanation of how they arrived there.<sup>12</sup>

However, it is possible to divine in the disjunct and fragmentary images of Manon and Des Grieux some logical ordering: we first see both Manon and Des Grieux in unambiguous social positions. They meet in the town square, the heart of the community. He is a student joining his peers, she is a seemingly obedient sister and daughter being escorted to a convent (of course she must have done something disobedient to warrant such a punishment, yet she is still under the family wing.) In Act II, Manon has moved a step closer to societal ostracization by becoming a kept woman; and the act ends with her arrest for theft, requiring a physical separation from society. She is deported along with prostitutes in Act III, now having to forsake not only a cozy, if morally ambiguous, living situation, but her country, continent and "civilization" as well. Des Grieux follows her and, in so doing, breaks the bonds of socially acceptable behavior. Manon's demise in the void of the desert confirms the overall trajectory: a journey from civilized society to dissociation, disintegration and death.

Another "man of quality," publisher Giulio Ricordi, disliked the librettist Illica's suggestion that Manon and Des Grieux embrace when reunited just before the deportation to America. He wrote to Puccini, on 5 August 1892: "As far as I am concerned, in the finale of *Havre* I am little pleased with that embrace!! It doesn't ring true to life. How can one permit a young man to kiss a condemned woman, and in front of the commander, the soldiers, and the entire populace? This offends common sense."<sup>13</sup> What Ricordi apparently missed was that Des Grieux's behavior had already traversed the bounds of propriety. Embracing the prisoner Manon, forsaking his past life, and following her to the new world all demonstrate breaks with the behavior of his former "civilized" self.

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de tous les hommes. J'ai tout employé à Paris pour obtenir sa liberté: les sollicitations, l'adresse et la force m'ont été inutiles; j'ai pris le parti de la suivre, dût-elle aller au bout du monde." Prévost, *Manon Lescaut*, 7.

<sup>12</sup>In the novel one discovers that Des Grieux has killed his rival for Manon, the nephew of the Governor, Synnelet, in a duel. Manon and Des Grieux decide to flee, despite her delicate health, and, about six miles outside New Orleans, are forced to stop in the middle of a "vast plain...covered with sand" [au milieu d'une vaste plaine...couverte de sable] where Manon dies and is buried by her lover. Prévost, *Manon Lescaut*, 311-4.



One of the compositional techniques that Puccini employs in this act—formal expectations consistently thwarted—can be seen to serve as a musical cognate for behavior like that of Des Grieux that is, if not anti-social, then certainly challenging to traditional norms. Further, it is possible to trace patterns of disruption and breakdown of order in many aspects of the work, in the methods utilized by both the librettists and the composer. More precisely, as the work proceeds, textual and musical expectations of form and (diatonic harmonic) syntax are repeatedly frustrated until they are all but abandoned.

## *deformations*

*Manon Lescaut's* libretto lists no official author because so many hands were involved that to name them all would have been an embarrassment. The convoluted tale of authorship involves the participation of Ferdinando Fontana, who first suggested the idea to Puccini in March 1885, Marco Praga<sup>14</sup> and Domenico Oliva<sup>15</sup> who began the actual writing in 1889, Ruggero Leoncavallo,<sup>16</sup> Puccini's fellow composer and sometimes neighbor in Vacallo, Switzerland,<sup>17</sup> who supplied a few verses, Giulio Ricordi, the publisher who made significant suggestions throughout the process, Illica and Giacosa

<sup>13</sup>Marek, *Puccini*, 120. Ricordi goes on to suggest an ending to the scene in which Manon, after Des Grieux cries out that he will follow her, falls to her knees, and lifts her arms to heaven in gratitude.

<sup>14</sup>Marco Praga (1862-1929), playwright, novelist, poet and critic for the *Illustrazione italiana*, he was also a director of the Società Italiana degli Autori ed Editori from 1896 to 1911. He was the son of Emilio Praga, a poet involved with the *scapigliatura milanese*. *Biografia degli Italiani*, s.v. "Praga, Marco," accessed 22 January 2011, [http://www.treccani.it/Portale/elements/categoriesItems.jsp?pathFile=/sites/default/BancaDati/Enciclopedia\\_online/P/BIOGRAFIE\\_-\\_EDICOLA\\_P\\_153583.xml](http://www.treccani.it/Portale/elements/categoriesItems.jsp?pathFile=/sites/default/BancaDati/Enciclopedia_online/P/BIOGRAFIE_-_EDICOLA_P_153583.xml).

<sup>15</sup>Domenico Oliva (1860-1917) was a literary figure and drama critic who was also active in the nationalist movement. He founded the weekly periodical *L'idea liberale* and was director of the *Corriere della Sera* from 1898 to 1900. *L'enciclopedia italiana*, s.v. "Oliva, Domenico," accessed 22 January 2011, <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/domenico-oliva>.

<sup>16</sup>Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857-1919) composer and sometimes librettist known mostly today for his one-act opera *Pagliacci* (1892). He planned a tetralogy of operas about the Italian Renaissance, composed on his own libretti, but he only completed the first, *I Medici* (1893). *La Nuova Enciclopedia della Musica* (Milan: Garzanti, 1983, rep. 1991): s.v. "Leoncavallo." His friendship with Puccini was strained when they were both working on versions of *La bohème*, after which Puccini referred to Leoncavallo, whose name means "lion horse" as "the double beast" [la doppia bestia].

<sup>17</sup>Puccini's home in Vacallo still stands, although it is owned privately. This author had the privilege of living there for five years.

who came on board in 1892, and finally Giuseppe Adami,<sup>18</sup> one of Puccini's librettists for *La rondine*, *Il tabarro* and *Turandot*, from whom the composer requested a bit of text in 1922 for the restored aria "Sola, perduta, abbandonata."

And there is one more to be added: Puccini himself. At least part of the reason for this authorial promiscuity was Puccini's newly found decisive voice. He seems to have realized, after the painful experiences of *Edgar*, that the quality of the libretto was vital. Luigi Ricci claims that the composer explained his thoughts on this in the following terms:

The great amount of money that is needed to build a house [...] is the same whether one persists in excavating the foundation in a gloomy, vile place, in front of a cesspool, or whether one has the luck or the astuteness, or at least the good taste, to choose a beautiful site, with a marvelous panorama. This site, in opera, is called libretto.<sup>19</sup>

Puccini's newly authoritative attitude is apparent in his instructions to librettist Illica to fit verses to music already written or conceived:

Since I have a rhythmic theme that I cannot change because it is effective, the [versi] *sdruciolli* don't work at all for me. It is necessary to do more or less like this: Questi tesor/ tu dei lasciar/ mio immenso amor./ Ti vo' salvar/ con me portar/ solo il tuo cor! Do not elongate or shorten [them]. They must be six *versi tronchi*. This is imperative, eh!<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Giuseppe Adami (1878-1946) was a librettist, journalist and playwright. He wrote librettos for Puccini, as well as for Zandonai, and, after the former's death, Adami compiled a collection of Puccini's letters and a biography, *Il romanzo della vita di G. Puccini. La Nuova Enciclopedia della Musica* (Milan: Garzanti, 1983, rep. 1991): s.v. "Adami."

<sup>19</sup>[I gran soldi che ci vogliono a costruirsi una casa [...] sono gli stessi, sia che ci s'ostini a scavar le fondamenta in un tristissimo e ignobile posto, d'innanzi ad una cloaca, sia che si abbia la fortuna o la furberia, ed ad ogni modo il buon gusto, di scegliersi un bel sito, panoramicamente meraviglioso. Questo sito, nel teatro lirico, si chiama libretto.] Luigi Ricci, *Puccini Interprete di se stesso* (Milan: Ricordi, 1954, rep. 1980), 20. Dieter Schickling has recently cast doubt on the authenticity of Ricci's book, in a private communication with this author.

<sup>20</sup>[Siccome ho un tema ritmico che non posso cambiare perchè efficace, gli *sdruciolli* non mi vanno affatto. Bisognerebbe press'a poco far così [...] Non allungare nè diminuire. Debbono essere sei *versi tronchi*. Quest'imperativo, eh! Gara, *Carteggi*, 64. *Versi sdruciolli* have the principal accent on the antepenultimate syllable, while *versi tronchi* end with an accented syllable. Other poetic forms include *versi piani*, which have the stress on the penultimate, and *versi sciolti*, which are a mix of unrhymed seven- and eleven-syllable lines.

In January 1893, just a month before *Manon's* première in Turin, Illica complained to Ricordi that he objected to working for Puccini with the “*Manon system*”<sup>21</sup> of paraphrasing music:

Today, with Verdi and Boito, the great artistic endeavor is to give music the most complete truth and effectiveness of the word, which is the characteristic of the theater [...] Puccini could set words from the libretto with the sentiments that these words inspire and with traits of the characters in the libretto, and not, for example, when having to express love, create music for words like: mice-soldiers-sole / tallow-whipple trees-babies / are children of love!<sup>22</sup>

It is mostly Illica's handiwork that brings more natural, less traditional qualities to the libretto of *Manon Lescaut*. He professed a then-progressive creed: “In the libretto I will continue to give weight only to the means of depicting character, the shape of the scenes, and the verisimilitude of the dialogue, in the naturalness of its passions and situations.”<sup>23</sup> He avoided the use of standard poetic meters: Giacosa called Illica's lines—the ones he was most often called upon to spruce up—“illicasillabi.” Illica felt traditional [poetic] forms were passé, as did others of his generation, and stated that “the form of a libretto is made by the music, only the music and nothing other than the music! [...] A libretto is only the outline.”<sup>24</sup>

Illica's contributions to *Manon Lescaut* are concentrated in two locations in the libretto. He created a new ending for Act I that would foreshadow and possibly ameliorate the dramatic gap with the next act: after Manon and Des Grieux escape together, her brother Lescaut and Geronte, her wealthy would-be kidnapper, now plot to trace the runaway girl to Paris, where the audience will see her next. But it is

<sup>21</sup>[sistema della *Manon*] Gara, *Carteggi*, 78.

<sup>22</sup>[Oggi che da Verdi, Boito, il grande tentativo artistico è di dare alla musica la più completa verità ed efficacia della parola, che è, la caratteristica del teatro [...] il Puccini lo musichi colle parole del libretto, coi sentimenti che queste parole ispirano e coi caratteri propri ai personaggi del libretto e non—ad esempio—quando si ha da esprimere l'amore, far della musica sopra parole come: topi—trabanti—sogliole / sego—bilance—pargoli / son figli dell'amor!] Ibid., 78-9.

<sup>23</sup>[io nel libretto continuerò a dar valore solo al modo di tratteggiare i caratteri e al taglio delle scene e alla verosimiglianza del dialogo, nella sua naturalezza, delle passioni e delle situazioni.] Ibid., 358.

<sup>24</sup>[la forma di un libretto la fa la musica, soltanto la musica e niente altro che la musica!...Un libretto non è che la traccia.] In the same letter of October 1907, Illica inveighs against his critics and says that “their most perfect and precious poetry makes the poorest impression” in front of the footlights.” [la loro perfettissima e preziosissima poesia [fa] la più trista delle figure [...] innanzi alla luce di una ribalta.] Ibid., 357-8.

Illica's redesign of Act III in which we find the greatest development toward a more non-traditional plan.<sup>25</sup> In his suggestions, two strong preferences can be determined: the simultaneous presentation of contrasting emotions (which heightens the effects of each), and a breakdown of formal structures, leading to continuous and speedy action.

In regard to his work on Act III, Illica wrote to Ricordi:

I removed that first scene between Lescaut and the archer and I substituted a very rapid little scene between Lescaut and Des Grieux that leaves the [stage] public out of the events. Thanks to this little scene, in which Des Grieux erupts full of pain, everything proceeds more rapidly, more simply, more clearly, without the picklock and drunk soldiers [...] The duet [...] remains as it was, but it is interrupted by a happy voice singing a little song of that era; it is a lamplighter coming to extinguish the lanterns. The two lovers embrace in the window, silent and immobile. Once the lamplighter is gone, the duet continues and Des Grieux convinces Manon that freedom is a sure thing. Manon believes him, but a gunshot rings out.<sup>26</sup>

Here, the dramatic action is being constantly interrupted, which will resonate with structural aspects of Puccini's score.<sup>27</sup> The act

<sup>25</sup>Illica's ideas for the end of the third act, some of which were not used, were quite innovative, such as: "When the two [lovers] embrace, the curtain falls quickly and the finale begins: a peroration, so to speak, or better, a very short piece in a seafaring tempo, that is, the effect of the ship departing. An imitative melody in the orchestra, and from behind the curtain a contrast of voices that seem to become more distant. The prostitutes have an anguished, sad song, being terrified of leaving home and facing the unknown, the infinite, the silence. The sailors, below, indifferently handle the sails [...] and Manon and Des Grieux who greet the new dawn, united again." [Quando i due si abbracciano cade rapidamente la tela e qui comincia il finale: perorazione—per modo di dire, or meglio, brano brevissimo a tempo di marinaresca, cioè l'effetto della partenza della nave—melodia imitativa in orchestra, dietro la tela, un contrasto di voci che sensibilmente si allontanano. Le cortigiane hanno un canto angosciato, triste, lo spavento del loro allontanarsi e dell'inoltrarsi verso l'ignoto, l'infinito, il silenzio; e i marinai, sotto, indifferenti che manovrano [...].] E Manon e Des Grieux che salutano la nuova aurora, felici, uniti ancora] *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>26</sup>[Vi ho tolta quella prima scena tra Lescaut e l'Arciere e vi ho sostituita una rapidissima scenettina fra Lescaut e Des Grieux che mette a parte il pubblico degli avvenimenti. Mercé questa scenettina, dove vi è uno sfogo di Des Grieux pieno di dolore, tutto procede più rapido, più semplice, più chiaro, senza grimaldello e senza soldati ebbri ... il duetto...rimane tal quale, ma che viene spezzato da una voce allegra che canta una canzoncina dell'epoca: è il lamponaio che va a spegnere il fanale. I due amanti si stringono alla finestra, muti, immobili. Via il lamponaio, il duetto continua e Des Grieux convince Manon che la libertà è sicura. Manon vi crede, ma un colpo di fucile tuona] *Ibid.*, 70-1.

<sup>27</sup>This scene has cinematic qualities, most similar to the filmic technique of the "dissolve." See Deborah Burton, "Ariadne's threads: Puccini and Cinema," *Studi Musicali* 2012/1.

begins with an 8-bar parallel period<sup>28</sup> in D minor, repeated intact on the dominant starting at III/7/0. However, when the theme is reiterated in D minor, the second half of the parallel period is impeded by Des Grieux's "eruption" at III/7/16, and the expected cadence is thwarted. The theme then returns in a disintegrated form, dissolving into a quasi-recitative, which ultimately leads to a leitmotivic iteration of "Donna non vidi mai" when Manon appears at III/9/0.

Like the act's opening theme, this latter melody has very regular, four-square phrase lengths and a predictable harmonic progression. But once more, at III/10/5, the theme disintegrates (just as Manon's Leitmotiv is heard) at the approach of the lamplighter: we hear the expected G tonic, but it is now G minor (not major), and the meter has changed from 3/4 to common time. At the end of the lamplighter's song, the duet recommences, now in G minor, and, at III/13/0, the two melodic strains are coupled. The expected conclusion to the lamplighter's song and the final cadence never arrive, however, and we instead are thrust into a new 8-bar theme in F-sharp minor at III/14/0.<sup>29</sup> This pattern repeats anew when the F-sharp-minor cadence is replaced at III/15/0 with one in the parallel major, written in G-flat. This begins the so-called "destiny" theme, whose eighth cadential bar is also elided, now by the gunshot and an F-sharp half-diminished seventh chord. In short, there appears here to be a larger strategy of denying established expectations.

Illica's version of the Act III finale—which he called "new and original"<sup>30</sup>—may at first seem traditional, its roll-call scene in the tradition of a *concertato*. In fact, Girardi has written that the entire finale fits the "solita forma" template, a standard series of movements preceded by a scena, originally recognized by Basevi:<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup>"Parallel period," also known as "antecedent-consequent phrase." See Chapter 4, note 13.

<sup>29</sup>This melody is borrowed from Puccini's *Crisantemi* (1890), an elegy written for Prince Amedeo di Savoia. The choice of this piece, in the key of F-sharp minor, is possibly related to the overall thematic use of F-sharp minor in *Manon Lescaut*, as well as to its associations with death.

<sup>30</sup>[una cosa nuova ed originale.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 71.

<sup>31</sup>"The usual form of duets, that is a *tempo d'attacco*, the *adagio*, the *tempo di mezzo*, and the *Cabaletta*." [La solita forma de' duetti, cioè quella che vuole un *tempo d'attacco*, l'*adagio*, il *tempo di mezzo*, e la *Cabaletta*.] Basevi, *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi*, 191. Quoted in Harold S. Powers, "Form and Formula" *Studi Pucciniani* 3 (2004): 13. The issue of the "solita forma" in Puccini has most recently been explored by Davis in *Il Tritico* and by David Rosen in "'La solita forms' in Puccini's Operas?" *Studi Pucciniani* 3 (2004): 177-99.

0. Scena: "All'armi" at III/16
1. Tempo d'attacco: "Udiste" at III/19
2. Concertato: "Rosetta" at III/21; "A guardami" at III/23/-3; "Violetta" at III/24 (Tempo 1°)
3. Tempo di Mezzo: "presto" at III/25/5
4. Stretta: "Guardate" at III/27<sup>32</sup>

Powers recognizes the *concertato* form, but ultimately disagrees on the presence of *la solita forma*: "The *concertato* is a free-floating remnant of the 'solita forma' for Finales, but what precede and follow it originate in a dramatic, not a musical, design."<sup>33</sup> Huebner adds that while full closes are not necessary to delineate sections of *la solita forma*, especially in the more continuous texture as is typical of this period, a "decisive cadence" should be established.<sup>34</sup> In addition, unlike older tried-and-true *concertati*, the action does not freeze. Thus the depiction of time and the dramatic flow remain more natural. Even if there were a vestigial form here, however, it would be perceptually overwhelmed by Puccini's continually interrupted cadences, which extend into the roll-call *concertato*.

At III/25/4, there is finally a cadence in E-flat minor, after 238 measures without formal closure. But this moment of repose does not last long. It is immediately followed by a freer section and then, at III/27/9, by Des Grieux's *cri di coeur* "Guardate, pazzo son"<sup>35</sup> (Girardi's "stretta") in E minor, the final cadence of which elides into a leitmotivic reiteration of the "destiny" theme at III/28/0, and the act concludes. Even here, however, we do not get a perfect authentic cadence, since

<sup>32</sup>Girardi, *Puccini*, 94.

<sup>33</sup>Powers, "Form and Formula," 28.

<sup>34</sup>Huebner continues, in regard to the Count's Act III aria in Massenet's *Manon*, "Due to this continuity, the term 'recall' would seem to lose some of its force, but retains validity inasmuch as a new unit of structure has been initiated following a decisive cadence." Huebner, "Thematic Recall," 85.

<sup>35</sup>Puccini related to his friend Ugo Ojetti that the theme for Des Grieux's outburst came from a tune he had heard: "One time, in the studio of Mentessi [Giuseppe Mentessi, 1857-1931, painter and member of the Milan *scapigliatura*], many years ago, Mentessi had been to visit a mental institution and showed me the lament of an insane woman, a lament that she repeated ad infinitum, excruciating. Mentessi had a harmonium. I tried to play that lament on the harmonium. I liked it. I wrote it on a piece of paper: it is the end of the third act of *Manon*." [Una volta, allo studio di Mentessi tanti anni fa. Mentessi era andato a visitare un manicomio e m'accennava il lamento d'una pazza, un lamento che quella ripeteva all'infinito, straziante. Mentessi aveva un armonium. Provai a rendere sull'armonium quel lamento. Mi piacque. Me lo segnai su un foglio: è il finale del terzo della *Manon*.] Ojetti, *Cose viste*, 338.

the dominant has been elided, and the harmony moves directly from F-sharp half-diminished to E major.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, almost the entire act has been bereft of full closes. Puccini has composed it, however, not in the style of a free-flowing Wagnerian endless melody, but as a series of musical moments in which regular phrase lengths and diatonic closes are expected, but do not arrive. Congruent with the larger theme of disintegration, these passages are, in essence, “deformational” forms.<sup>37</sup>

Puccini’s newfound style was not created in a vacuum, but developed in the fecund company of many fellow operatic iconoclasts. As Powers writes, “Whatever combination of procedures old and new, indigenous and borrowed, may be the basis for coherence and continuity—we still have to do with a sea-change in the Great Tradition.”<sup>38</sup> The way forward had been heralded by Arrigo Boito in 1863-64:

For as long as opera has existed in Italy, until today, we have never had true operatic *form*, but instead always the diminutive, the small form... aria, rondò, cabaletta, stretta, ritornello, pezzo concertato, are all there, marshaled into straight lines. [...] In this hour, in this minute, the voyage that music must follow is shinningly indicated. [...] To have life and glory and to reach the great destinies marked for them, operas “of the present” must arrive, in our opinion, at: I. The complete obliteration of the small form; II. The creation of form; III. The realization of the greatest tonal and rhythmic development possible today; IV. The supreme incarnation of the drama.<sup>39</sup>

*Manon Lescaut* can be seen to approach Boito’s last three goals, but the first is problematic. Puccini does indeed use small forms here,

<sup>36</sup>See Chapter 3 for a motivically related interpretation of this motion.

<sup>37</sup>Hepokoski and Darcy employ the term “deformation” to mean “the stretching of a normative procedure to its maximally expected limits or even beyond them—or the overriding of that norm altogether in order to produce a calculated expressive effect.” James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 614. In this section of *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini “overrides the norm” of expected cadences.

<sup>38</sup>Powers, “Form and Formula,” 48.

<sup>39</sup>[da quando il melodramma ha esistito in Italia in fino ad oggi, vera *forma* melodrammatica non abbiamo avuta giammai, ma invece sempre il diminutivo, la *formula*...aria, rondò, cabaletta, stretta, ritornello, pezzo concertato, sono tutte là, schierate in dritta fila. [...] A quest’ora, a questo minuto, il viaggio che ha da seguire la musica è luminosamente segnato....L’opera in musica ‘del presente’, per aver vita e gloria e toccare gli alti destini che le sono segnati, deve giungere, a parer nostro: I. La completa oblitterazione della formula II. La creazione della forma III. L’attuazione del più vasto sviluppo tonale e ritmico possibile oggi IV. La suprema incarnazione del dramma] Arrigo Boito, *Tutti gli scritti*, ed. Pietro Nardi (Milan: Mondadori, 1942): 1080-1 and 1106-7. Quoted in Powers, “Form and Formula,” 22.

notably the madrigal and minuet of Act II. In the second half of that act, however, such brief set-pieces are nowhere to be found. Thus, as he does in Act III, the composer sets up a situation where standard formats are expected, and then turns the tables. Boito's second goal, the creation of form, occurs in Puccini mostly at the level of an entire act, which are often bifurcated in the middle.<sup>40</sup>

Turning now to Act I, Puccini borrowed the theme for the opening of *Manon Lescaut* from the second minuet of his *Tre minuetti* (1890) [Exx. 6.0a-b] Although the two themes are in the same key, A major, and form parallel periods that open with the same antecedent phrase, they are not identical. The main difference (beside a slight rhythmic inversion of the initial sixteenth+thirty-second into thirty-second+sixteenth) is that the operatic version of the consequent phrase is three bars longer, interpolating new music that emphasizes pitch class F-sharp, especially bars 7, 8 and 10. This creates a total period of eleven measures, not the normative eight—a deformational parallel period.

Ex. 6.0

a) Minuetto 2, *Tre minuetti* (1890)

<sup>40</sup>Greenwald has noted that each of Puccini's first acts and one-act operas is divided in two or three dramatic-musical units. Greenwald, "Dramatic Exposition," 195.



b) *Manon Lescaut*, Act I, opening

**Allegro brillante**

*ff* < E - A - E - C# >

< F# >

< E - F# >

< E - F# >

< F# >

Although some may consider it problematic to discuss operatic scores in terms of instrumental forms, the use of similar formats in both genres has a long history. In any case, Puccini has forced the issue by choosing a minuet theme as his source—a choice that not only informs the eighteenth-century atmosphere he is striving to establish, but that also sets up auditory expectations of standard Classical-era schemata. The original minuet falls neatly into a compound ternary form: the A section (minuet) is rounded binary and the B (trio) is ternary. The phrases group into two- or four-bar units throughout except for a three-bar retransition in the trio's middle section. In short, it is quite regular.

The opening of *Manon Lescaut* shows no such transparent form, although several attempts have been made to shoehorn the passage into a standard formal mold. Leibowitz has individuated a sonata form in this first scene, complete with first (main) and second (subordinate)

theme groups, development and recapitulation,<sup>41</sup> and others have seconded the notion. In Leibowitz's analysis, the main theme includes the material up to I/3/0 and is in ABA<sup>2</sup> form, followed by a transition; the subordinate theme begins with Edmondo's "Ave sera" at I/4/0, the development arrives at I/12/20, interrupted by "Tra voi belle," followed by reprises of the themes without any fixed order.

This seems like an uncomfortable fit at best. Nevertheless, the opening theme does cycle repeatedly, at I/2/4, at I/3/8 (the end of the consequent only), at I/12/20 (the end of the consequent with variation), I/17/10 (end of the consequent with variation), at I/22/0 and at I/25/0. In fact, it is quite possible to regard the opening, wordless music (until Edmondo's "Ave, sera" at I/4/0) as a five-part rondo form, ABACA:

- A I/0/0, A major
- B I/1/0, sequential
- A I/2/4, A major
- C I/3/1, D major
- A' I/3/8, A major (end of the consequent only)

Fragments of the opening theme also appear throughout the first scene (at I/10/12, I/12/20, I/18/6), interposed with new themes, such as Edmondo's "Ave sera" (a periodic form of 8+8 bars with a codetta, the entire section then repeated nearly intact) and Des Grieux's "Tra voi belle" (a ternary song form, with the outer sections of 4+4 bars).

But a sticking point of any formal analysis of this scene is the *fortissimo* full reprise of the opening theme at I/22/0, slightly ornamented, which has been labeled a "mirror recapitulation."<sup>42</sup> That is, an altered version of the sequential B theme at I/20/1, as noted above, moves sequentially from F-sharp major to a prolonged E, the dominant of the original key of A major, leading to the main theme's restatement. If this reprise is not the sonata recapitulation that Leibowitz believes it is, then perhaps it can be understood as an example of Suzanne Scherr's "musical bracketing"<sup>43</sup> or, in a similar

<sup>41</sup>Leibowitz, "L'arte di Giacomo Puccini," 11-2.

<sup>42</sup>This concept is mentioned in Huebner, "Thematic Recall," 93-4.

<sup>43</sup>"[inserting two or more] similar sections into a contrasting sequence of episodes to serve as a cohesive dramatic and musical bracket." Suzanne Scherr, "The Chronology of Composition of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*" in Gabriella Biagi Ravenni and Carolyn Gianturco, eds., *Giacomo Puccini: L'uomo, il musicista, il panorama europeo*, Studi Musicali 4 (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1997): 85.

vein, Steven Huebner's concept of "framing."<sup>44</sup> It is also possible to include this type of thematic recurrence under the rubric of *indirect conflation*: that is, parenthetical interruptions are inserted against a thematic backdrop that keeps reappearing.<sup>45</sup>

But let us also consider the approach taken by Hepokoski and Darcy, which would make it possible to see the entire first scene as an extended rondo format, especially since they permit the refrain and episodes to be varied, shortened or expanded radically. The authors write, "The rondo proper encompasses formats [...] within which thematic variations or shortenings of the A-idea, the refrain, are also possible in its later appearances." and "each rotation is marked by a similar opening, even though what follows in the remainder can differ from one rotation to the next."<sup>46</sup> Further, the rondo form is described as in dialogue with the rotational principle, which they define thus: "Rotational structures are those that extend through musical space by recycling one or more times—with appropriate alterations and adjustments—a referential thematic pattern established as an ordered succession at the piece's outset."<sup>47</sup> They also allow a freer definition of the rondo form:

Successive rotations in music [including rondo] are often subjected to telling variation: portions of them may dwell longer on individual modules of the original musical arrangement; they may omit some of the ordered modules along the way; or they may be shortened, truncated, telescoped, expanded, developed, decorated, or altered with *ad hoc* internal substitutions or episodic interpolations.<sup>48</sup>

These authors also note that a true rondo form usually contains retransitions, passages that move "from the end of an episode to a dominant preparation that sets up the subsequent reappearance of the tonic refrain."<sup>49</sup> This is precisely what occurs just before the final reprise, from I/20/1 to I/22/0.

<sup>44</sup>"The use of the same theme or motif to mark a beginning or an end (structural, dramatic, or otherwise) or to enclose an action or musical process (but, sometimes, remain extrinsic to it)." Huebner, "Thematic Recall," 86. Huebner applies this concept directly to the passage in question on page 94.

<sup>45</sup>See Chapter 2.

<sup>46</sup>Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements*, 388, 390.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 390.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 611.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 398.

In Hepokoski-Darcy terminology, then, this scene would have seven rotations, or cycles, each beginning with the refrain.

Rotations

1.
    - A I/0/0
    - B I/1/0
  2.
    - A I/2/4
    - C I/3/1
  3.
    - A' I/3/8 (end of the consequent only)
    - D I/4/0
    - D' I/7/9
    - D'' I/8/0
    - D' I/9/1
    - D'' I/9/9,
    - C' I/10/5
  4.
    - A I/10/12 fragmented
    - C'' I/12/13
  5.
    - A I/12/20 (end of the consequent with variation)
    - E I/15/0 ("Tra voi, belle")
- TR
6.
    - A I/18/6 (end of the consequent with variation)
    - D I/19/0
    - RT = B' I/20/1
  7.
    - A I/22/0

Each of these formal schemata, however, runs into trouble at the end: just as the final reprise is about to be completed, the music disintegrates into a descending A-major arpeggio that lands on the shocking, tonally foreign pitch of F natural: Manon has arrived. And her arrival obliterates the neat ending we were expecting. One senses at this moment that the ground has shifted; in time the audience will come to see this "earthquake" destroy Des Grieux and his place in society. And just as we did not get our reprise neatly tied up with a

bow, which would have re-affirmed some sense of Classic symmetry and predictability, our musical assumptions and expectations have also been rudely overturned.

### *fragmentary motivic manipulations*

In each of the disjunct moments portrayed in this opera, we see Manon in a new visual setting that seems to reflect a new side of her character. Alessandra Campana has noted that, in Ricordi's published *disposizione scenica* for *Manon Lescaut*, much emphasis has been given to visual cues.<sup>50</sup> Indeed when Des Grieux falls in love with Manon, he exclaims "Donna non *vidi* mai simile a questa!" [I have never *seen* such a woman!] (emphasis added.) Like Des Grieux, we too get glimpses of the heroine but none truly reveals who she is: in a sense, we are as blinded as her lover. With each shift of scenery and location, a new, startling vision and version of Manon appears: she seems defined by her environments. Surrounded by a crowded village square at Amiens, the image of her as one of many reflects her status as a subservient member of a family and community. The lack of control she has over her own destiny is demonstrated by not one but two kidnapping attempts, to which she submits as the only means of escaping the forced journey to the convent. In Act II, Manon is seen living in luxury and enjoying it, the ornate setting an externalization of her greed: indeed, after Des Grieux re-enters her life, it is her love of jewels, and her regret in leaving them behind, that delay their escape and enable her arrest. The cold, dark and grimy setting of Act III reflects a Manon dragged down into an inescapable future of disgrace, and in the final act's setting—empty of all exterior props—Manon herself becomes one with the void in which she finds herself, and expires.

Accordingly, Manon's Leitmotiv—a descending stepwise fourth heard early on with her four-syllable name—is as transformed during the opera as she is, as Girardi and others have discussed.<sup>51</sup> Occasionally it is truncated to a descending second suggesting her

<sup>50</sup>"The stage manual is remarkably specific and consistent in providing instructions about the actor's gesture of looking—a detail rarely found in other *disposizioni sceniche*....[Des Grieux's] act of looking at her ecstatically is so often reiterated that it becomes a sort of visual motive to represent his love for Manon." Alessandra Campana, "Look and Spectatorship in *Manon Lescaut*," *Opera Quarterly* (2008) 24/1-2: 13.

<sup>51</sup>Girardi, *Puccini*, 72ff.

two-syllable first name, such as at the beginning and end of the final act [See Exx. 3.4b-c].

In Act I, after she states her full name, we also hear an open fourth on the word “chiamo.” This is the interval that opens the opera, and as such forms part of the MPI. [See Chapter 3.] Further, the open fourth is the first interval that Des Grieux sings, on “L’amor?” [Love?]. [Exx. 6.1a-b]

Ex. 6.1

a) Manon’s theme, I/27/7

b) Des Grieux’s entrance on “L’amor?”, I/12/14

While space limitations preclude a discussion here of all the occurrences of Manon’s theme in the opera, a few examples will suggest the wide variety of guises under which it appears. For example, the two-note version of the theme is heard in minor mode, accompanied by a thudding, repetitive bass suggestive of her heartbeat, as Des Grieux suddenly reappears in her gilded room *chez* Geronte, at II/25/4. [Ex. 6.2a] And the four-note version appears rhythmically altered at the beginning of her Act II aria “In quelle trine morbide” at II/6/5. [Ex. 6.2b]:

## Ex. 6.2

a) Manon's shortened theme in minor, II/25/4

b) Descending stepwise fourth in “In quelle trine morbide,” II/6/5

Two surface transformations of Manon's four-note theme occur in the last act: the first is a *projection* onto the chromatic collection when Manon has fainted, and the second is partially harmonized by the whole-tone collection at the moment when Des Grieux expresses his love, “with infinite passion”; it then resolves to E-flat major. [Exx. 6.3a-b]

Exx. 6.3a-b: transformations of Manon's theme at IV/4/13 and IV/17/1.

Manon's theme can also be strikingly transformed by small-scale motivic parallelism. At II/4/24, we hear Manon's arietta “Una casetta angusta” as she recalls her happy times living with Des Grieux. A closer examination of this theme shows a descending stepwise fourth as its structural basis, accompanied by parallel 6/3 chords (as in the original

version of the theme) connected by 7-6 suspensions. [Ex. 6.4a] And at II/16/3, we hear the minuet's trio theme, a phrase that will haunt the dying Manon at IV/25/0, as another composing-out of a descending fourth. [Ex. 6.4b]

## Ex. 6.4

a) Expanded descending stepwise fourth in “Una casetta angusta”, II/4/24

b) Expanded descending stepwise fourth in Minuet's trio theme, II/16/3.

Another Leitmotiv has been associated with the idea of “destiny,” most probably because of Des Grieux’s accompanying text, “In your deep eyes, I read my destiny.”<sup>52</sup> Manon is portrayed in the opera (though not in the novel) as prisoner to an inescapable fate. She is first seen as captive to her family’s wishes to forcibly send her to a convent as well as caught within the gaze of her male admirers. Then she is imprisoned in the gilded cage of Geronte’s boudoir, put in the literal chains of prison and deportation, and finally bound to inevitable death. For Des Grieux, once he meets, loves and follows Manon, his path is irrevocably altered: he will lose his social standing, money and self-respect. To paraphrase D’Amico, both characters are damned from the start.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup>[Nell’occhio tuo profondo io leggo il mio destin] The motivic label has been applied by Girardi, *Puccini*, 74, and Scherr, “Chronology,” 93, although the latter refines it as the “Destiny of Des Grieux.”

<sup>53</sup>Fedele D’Amico, “Conferenza: Vacallo (Mendrisio) 15 Luglio 1985)” *Quaderni pucciniani* (1996): 16: “In *Manon Lescaut*, love is something damned from the start.” [In *Manon Lescaut*, l’amore è una cosa dannata in partenza.] In another article, (cont.)



As seen in Ex. 6.5a, the “destiny” theme is a joining of the stepwise fourth motive of Manon and the open fourth motive, in reverse order from their appearance in Manon’s self-introduction (Ex. 6.1a).<sup>54</sup> The theme undergoes a *projection* onto the whole-tone collection [Ex. 6.5b], similar to the one we have seen above, at III/6/1.

Ex. 6.5

a) “Destiny” motive, II/34/4

Ex. 6.5a is a musical score for piano and voice. The piano part consists of two staves. The right hand has a melodic line with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Above the staff, there are labels "[open fourths]" and "[stepwise fourth]". The left hand has chords: G2-B2-E3, G2-B2-E3, G2-B2-E3, G2-B2-E3, G2-B2-E3. The voice part has lyrics: "Nell' oc - chio tu - o pro - fon - do". There is a 3-measure triplet in the bass line of the piano part.

b) “Destiny” motive, projected onto the whole-tone collection, III/6/1

Ex. 6.5b is a musical score for piano. The piano part consists of two staves. The right hand has chords: G major, G major, G major. The left hand has a melodic line with notes G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. There is a 3-measure triplet in the bass line of the piano part.

These *projections* of motives onto alternative pitch collections serve to distort the transparently diatonic tonal space established at their first appearance, and at the start of the opera itself. Thus, both formal and pitch-related motivic elements of *Manon Lescaut* undergo a breaking-down and transformation of traditional musical schemata that shadow the narrative trajectory from order to chaos. And while Puccini’s path toward compositional mastery will not end with the completion of this opera, his voyage so far has been fruitful. The new “country” he has discovered is full of bright promise.

D’Amico writes that the theme of the opera is “love as a curse, in and for itself, independent of who practices it.” [dell’amore inteso come maledizione in sé e per sé, indipendentemente da chi lo pratica.] Fedele D’Amico, “Le ragioni di ‘Manon Lescaut’” *I case della musica* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1962).

<sup>54</sup>Girardi also finds this motive as the last line of Manon’s “In quelle trine morbide” at II/6/19, accompanying the text “or ho tutt’altra cosa.”



## Chapter 7

### Sfumature:<sup>1</sup> *La bohème*'s fragmentation and sequential motions

“Sfuma un’ardente scena d’amor”<sup>2</sup>

As the pages of Rodolfo’s play crackle into flames near the start of Act I of *La bohème*, momentarily keeping the bohemians warm in their frigid garret, the bohemians describe an evanescent drama that could be *La bohème* itself. The opera’s nearly permanent place on the operatic stage, where it has remained for over a century, has rendered it so familiar to audiences that its ephemeral qualities no longer surprise. But this succinct tale of brief love extinguished too early has something in common with the synecdochical drama set ablaze, whose capriciousness and brevity are mockingly described.<sup>3</sup> The opera’s audience is shown

<sup>1</sup>[nuances]

<sup>2</sup>“An ardent scene of love vanishes” from *La bohème*, Act I.

<sup>3</sup>Rodolfo: my ardent play will warm us.

Marcello: You maybe want to read it?  
You’ll freeze me.

R: No, the paper will crackle into ashes /  
and inspiration will return to the heavens  
/ it threatens great damage to the world  
/ and Rome is in danger! [...]

R: Quiet, they are giving my play...

Colline:...to the fire / I find it scintillating!

R: Vivo!

C: (*as the fire dies down*) But too short!

R: Brevity is a great merit [...]

R: In that languid blue flame, an ardent  
scene of love vanishes [...]

R, M, C: Beautifully disappearing in a  
happy blaze

M: Oh God!.../ the flame is already  
dying,

C: What a useless play!

M: It already wears thin, crumples, dies  
(the fire goes out)

C e M: Down with the author!

[Rodolfo: l’ardente mio dramma ci scaldi.  
Marcello: Vuoi leggerlo forse? Mi geli.

R: No, in cener la carta si sfaldi/ e l’estro  
rivoli ai suoi cieli.] Al secol gran danno  
minaccia.../ E Roma in periglio! [...]

R: Zitto, si dà il mio dramma...

Colline:...al fuoco./ Lo trovo scintillante!

R: Vivo!

C: (*mentre il fuoco si sta spegnendo*) Ma dura  
poco!

R: La brevità, gran pregio [...]

R: In quell’azzurro—guizzo languente /  
Sfuma un’ardente scena d’amor [...]

R, M, C: Bello in allegra/ vampa svanir.

M: Oh Dio!.../ già s’abbassa la fiamma.

C: Che vano, che fragile dramma!

M: Già scricchiola, /increspasi, muore.  
(il fuoco si spegne)

C e M: Abbasso, abbasso l’autore!]

only fleeting glimpses of the unsettled lives of these characters, and the music (beginning with the opening unresolved dominant seventh chord, which is the first link of a sequential cycle) is similarly unstable. As love blooms and dies, as moods change kaleidoscopically, as the frail Mimì passes on, as the bohemians live through this transient stage in their lives,<sup>4</sup> the music follows suit.

The four “tableaux” [quadri] are not “acts,” but partial views of an unpredictable and unaccountable existence, based on events and personages from Henry Murger’s life.<sup>5</sup> Much narrative detail is omitted (taking further the episodic structure found in *Manon Lescaut*) and scenes unseen from *La bohème* abound.<sup>6</sup> We are not given a chance to see a panoramic view of their Paris—no traditional introductory chorus here to establish time and place. We only hear narrative-within-narrative descriptions of the grey skies and rooftops of the city, the millionaire uncle, Chez Mabilille, the pawn shops. And we are made aurally aware of out-of-sight activities, such as Colline falling down the garret stairs, Parpignol the toy seller approaching, Musetta singing from inside the tavern, and church bells ringing on the Avenue d’Orleans.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Henry Murger, whose *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* were the basis for the opera, entitled his twenty-third chapter, “La Jeunesse n’a qu’un temps” [Youth comes only once] which treats the lives of the now former bohemians as they become respectable—even Musetta gets married.

<sup>5</sup>Alexandre Schanne describes the real people behind Henry Murger’s *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* in *Souvenirs de Schœnard* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1887), 1-2: “Rodolphe is Murger. Colline was composed of the philosopher Jean Wallon and Trapadoux, called the “Green giant.” We find in the painter Marcel Lazare and Tabar. Schœnard is Alexandre Schanne: that’s me. [...] Murger, publishing in the *Corsaire [Satan]* his first scenes from *la Vie di Bohème*, gave me a role calling me “Schœnard.” The first “n” of the word, being inverted by the printer, became a “u,” making “Schœnard.” [Rodolphe, c’est Murger. Colline est un composé du philosophe Jean Wallon et de Trapadoux dit le “Géant vert”. On retrouve dans le peintre Marcel Lazare et Tabar. Schœnard, c’est Alexandre Schanne c’est moi. [...] Murger, publiant dans le *Corsaire [Satan]* ses premières scènes de *la Vie di Bohème*, m’y donna un rôle en m’appelant *Schœnard*. Le premier n du mot, ayant été renversé par l’imprimeur, devint un u, ce qui faisait *Schœnard*.]

<sup>6</sup>Between March 1845 and April 1849, the Parisian magazine *Le Corsaire Satan* published single stories entitled, “Scènes de la Bohème” by Henry Murger. Murger later adapted it into a stage play with Théodore Barrière, which premiered in 1849. Finally, it became a novel, originally entitled *Scènes de la bohème* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1851). A modern edition of Murger is: Henry Murger, *Scènes de la vie de bohème* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).

<sup>7</sup>As Greenwald notes: “we are still keenly aware that the boundaries of what we have just witnessed are not finite.” Greenwald, “Dramatic Exposition,” 222-3.

In addition to the lack of a clear narrative trajectory, the first audiences of *La bohème* would have noticed something else missing as well: many operatic conventions. Puccini, librettists Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, and editor Giulio Ricordi challenged traditional ways, in a manner not too unlike that of their bohemian protagonists, with the then-progressive aim of making the opera seem as natural as possible.

There is also no moral to this story, or even a clear dramatic conflict—no sworn enemies or patriotic causes. As Daniela Goldin writes:

In general, just by reading a cast list one can foresee how an opera will end. One can imagine a plot, its complications and its motives. Not so in *Bohème*.<sup>8</sup>

Further, many aspects of the stage business were shocking in their day. In how many operas do the protagonists disappear at the end of an act—still singing—and leaving behind an empty stage? Have we ever before heard the prima donna finish her entrance aria with the antithesis of a flashy ending—a quasi-recitative<sup>9</sup>—or die, sans deathbed aria, while the tenor does not even notice? The actual moment of Mimi's death is not even marked in the score. And, just before he realizes she is gone, Rodolfo lapses into speaking voice, shattering the most basic of operatic commandments and removing yet another layer of separation between the stage the audience.

### *a transitory score*

The opera opens without clearly establishing a tonic, and tonal closure is frequently lacking elsewhere in the work as well. Perhaps the most striking example in the opera of this open-endedness is the bitonal clash between keys a tritone apart, at II/27, when the concertato

<sup>8</sup>[In genere, alla sola lettura del “cast” si può prevedere come va a finire un'opera, si possono immaginare una vicenda, le sue complicazioni e i suoi moventi. Non così in *Bohème*.] Daniela Goldin. “Drammaturgia e linguaggio della *Bohème* di Puccini” in *La Vera Fenice: librettisti e libretti tra Sette e Ottocento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1985), 344. She adds: “*La Bohème* is an opera without enemies, which places it absolutely out of panorama of operatic tragedy. [...] Consider too the disappearance in *La bohème* of the strophe (which is fundamental, as we know, in Verdi's libretti).” [*La Bohème* e' un' opera senza nemici; il che la pone assolutamente fuori del panorama operistico tragico. [...] considerare anche la sparizione, nella *Bohème*, della strofa (fondamentale invece, sappiamo, nella poetica verdiana).] Ibid., 346, 358.

<sup>9</sup>Other arias—though not entrance arias—have ended in this way: Rothstein mentions “Im Mohrenland” from Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and the same practice in Rossini: Almaviva's serenade to Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Desdemona's Willow Song in *Otello*. Rothstein, “Common-tone Tonality,” §51.

built on Musetta's E-major waltz remains incomplete while overlapping with the tattoo's march that begins in B-flat major. [Ex. 7.0]

Ex. 7.0: Bitonal clash, II/27

The musical score for Ex. 7.0 is arranged in three systems. The first system includes Flutes, Clarinets, and Harp. The second system includes Horns, Trumpets, and Drums. The third system includes Strings. The key signature is E major (three sharps). The tempo is marked 'Allegro (alla marcia)'. The music features a complex bitonal texture with overlapping rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings like *ppp*.

The overall effect is that of musical flexibility and fragmentation. Puccini wrote, “It cost me some effort to keep to the reality, and then to lyricize somewhat all these little bits. And I succeeded.”<sup>10</sup> Part of his solution was to create leitmotivic thematic cells, and slightly more extended passages, that thwart traditional expectations of full-blown set-pieces, extending the techniques found in *Manon Lescaut*. As Salvetti writes, “The coherence of the musical discourse [...] does not rely upon long scenes constructed harmoniously on a single idea, but from many small phrase fragments.”<sup>11</sup> This technique is part and parcel of Puccini’s technique of *indirect conflation*, discussed previously in Chapter 2.

The restless surface of the music and its close linking to the vicissitudes of the action were the attributes most noticed by contemporary critics, usually with little approbation. Theorist, and occasional music critic, Heinrich Schenker particularly objected to the restless shifting of emotions displayed by the characters:

<sup>10</sup>“Mi è costata un po’ di fatica per volermi attenere alla realtà e poi per lyricizzare un po’ tutti questi spezzatini. E ci sono riuscito.” Gara, *Carteggi*, 133.

<sup>11</sup>[La coerenza del discorso musicale si affida così non a grandi scene, costruite unitariamente su un’unica idea, ma a tanti piccoli incisi.] Guido Salvetti, “Il Novecento I,” in *Storia della Musica*, 9 (Turin: EDT, 1979), 165.

Should a composer seriously consider such men [Puccini and Leoncavallo], as seriously as they themselves do and reward half-truths with whole? No. One can employ music only for that which is either completely true or completely false. Thus, for example, the count in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* or Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, despite their less than honorable intentions, are at least men of more steady sentiments, and more steady desires than Marcellos, Rodolfos, etc. [...] We fear that the two Italians have gleaned from Murger's book only the superficial salacity of the material. Rather dishonestly.<sup>12</sup>

And Eduard Hanslick, Wagner's adversary, was particularly vehement, criticizing the emphasis on "ordinary things" and the score's fragmentation:

Everything is broken up into the smallest bits and pieces; the power to comprehend and unite, without which there is no genuine effect in music, is totally lacking. [...] The basic feeling of the whole, continually broken up, is thus dissipated in noisy, nervous details<sup>13</sup>

As noted in Chapter 1, Hanslick saved his sharpest invective for Puccini's overt use in this opera of parallel fifths.<sup>14</sup>

The critic known as Jarro wrote an article in which he "interviewed" Puccini about *La bohème* by means of a supernatural encounter. If one were disposed to view this as a writerly conceit and

<sup>12</sup>"Darf ein Componist solche Menschen ernster nehmen, als sie selbst sich nehmen und für halbe Echtheit mit ganzer lohnen? Nein. Nur ganz echt oder ganz unecht muss es sein, wofür die Musik sich einsetzen kann. So sind z. B. der Graf in Mozart's "Hochzeit des Figaro" oder Mozart's *Don Juan*, trotz ihrer unehrenwerthen Absichten zumindest Männer von fixerer Gesinnung und fixerem Willen als die Marcells und Rudolphs etc. [...] Wir fürchten, es war nur die oberflächlich empfundene Pikanterie des Stoffes, die den beiden Italienern gerade Murgers Buch empfohlen hat. Unehrlich genug." Heinrich Schenker, Number 97, *Neue Revue*, 8/2, 1897.

<sup>13</sup>[Allergewöhnlichsten Dinge] and [Alles zersplittert sich in kleinste Stücke und Stückchen; die überschauende und zusammenfassende Kraft, ohne welche es in der Musik keine echte Wirkung giebt, fehlt gänzlich. [...] Die Grundempfindung des Ganzen, unaufhörlich zerrissen, zerflattert dergestalt in lauter nervösen Details.] Hanslick: "*Die moderne Oper*," 81-3.

<sup>14</sup>Hanslick wrote: "It is impossible to interpret this clever cultivation of ugliness as a 'witty' protest against the harmony of our great masters; it is nothing more than a crude musical insult. The unmotivated use of ugliness just because it is ugly, as well as the insolent predominance of the most banal dialogue, are a result of the naked realism that has now also invaded opera." [Für einen "witzigen" Protest gegen die Harmonielehre unserer grossen Meister können wir diese raffinierte Züchtung des Hässlichen doch unmöglich halten; sie ist nichts weiter als eine rohe musikalische Beleidigung. Die unmotivierte Umwendung des Hässlichen, bloss weil es hässlich ist, sowie die anmassende Vorherrschaft des banalsten Dialoges sind eine Konsequenz des nunmehr auch in die Oper eingedrungenen nackten Realismus.] *Ibid.*, 84.

place some measure of credence in the authenticity of the account, then “Puccini” defended his parallel fifths thus:

With the fifths at the beginning of the second act, with consecutive 5-3 chords on three trumpets, I believe to have suggested the clamor, the hubbub of a public celebration. The contrapuntal error renders the racket, the undignified vivacity of the celebration! The progression of fifths in the third act is slower, given to the flutes and harps, with a tremolo on the bridge of the cellos. They are descending fifths without thirds, empty fifths that give the idea of falling snow, of the bleakness of the cold. I believe to have used them with efficacy.<sup>15</sup>

The transitoriness that permeates many aspects of the plot is epitomized musically by the opera's opening sequence of descending fifths (circle of fifths).<sup>16</sup> Here, the opening theme remains unresolved on a 4/2 inversion of the dominant seventh of C major for twenty-four measures. (This is the most unstable arrangement of the chord since the dissonant seventh is in the bass.) Once having arrived at C major, however, the pattern is repeated on the V4/2 of F [I/1/0], moving to B-flat major [I/1/40]. Then, after the aria “Nei cieli bigi,” this sequence proceeds to the dominant 4/2s of E-flat, A-flat, D-flat [at I/2/13, I/3/0, and I/3/9 respectively]. [Ex. 7.1] As Greenwald writes:

This non-tonic opening reflects both the action that has been going on before the opera and the *in medias res* situation as the curtain rises on Marcello painting “The Passage of the Red Sea” and Rodolfo gazing out of the window [...] Puccini clearly understood [this] by setting it against a cycle of fifths—a progressive musical device that can be joined midstream and ended effectively and easily at any desired point.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup>[Con le quinte, sul principio del 2o atto, con accordi consecutivi di 3a e 5a su tre trombe, ho creduto dar idea del clamore, della barabonda di una festa popolare. L'errore di armonia rende il chiasso, l'incomposta vivacità della festa! Il procedimento della quinte, al 3o atto, e' più lento, affidato ai flauti, alle arpe, con un tremolo de' violoncelli, sul ponticello. Sono quinte discendenti senza terza; quinte vuote, che danno idea del cader della neve, dello squallore del freddo. Penso di averle adoperate con efficacia.” Jarro [pseud. Giulio Piccini], “Un Dialogo col M.o Puccini sull'opera ‘Bohème’ in *Attori, cantanti, concertisti, acrobati: ritratti, macchiette, aneddoti: memorie umoristiche*. (Florence: Bemporad, 1897), 349-50.

<sup>16</sup>Puccini, even as a student, was attracted to this type of sequence, as attested to by a doodle in his class notebook of 1882: he writes out the descending fifths pattern, as rising fourths, moving from C through F-double flat before making enharmonic alterations. Three of Puccini's notebooks are conserved at the Biblioteca dell'Istituto Musicale “Boccherini” in Lucca and can be viewed online at <http://www.internetculturale.it>.

<sup>17</sup>Greenwald, “Dramatic Exposition,” 252. Greenwald identifies the B-flat major of “Nei cieli bigi” as the overarching tonic for Acts I and II. It also could be seen as an *innesto*, grafted as an interruption into the sequential background.



Ex. 7.1: *La bohème*, opening, descending fifths sequence

descending fifths sequence

Sequences are transitory by nature, and thus are very useful for connecting diverse keys or registers by simply repeating ascending or descending patterns that can disrupt tonal stability. And the score of *La bohème* reads like a primer in this technique: in the first act alone, there is a multitude of sequential patterns.

For instance, Puccini composes a 7-6 descending sequence at I/4/24 that leads into a rising chromatic passage of parallel sixths supporting augmented triads. [Ex. 7.2a] At I/13/0, we find a sequence of rising minor thirds, in which the four-bar model begins in E-flat major, then moves up to G-flat major, A major and C major, an expanded diminished seventh chord or minor-third cycle. [Ex. 7.2b] A few bars later, at I/21/29, we hear a descending sequence of parallel tenths [Ex. 7.2c, next page] followed soon by another parallel tenths sequence during “*Che gelida manina*” at I/32/13 [Ex. 7.2d, next page]. The start of “*O soave fanciulla*,” at I/41/0, shows an ascending thirds sequence that seems to embody the rising passions of the two lovers [Ex. 7.2e]

Ex. 7.2: *La bohème*, Tableau I, sequences

a) I/4/24

augmented triads

b) I/13/0

rising thirds sequence

c) I/21/29

d) I/32/13

e) I/41/0

In the second tableau, Musetta's capricious "second" theme is built on descending tenths (or thirds), decorated with 4-3 suspensions [Ex. 7.3a, opposite] at II/17/11, while in the third tableau, beginning at III/10/0, Puccini writes a larger-scale sequence of rising minor thirds that outlines an expanded diminished-seventh pattern (minor-third cycle) while subsuming an ascending 5-6 pattern. B-flat minor<sup>18</sup> becomes G-flat major 6/3 chord through the 5-6 shift, which then serves as the subdominant of D-flat major, enharmonically reinterpreted as C-sharp minor; the pattern repeats, advancing the sequence to E major. Next, E minor takes over and, with a different melodic pattern, ascends to G minor and then B-flat minor.<sup>18</sup> [Ex. 7.3b] Later in the tableau, at III/21/0, when Rodolfo sings "Mimi è tanto malata!" we hear yet another sequence built on descending fifths. [Ex. 7.3c]

<sup>18</sup>The original version of this passage, at III/10/4, shows a shorter sequence but the vocal line moving up to high C. This is shown in Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, 113.

Ex. 7.3: *La bohème*, Tableaux II and III, sequences

a) II/17/11

b) III/10/0

c) III/21/0

In the fourth tableau, there are numerous thematic reminiscences, and accordingly we hear reprisals of sequential material, such as the descending fifths pattern at IV/6/19-33: B minor-E major-A major. Yet there is also new sequential material, such as the extension of Mimi's theme at her return (IV/12/50), which combines rising thirds with voice exchanges [Ex. 7.4a, next page], and the chromatically descending parallel tenths at IV/18/2, which move from A minor to E-flat dominant seventh, the distance of a tritone. [Ex. 7.4b, next page]

Ex. 7.4: *La bohème*, Tableau IV, sequences

## a) IV/12/50

IV/12/50

Zitti, riposa

O mio Zeddy

rising third sequence with voice-exchanges

IV/13/0

“Mi senti qui con te?”

“Ah! mia Mimì”

## b) IV/18/2

IV/18/2

“Forse è l'ultima volta” 10

A to Eb motion

Puccini’s skill at employing sequences derives in large part from his training in the thoroughbass traditions, where they were known as “arrangements” [disposizioni] or “bass motions” [movimenti del basso]. As Baragwanath writes:

These involved the application of short sequential melodic figures or designs to the individual parts of model realizations (sung and/or played) of the “bass motion by step,” or scale, and to the other bass motions consisting of regular patterns of conjunct and disjunct intervals.<sup>19</sup>

And Puccini did not have to look far to find models: his own father’s counterpoint treatise, used for years at the Lucca conservatory, contains a list of the “regular movements or sequences of the bass” [movimenti o andamenti regolari del Basso].<sup>20</sup> Two of these, for

<sup>19</sup>Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 147.

<sup>20</sup>See Burton, “Michele Puccini’s Counterpoint Treatise,” 177, and Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 161. Baragwanath describes the treatise as “essentially a handwritten compilation of pedagogical materials drawn for the most part from early (cont.)

example, describe descending fifth patterns: “ascending by fifth and descending by fourth” [sale di 5a e scende di 4a], and “ascending by fourth and descending by fifth” [sale di 4a e scende di 5a]. The first of Michele’s examples modulates from C to E, while the second remains in the G-major compass.

However, Puccini made use of the old patterns, which he literally had at his fingertips, for less traditional purposes. Defying rigid tonal structures, the prolific use in *La bohème* of the open-ended patterns allows free-floating passage from one key to another. And when Puccini employs the sequences in a more expanded way, such as outlining minor-third cycles (Exx. 7.2b and 7.3b), he invokes the type of “atonality” put forth by his contemporary Domenico Alaleona.<sup>21</sup> Even so, when a minor-third cycle begins and ends on the same pitch, as in Ex. 7.3b, it can be seen to function like a diatonic prolongation; in this case, the entire complex would be an example of *direct conflation*.<sup>22</sup>

### ***scenes unseen***

The few fleeting moments of which we catch sight in *La bohème*, were once more numerous. In adapting Murger’s *Scènes*, the opera’s creators worked long and hard to arrive at the final product and, in the process, they discarded much material (enough for ten operas, as Illica wrote). The largest section to be cut was an entire act, “The Cortile Scene” (originally Tableau III) which, along with a politically risky scene from Act IV, has now been published and translated into English.<sup>23</sup> Many other documents, however, including those housed at Giacosa’s family home, reveal fascinating glimpses of the *La bohème* that might have been.<sup>24</sup>

One of the most surprising discoveries to be found in these papers has to do with perhaps the most famous line of the opera, “They call

Neapolitan sources and Sala (1794), Fenaroli (1814), and Mattei (ca. 1824–25, ca. 1827, and 1850 [1829?]). *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>21</sup>See Chapter 1.

<sup>22</sup>See Chapter 2.

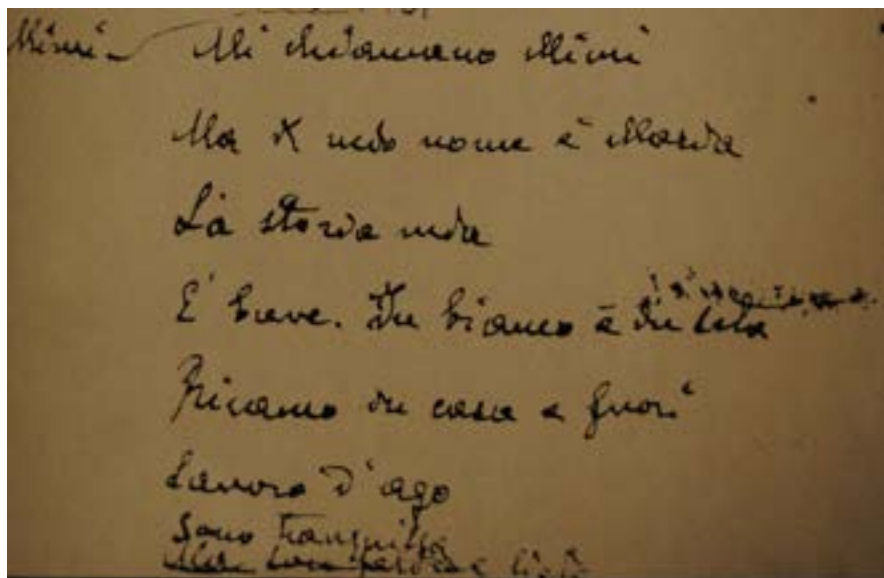
<sup>23</sup>F. Regina Psaki, Arthur Groos and Roger Parker, “Appendix: bohemian politics and the act that disappeared” in Groos and Parker, “*La bohème*,” 142–81.

<sup>24</sup>The presence of archival material at the Casa Giacosa was first noted forty years ago by Dr. Bice Serafini; her subsequent article (“Giacosa e i libretti” in *Critica Pucciniana*, 116–32) and thesis, along with a brief article written by her advisor at the University of Pisa, Dr. Federico Ghisi, were, until the publications of Pier Giuseppe Gillio and this author, the only published accounts of the drafts.

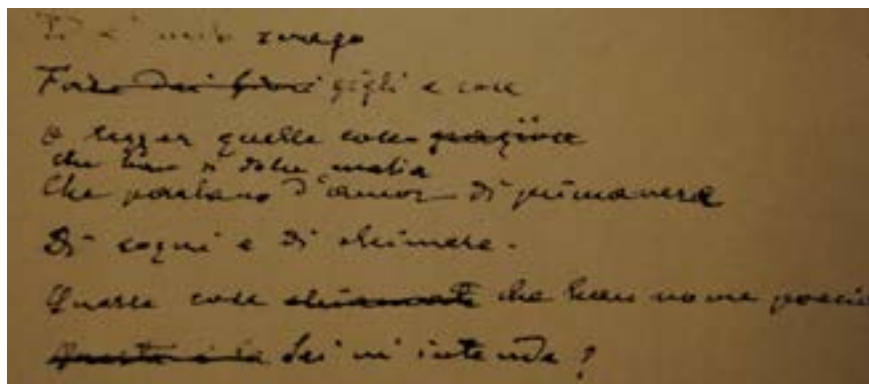
me Mimì, but my name is Lucia.”<sup>25</sup> In the version of the aria at Casa Giacosa, Mimì’s given name is, instead, *Maria*, a phonetically closer choice, and one probably relating to another of Murger’s characters. Yet, because the name of the character in the original novel on which Mimì was primarily based had been “Lucille,” perhaps the librettists decided upon the nearly equivalent “Lucia.”<sup>26</sup> [Exx. 7.5a-b]

Ex. 7.5: Facsimiles of Giacosa’s sketches for “Mi chiamano Mimì,” Archivio Privato Eredi Giacosa. Used by permission.

a)



b)

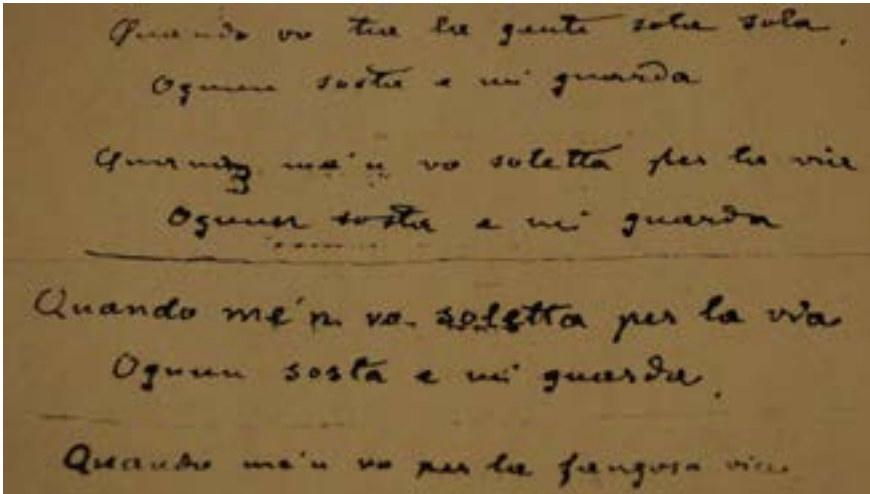


<sup>25</sup>[Mi chiamano Mimì, ma il mio nome è Lucia.]

<sup>26</sup>Elements of Mimì were also based on Murger’s character Francine.

The Latin Quarter tableau underwent numerous changes as well, the largest of which was its separation from the first tableau and subsequent transformation into Act II. Only a few documents from this tableau have survived at the Casa Giacosa. Most fascinating is a single page containing not less than six versions of the beginning of Musetta's waltz, written meticulously by Giacosa, and all variations on the same idea. [Ex. 7.6]

Ex. 7.6: Giacosa's sketches for Musetta's waltz, Archivio Privato Eredi Giacosa. Used by permission.



This waltz is a well-known example of Puccini's "prima la musica"—that is, his practice of composing the music before receiving the text. It was originally a piano piece, *Piccolo valzer*, published a few years earlier.<sup>27</sup> Adami writes that Puccini had sent Giacosa some dummy verses to show the meter and line length of the pre-existing melody "Cockadoodle-doo, cockadoodle-doo, beefsteak" [Cocoricò, cocoricò, bistecca] and that the librettist "turned pale, trembled and groaned"<sup>28</sup> before coming up with Musetta's verses the next day, claiming that had

<sup>27</sup>The *Piccolo Valzer* was published in the magazine *Armi ed Arte* (Genoa: Montrofano, 1894) on the occasion of the christening of the battleship Umberto I. The tempo marking reads, "with undulation" [con ondulazione] as befitting its nautical subject. Other writers and musicians who contributed to this issue were Alberto Franchetti, Luigi Mancinelli and Edoardo Trucco. A modern edition exists in Giacomo Puccini, *L'Opera completa per Pianoforte*, ed. Marco Sollini. (Rome: Boccaccini and Spada, 2000).

<sup>28</sup>[Il poeta allibisce, freme, geme.] Giuseppe Adami, *Il romanzo della vita di Giacomo Puccini* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1942), 132. Quoted in translation in Groos and Parker, *La bohème*, 111.

been easily done. These sketches attest to the laborious process that actually took place.<sup>29</sup>

Puccini usually composed at the piano, reading from the libretto and writing musical sketches in its margins. One libretto version of the first tableau, housed at the Museo Illica in Castell'Arquato, shows one of these, with the annotation "theme of either Colline or Schaunard" [Motivo o di Colline o Schaunard], which was not ultimately used.

In the last act, Puccini wanted the action to focus on the amorous scenes and the "Tod von Mimi" as he put it. Therefore, he wanted to abridge the initial elements of the last act. One of the parts that he excised, after much discussion and work, was the "toast to water,"<sup>30</sup> whose text has long been a mystery. This toast caused many problems amongst the collaborators. As Puccini wrote to Ricordi in October 1895, "That toast will be my death!"<sup>31</sup>

Among the papers at the Casa Giacosa, is a printed proof of the toast. [Ex. 7.7, next page] It reads:

RODOLFO: 'Youth—that fearless reigns / to seek inebriation—wine disdains / if the eye—shining vividly / its sparkle-lights up by itself / there is no need for—the birth of Noah. / I drink pure water—the inebriation is in me.'

COLLINE (à Metastasio): 'If water is unavailable / the vine doesn't make wine. / But water has nothing to do with / the vat's liquids [humours]. / Therefore water is absolute / and wine is contingent. / And con-se-quent-ly / only in water is truth.'

SCHAUNARD: 'The vapor of wine clouds the brain / The vapor of water clouds the sun. / since the empyrean lies above man / so has water a flight more lofty than wine.'

MARCELLO: 'Praise the sea, keep to the earth / Praise God, believe in destiny. / Praise the fields and live in a hothouse. / Praise water and drink wine.'

RODOLFO: 'Now let's clear the halls / for a dance.'

MARCELLO: 'With vocal music.'

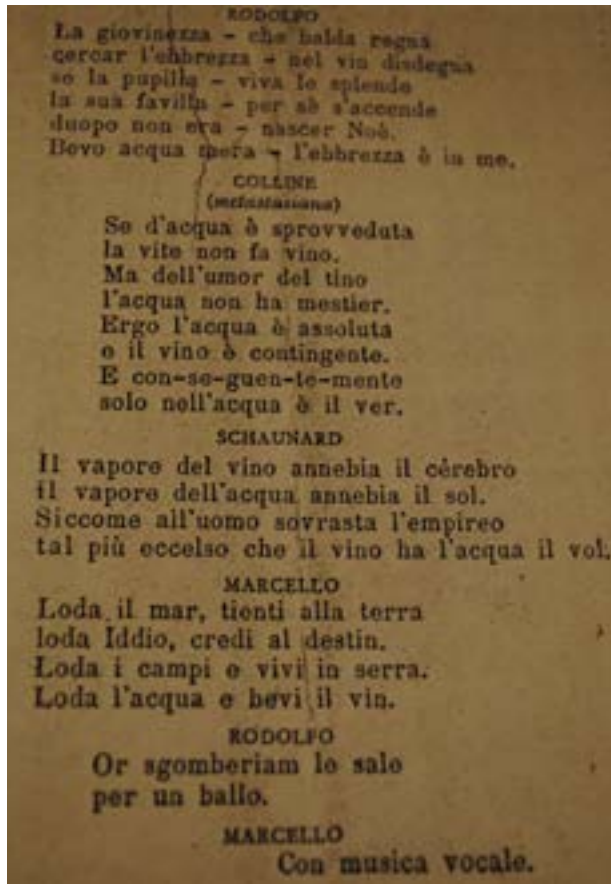
<sup>29</sup>Illica was also annoyed at being asked to "paraphrase music" as had happened with *Manon Lescaut*. Illica wrote to Ricordi in January 1893: "Permit me to tell you that I do not feel strong enough to return to paraphrasing music." [Permetta che Le dica che io non mi sento la forza di ritornare a parafrasare della musica] Gara, *Carteggi*, 78-9.

<sup>30</sup>This was probably inspired by Murger's character Jacques, who is a member of the "Water-drinkers' Club" [Société Buveurs d'Eau], an abstemious group dedicated to pure intellectual pursuit. Murger, *Scènes*, 291. The bohèmes abstain for less lofty reasons.

<sup>31</sup>[Quel brindisi sarà la mia morte.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 122.



Ex. 7.7: "Proof" of brindisi text, Archivio Privato Eredi Giacosa. Used by permission.



The text of this toast is remarkable, not only for the sentiments themselves, but for the individual ways in which the characters express them (Rodolfo is more poetic and Colline more philosophical, etc.)—and each of the bohèmes speak in a different meter. The mixing of meters became an issue for Puccini, as he wrote in yet another letter to Ricordi of the same period:

Reading carefully, one understands what the poet wanted, and that is a quartet sung simultaneously, with the fault though of “different meters” in the “different toasts.” Marcello, as you see, intervenes to cut off the discussion of precedence. Rodolfo confirms the idea and Schaunard gives the signal, tapping out three so they can begin together—don’t you think? Therefore, the idea of having one sing after the other is out,

because it would be nonsensical. And therefore how do I handle the different meters and concepts?<sup>32</sup>

That the four begin together is made clear by the text preceding the toast, which can also be found among the papers at the Casa Giacosa. It reads:

“Rod.:	Give me the mug. I will make a toast
Marc.:	Me, too
Coll.:	Also me.
Rod.:	It's my turn.
Schaun.:	If inspiration is bursting in all of us, let's toast together
Marc.:	Let it be so—A toast-quartet
Schaun.:	The theme is water—look here, one—two—three.” <sup>33</sup>

Puccini also complained to Illica: “For the toast, I repeat to you that it is almost impossible to set it (I say almost, because if one wants one can set the tailor's bill.)”<sup>34</sup>

Puccini's reticence in this regard is peculiar given his fluency with metric and layering techniques (after all, at the end of Act II, he combines the triple meter of Musetta's waltz and the duple meter of the approaching parade, albeit briefly). Perhaps his sense of dramatic pacing was guiding him to focus on the denouement. As he wrote, “making beautiful academic music in the final act is ruinous,”<sup>35</sup> a

<sup>33</sup>[Leggendo attentamente, si comprende cosa abbia voluto il poeta, e cioè un quartetto cantato simultaneamente, col torto però dei ‘metri differenti’ ai ‘differenti brindisi.’ Marcello, come vede, interviene per troncane le questioni di precedenza. Rodolfo ribadisce l'idea, e Schaunard dà il segnale battendo i tre colpi per poter così attaccare uniti—non le pare? Dunque decade l'idea di far cantare uno dopo l'altro, poichè sarebbe un nonsenso. E allora come fare per i differenti metri e concetti?]

<sup>34</sup>[Rod. Dammi il gotto.

Io farò brindisi.

Marc. Io pure

Coll. Anch'io.

Rod. Il turno è mio

Schaun Se in tutti l'estro freme

Brindiamo insieme

Marc. Così va detto—Un brindisi quartetto

Schaun. Il tema è l'acqua—a me

Uno—due—tre—]

<sup>34</sup>[Per il ‘brindisi’ ripetoti che così è quasi impossibile musicarlo (dico quasi, perché volendo si può musicare anche il conto del sarto).]

<sup>35</sup>Gara, *Carteggi*, 126.

sentiment he would repeat when composing his next work, *Tosca*: he nixed a farewell aria by the diva as an “overcoat aria”<sup>36</sup>—the signal for the audience to leave. In the end, the composer decided to omit the bohèmes’ toast and suggested the scene as it stands today, with the bohèmes shouting down Schaunard’s *attempt* at a toast, just a fragmentary remnant.

<sup>36</sup>[aria del paletot] Eugenio Checchi, “Giacomo Puccini,” *Nuova Antologia* (December 1897), 471.



## Chapter 8

# Structural symmetries and reversals in *Tosca*<sup>1</sup>

### *symmetries*

As the curtain opens on Act I of Victorien Sardou's play *La Tosca* (1887), we see the interior of the Church of Saint-Andréa des Jésuits with a young man stretched out, apparently asleep, upon artist's scaffolding. Immediately, the Sacristan Eusèbe enters, approaches the horizontal Gennarino and awakens him. To appreciate the significance of this moment, let us remember the final moments of the play: then too a body (Cavaradossi's) is laid out. But is the artist really dead, or can he be awakened? The first audiences of *La Tosca* did not know that answer.

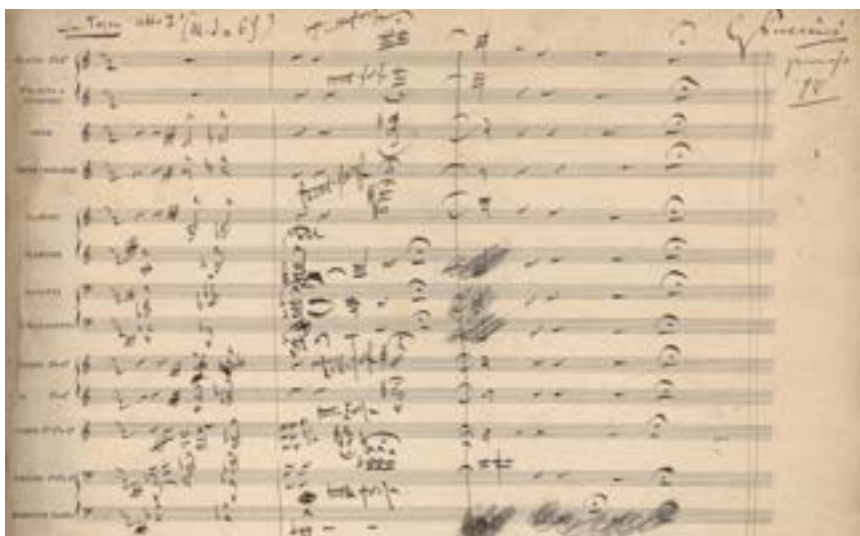
And, precisely at the central point of the drama (in the middle of the third of five acts), Sardou's *Tosca* comes to knowledge: "Ah! My God, and to think that I did this!" [Ah! Dieu, et c'est moi qui ai fait cela!] After this moment, she is doomed, and all of her subsequent "choices" are useless. For example, to save Cavaradossi, *Tosca* decides to reveal the whereabouts of Angelotti, but her lover is still arrested (as is *Tosca* herself in this version). She must also choose whether or not to accept Scarpia's sexual bargain; but again, the outcome will be unaffected by her choice. The symmetrical placing of these visual/dramatic images reveals something of Sardou's vision of the play—one that he tried to communicate to the young composer Puccini, to whom he finally entrusted with the task of making it into an opera.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sections of this chapter are derived from Deborah Burton, "Tosca Act II and the Secret Identity of F-sharp" in *Tosca's Prism: Three Moments of Western Cultural History*, eds. Deborah Burton, Susan Nicassio and Agostino Ziino. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 147-66, and Burton, "An Analysis."

<sup>2</sup>For a detailed look at the process by which Puccini came to compose *Tosca*, see Deborah Burton, "The Creation of *Tosca*: towards a clearer view," *Opera Quarterly* 12/3 (Spring, 1996): 27-34.

The opening that Puccini chose for his musical setting of the work is a violent, three-chord opening that defies traditional diatonicism; he even composed it without a key signature. [Ex. 8.0] As noted in the Introduction to this volume, in one gesture, all the pitch-spaces needed are introduced: the upper line D-E-flat-E is chromatic; the bass line, B-flat-A-flat-E, is whole-tone based;<sup>3</sup> and the chords that rest upon it are diatonic. As noted previously, it is an example of *direct conflation*.<sup>4</sup> Further, the opening bass gesture outlines a tritone, B-flat-E, which breaks the octave in two symmetrical halves.

Ex. 8.0: First page of autograph score of *Tosca*.<sup>5</sup> Property of Ricordi & C. S.r.l. Milano. Used by permission.



But if this gesture is a tonal “problem” that must eventually be reconciled within a key, pairing it with its tritone transposition would complete the octave: that is, B-flat-A-flat-E + E-D-B-flat = B-flat-B-flat. As noted previously, this is precisely what happens at the end of Act I, where the B-flat endpoint then functions as the dominant to E-flat major, affirming a diatonic resolution. [Ex. 1.8]

<sup>3</sup>The skipped note in this whole-tone line is F-sharp, which, as noted below, will serve as the final tonic for Act II. These three notes also form Puccini’s “signature”: the set class (026).

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup>At the top it reads: “La Tosca / Act I / G. Puccini / January ‘98” [La Tosca atto Io / G. Puccini / gennajo 98].

This view of *Tosca*'s "preludio" (as Puccini called it) [Ex. I.1], and its transposition, can invoke the concept of a Schoenbergian *Grundgestalt*, whose contribution to a work's coherence is explained by Patricia Carpenter: "The function of the *Grundgestalt* in effecting a coherent tonality in a work is to make manifest that process by which instability is brought about in a work and stability finally restored."<sup>6</sup> In *Tosca*, the extreme instability of the motive's jagged outline is brought into balance by its tritone transposition, in a symmetrical way. The ultimate diatonic resolution of this gesture also seems to reaffirm the tonality of this work, underlying layers of *direct conflation* of progressive (and other traditional) elements.

It is also possible to track expansions of this motive on a larger scale as an MPI,<sup>7</sup> utilizing Schenker's notion of "motivic parallelism, or "Reti's "thematic keys." We can find evidence of the B-flat-A-flat-E pattern composed-out in the first half of Act I: joined with the initial B-flat major, *Tosca*'s entrance music (I/25/0) is in A-flat major, and the love duet (I/39/0) is in E major.<sup>8</sup>

In Act III, on the other hand, an expansion of the motive, transposed at the tritone (E-D-B-flat), can be traced: when the curtain opens at III/1, we hear the E Lydian Shepherd's song, then the play of Roman church bells, which ends with a foreground appearance of the sonorities E 4/3, D major and B-flat major, outlining the transposed motive. E is reasserted with the sounding of the very low E of the Vatican's bell (the *Campanone*) at III/7/3.<sup>9</sup> As Cavaradossi thinks about writing a note to *Tosca*, at III/9/4, we hear the love theme transposed to D major, which recurs at III/10/3 in a more extended version. The completion of the pattern, when the transposed motive arrives back at home at B-flat, is marked by *Tosca*'s final cry, "Oh, Scarpia, before God!" [O Scarpia avanti a Dio!] at III/41/0, just before the climactic cadence in E-flat minor. Thus, the composing-out of B-flat-A-flat-E in Act I is mirrored in that of Act III on E-D-B-flat. [Ex. 8.1, next page]

<sup>6</sup>Patricia Carpenter, "Grundgestalt as Tonal function" *Music Theory Spectrum*, 5 (Spring 1983): 16.

<sup>7</sup>See Chapter 3. The surface manipulations of the motive are discussed in detail in Burton, "An Analysis" and "*Tristano, Tosca e Torchi*." Other discussions of surface motivic manipulation in *Tosca* can be found in Titone, *Vissi d'arte* and Girardi, *Puccini*.

<sup>8</sup>See Burton "Analysis," Chapter IV for a discussion of motivic expansions in the second half of Act I.

<sup>9</sup>Puccini researched the pitch of this bell and received the answer sometime before 17 January 1898—that is, the same month he composed the opera's opening gesture—when he thanked Don Pietro Panichelli for the information. Eugenio Gara. ed. *Carteggi Pucciniani*. (Milan: Ricordi, 1958), 157.

Ex. 8.1: *Tosca*, graphs of Acts I and III

Act I      opening motive—expanded

I/0   I/25   I/39

Eb minor: Bb Ab E      V I

Act III      opening motive—transposed and expanded

III/1-4      III/9-10      III/41

E D Bb=V I

The structural symmetries of the outer two acts recall those of Sardou’s play. But what about Act II? In order to understand the structure of the middle act, it is necessary to explore more thoroughly the playwright’s dramatic conception.

### *inevitabilities*

Should Tosca live or die? That the answer to this most basic question was ever debated between playwright and librettists should sound an alarm: this disagreement indicates two very diverse conceptions of the drama as a whole. Sardou thought of his play as a tragedy in which the heroine’s fate must indeed be a fatality. But the librettists saw her in a gentler light: their suggested ending—a mad scene—would make her character more fragile, and thus more sympathetic.<sup>10</sup> Further, to Roman Catholic Italian audiences, her suicide would most likely represent a mortal sin, not an act of defiance. That did not seem to mesh well with the more religious character with which the librettists endowed their Tosca: it is only in the libretto that Tosca pardons Scarpia’s corpse, for example. In the play, after the murder is over, Tosca says only, “Well done! Now, I consider us even!”<sup>11</sup>

The mad scene was opposed vehemently by Sardou, and eventually Puccini himself. It is unclear why the composer changed his mind (apparently more than once) about Tosca’s suicide. But librettist Illica

<sup>10</sup>Puccini scholars have long known that an alternative ending existed, but it was not until 1999 that Gillio discovered it, misplaced in a stack of papers at the home of librettist Giuseppe Giacosa. Pier Giuseppe Gillio, “Ci sarà talamo guizzante gondola,” in *Tosca’s Prism* eds. Deborah Burton, Susan Vandiver Nicassio and Agostino Ziino (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 183-220.

<sup>11</sup>[A présent, je te tiens quitte!]



remained bitter about the excising of his idea, even after the première, writing about, “that finale whose abolition constituted either an act of bestiality or one of insanity.”<sup>12</sup>

The issue of Tosca’s suicide was contested from early on. As early as November 1894, Sardou was told that librettist Luigi Illica had come up with a new ending. But the playwright remained adamant that Tosca should die. Even so, in January 1899 (just a year before the première), the issue was still unresolved. In a letter to Giulio Ricordi, Puccini writes: “This morning I was at Sardou’s for an hour, and he told me things about the finale that will not work. He wants that poor woman dead at all costs! [...] perhaps he will want to kill Spoletta too? We shall see.”<sup>13</sup>

It has been written elsewhere that Sardou’s *La Tosca* is an example of the “well-made play” [pièce bien faite] for which the playwright was famous—and infamous.<sup>14</sup> That genre can be defined as a formulaic style of drama with “its intricate complications of recoiling intrigue, its ingeniously contrived conclusion.”<sup>15</sup> Created by Eugène Scribe<sup>16</sup> and perfected by Sardou, the nineteenth-century French well-made play relied on skillfully planted hints to bring its plot to a satisfying denouement that would invariably reassert the status quo.

But that is not *La Tosca*, which is a tragedy more in the tradition of French dramatists Marie-Joseph Chénier (1764–1811) and Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740–1814). Mercier wrote that the “end of tragedy is to move men’s hearts, to cause tears of pity or admiration to flow, and by all this to inculcate in men the important truths, to inspire in them a hatred of tyranny and superstition, a horror of crime, a love of virtue

<sup>12</sup>[quel finale la cui abolizione ha costituito o un atto di bestialità o uno di pazzia.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 192. In these documents, we read that Tosca, driven mad, believes herself in Venice, and, with rather purple prose, says: “He is not dead, you know. He is sleeping...he’s tired. Away all, away all! The waves of the tremulous canals kiss the old histories, the old glories...Do not sing, gondolier, soft, soft...I want a great silence around us.” [Non è morto / Sai. Dorme... è stanco. Via tutti, via tutti! L’onde dei tremuli / Canali baciano / Le vecchie istorie / Le vecchie glorie... / Non cantar gondoliero... piano, piano... / Voglio un grande silenzio a noi d’intorno.]

<sup>13</sup>[stamani sono stato da Sardou per un’ora, e circa al finale, mi ha detto cose che non vanno. La vuol morta a tutti i costi quella povera donna! [...] forse vorrà far morire anche Spoletta? Vedremo.] Ibid., 172 (13 January 1899).

<sup>14</sup>See, for example, Ashbrook, *The Operas of Puccini*, 79.

<sup>15</sup>Brander Matthews, *Inquiries and Opinions* (New York: Scribner, 1907), 239.

<sup>16</sup>Auguste Eugène Scribe (1791–1861) was a French dramatist, who also wrote libretti for Adam, Auber, Meyerbeer and Offenbach. Oxford Music Online, accessed 26 November 2011.

and liberty, a respect for laws and morality, the universal religion.”<sup>17</sup> *La Tosca*, which portrays a woman caught in a fateful (and fatal) struggle between tyrannical royalists and republican idealists, seems to follow these guidelines.

The Sardou play comes even closer to filling the dramatic prescription set forth by Mercier, who attempted to stimulate republican virtues and unite all classes in patriotic fervor by means of the historical drama: “True tragedy should return to the practice of *Greek drama*, which appealed to all classes, showed the people their true interests, and aroused an enlightened patriotism and love of country.”<sup>18</sup> Sardou’s characterization of the heroine, the nature of the forces that cause the chief conflicts, and the overall structure of the play are derivative of prescriptions set forth by the ancient Greeks. And that Sardou hoped his efforts would inspire patriotism is of a piece with earlier events in his life: a year after his play *Patrie!* had had a triumphant première, the empire of Napoléon III collapsed and an unpopular provisional government was set up, during which Sardou “saved” the Tuileries from pillage by an angry Parisian mob, leading the way with a handkerchief tied to a walking stick.<sup>19</sup> The playwright wasted no opportunity in *La Tosca* to induce flag-waving sentiments in his audience (the last line of Act II, for example, is “Vive la France,” spoken amid the cheers of a crowd).

The structure of *La Tosca* recalls the writings of the Roman Horace (68–65 B.C.) who, in his *Ars Poetica*, set forth specific rules for drama, including these two: the marvelous and the offensive should be kept offstage, and the play must contain five acts. Sardou’s *La Tosca* is indeed five acts long, and, for the most part, the violence is offstage. The only exception is the murder of Scarpia—the torture scene, the suicide of Angelotti, and the execution of Cavaradossi are all out of the audience’s sight.

Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, prescribes three dramatic unities (unity of place, time, and action), and *La Tosca* conforms to all of these: the

<sup>17</sup>Marvin Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present*, exp. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 159.

<sup>18</sup>Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Du théâtre ou Nouvel essai sur l’art dramatique* (Amsterdam: E. van Harrevelt, 1773), 39-40. Quoted in Carlson, *Theories*, 158.

<sup>19</sup>Sardou relates the events in his memoirs: “The proposition was applauded. ‘Yes, yes, go! go! [...] pulling out my handkerchief, I improvised a small flag with my cane.’” [La proposition est acclamée. ‘Oui, oui, allez! allez! [...] Et, tirant mon mouchoir, j’improvisai avec ma canne un petit drapeau] Victorien Sardou, *Les papiers de Victorien Sardou: Notes et Souvenirs*, Georges Mouly, ed. (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1934), 299-308.

drama takes place solely in Rome and occurs within the length of a single day. As to the final Aristotelian unity, that of action [mythos], it could be argued that the Angelotti story is a secondary plot line, but it can be seen as only a technical means by which the main characters are brought together.

Aristotle also states that the action may be either simple or complex: the complex plot will involve “reversal” [peripeteia], a change of fortune to its opposite; “recognition” [anagnorisis], a change from ignorance to knowledge; or both. A tragic figure is one with a “fatal flaw” [hamartia].<sup>20</sup> *La Tosca* involves both many reversals and a change in its tragic heroine from ignorance to knowledge. This transformation profoundly influences her character: in the course of the drama, Floria Tosca grows from a silly, apolitical woman in love (she admires her lover’s republican moustache too much to have him shave it) to an avenging angel fighting tyranny. But, more important, she has a fatal flaw—her jealousy. It is this trait that entangles her in the sociopolitical machinery that pervades the historical period: Tosca’s jealous pursuit of Cavaradossi enables Scarpia to track the escaped prisoner Angelotti to her lover’s secret villa.

Large political forces are called upon by Sardou in a manner akin to the Greeks’ use of Fate, the inevitable end to which each character is drawn. The play’s Scarpia, unlike his operatic counterpart, is also driven by forces beyond his control: he must find Angelotti or lose his position and perhaps his head. In Act II, Scene 4, this is made clear to him by Queen Maria Carolina.<sup>21</sup> The threat Scarpia faces is reiterated later in the act, when a royalist crowd calls for his death. Sardou’s

<sup>20</sup>Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre*, 19.

<sup>21</sup>“*Maria Carolina*: Be careful that this business is not the end of you. You have some enemies. / *Scarpia*: The same ones as Your Majesty. / *Maria Carolina*: And these people would circulate nasty rumors about you.

*Scarpia*: Every day I arrest those who spread rumors about the Queen. / *Maria Carolina*: They declare that Angelotti, locked up for a year, managed to escape only eight days after you came. / *Scarpia*: They accuse me? . . . / *Maria Carolina*: His sister is rich and beautiful. / *Scarpia*: Does Your Majesty think me guilty? / *Maria Carolina*: The answer is easy. . . . Find Angelotti” [*Marie-Caroline*: Prends garde que cette aventure ne te soit fatale. Tu as bien des ennemis. / *Scarpia*: Les mêmes que Votre Majesté. / *Marie-Caroline*: Et ces gens-là font courir de mauvais bruits sur ton compte. *Scarpia*: J’arrête journallement ceux qui calomient la reine. / *Marie-Caroline*: On constate qu’Angelotti, enfermé depuis un an, n’a réussi à s’échapper que huit jours après ta venue. / *Scarpia*: On m’accuserait? . . . / *Marie-Caroline*: Sa soeur est riche et belle. / *Scarpia*: Votre Majesté me croit coupable? . . . / *Marie-Caroline*: Ta réponse est facile. . . . Trouve Angelotti.]

Cavaradossi, because of his lineage, also seems fatefully, inexorably drawn into the conflict: his father was a republican who lived in France, and an ancestor, Luigi Cavaradossi, had had confrontations with tyrannical authorities, escaping the pope's archers by taking refuge in the villa's hidden well.<sup>22</sup>

The playwright further emphasizes the eternal, fate-directed nature of the plot by constantly relating the current events of the play to ancient history and by choosing Rome as a setting. Here is Cavaradossi's description of the Eternal City, which proclaims the city's ancient nature while recalling the play's theme of tyrannical abuse of power—and its subversion: “In this city that has conquered the world (but on which the entire world has taken revenge by returning the favor, and every nation, in turn, has sieged and sacked it), in this Rome of the Christians and the barbarians, the Neros and the Borgias, of all the persecutors and all the victims, there is no old house, as you know, without a secret place to hide from the tyrant within or the invader without.”<sup>23</sup>

Turning now to *Tosca's* Act II, we can trace ways in which Puccini seems to have transferred a quasi-neoclassic structure to his operatic score: the use of an underlying symmetrical plan that controls the musical action in an inexorable, fatelike manner. This tempestuous and violent act begins rather extraordinarily with a moment of calm (and the F-sharp–E–D opening motive). Scarpia is alone. The same F-sharp–E–D motive and the tranquil mood return exactly halfway through the act, after Cavaradossi has been taken to prison: at that moment, this theme returns with both Scarpia and Tosca onstage. At the end of the act, we hear three main tonalities: at II/64/5, a single pitch D—over which Tosca was originally to have said, “And before him all Rome trembled” [E avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma]<sup>24</sup>—followed by the opera's opening motive ending in E minor, and finally the F-sharp-minor cadence.

<sup>22</sup>In an early libretto version, housed at the Archivio Privato Eredi Giacosa, these two characters were conflated: Cavaradossi's father had hidden in the well.

<sup>23</sup>[Dans cette ville, qui a conquis le monde, mais sur qui le monde entier a pris la revanche de sa servitude et que toutes les nations, à tour de rôle, ont assiégée et mise à sac; dans cette Rome des chrétiens et des barbares, des Nérons et des Borgias, de tous les persécuteurs et de toutes les victimes, il n'est pas, vous le savez, un vieux logis, qui n'ait son abri secret, contre le bourreau du dedans ou l'envahisseur du dehors.]

<sup>24</sup>Ricordi's piano solo version of the opera still shows Tosca's famous line at this earlier point.

It may seem surprising that the act ends suddenly in F-sharp minor, after three appearances of the opening motive, all finishing in E minor. Concluding the act in E minor would surely have facilitated a smoother transition to the E major of the following Act III opening. Could it be that Puccini wanted the complete chromatic on this page? F-sharp, A, and C-sharp of the F-sharp-minor triad (pcs 1, 6, 9), added to the pitch classes of the opening motive—B-flat major, A-flat major and E minor (that is, 0, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11)—complete the chromatic aggregate.

As intriguing as this idea might seem, we would suggest rather that the F-sharp minor is a symmetrical reflection of the opening F-sharp, and that the final tonalities we hear in this act—D minor, E minor, and F-sharp minor—are enlarged mirror images of the opening notes (that is, in retrograde). Furthermore, we propose that these three pitch classes F-sharp, E, and D guide the structural path of the entire act, forming a tight, symmetrical plan.

The tonality of F-sharp is evident throughout the act: we hear Cavaradossi cry “Vittoria!” in F-sharp major at II/42/8 and Tosca decides to murder her oppressor in F-sharp minor at 59/0. But E appears frequently as well: we hear it, as a low pedal point, both before and after the offstage dance music: this E, when Scarpia closes the window just after the climax of the cantata at II/19/0, leads to a complete whole-tone bass progression, of which E again is the goal at II/20/0. When Tosca finally reveals where Angelotti is hiding (“In the garden well” [Nel pozzo nel giardino]), we hear E again as the final note of a whole-tone progression at II/39/0. E appears at II/60/4 as the root of a half-diminished chord at the murder of Scarpia. Lastly, D as also a frequent tonal center in this act: D major is the key of the “Gavotte” at II/3/0, D minor the key of the torture scene at II/28/0, and, of course, Scarpia dies in D minor at II/62/6–8.

In sum, all three of these pitch classes (F-sharp, E, and D) function as musical signposts in the harmonic journey that occurs in this central act. Ex. 8.2 (next page) graphs the important dramatic moments of this act, in order of their occurrence, and lists their main tonalities. As shown, a very clear pattern emerges of a repeatedly falling and rising third: F-sharp–E–D–E–F-sharp–E–D–E–F-sharp–E–D–E–F-sharp–E–D–E–F-sharp–E–D–E–F-sharp.

Although several other key centers occur in this act, the harmony seems always to return to this same inexorable path. Examples of *indirect conflation*, most of the main musical events that occur in other keys are the “detachable pieces” [pezzi staccabili]: those arias that Puccini and

Ex. 8.2: *Tosca*, Act II, patterns of F#-E-D / D-E-F#

pitch class	harmony	rehearsal number/ + measures	dramatic action
F-sharp	none	II/0	Scarpia is eating in his chambers
E	pedal under D Major	II/0/1-2/0	Scarpia describes his plans in a monologue
D	D Major	II/3/0	Gavotte
E	pedal underneath D major	II/5/4	end of Gavotte
F-sharp	F-sharp minor	II/9/5	Spoletta enters
D/	D major, then with added C-sharp	II/10/10-11/0	Spoletta tells of search
F-sharp	half-diminished chord in inversion	II/13/0	Cantata and interrogation
E	pedal, with whole-tone	II/19/0-20/0-21/7-22/0	Scarpia closes window; Tosca enters
D	D minor-G minor-D minor	II/28/0-32/0-39/0 (108 measures)	Torture scene until scream
E	pedal with whole-tone	II/39/0-40/0	Tosca reveals where Angelotti is hiding
F-sharp	F-sharp major	II/42/9	"Vittoria!" Central point of act
E	pedal under D major, as beginning	II/44/10	Cavaradossi is taken to jail
D	D minor, last chord of opening motive	II/48/11	Scarpia threatens to kill Cavaradossi before Tosca can get the queen's pardon
E	E minor	II/50/2	Drums heard
F-sharp	G-flat major then diminished 7th on F-sharp	II/54/0-55/0	Tosca rebuffs Scarpia, Spoletta enters, interrupting, saying Angelotti killed himself.
E	E major or E minor implied	II/55/31	Scarpia asks Tosca to decide, "Ebbene?"
D	D dominant 7th	II/56 /3	Tosca nods 'yes'
E	pedal point, with E major, whole-tone and other harmonies	II/57/0-58/11	Scarpia gives Spoletta new execution orders
F-sharp	F-sharp minor	II/59/0	Scarpia writes the safe-conduct pass; Tosca sees the knife
E	half-diminished chord	II/60/4	Tosca stabs Scarpia
D	opening motive ending on D minor	II/62/0-63/0	Scarpia dies
D	none	II/64/5	Tosca lights two candles
E	E minor	II/65//0	Tosca places the candles and crucifix around Scarpia
F-sharp	F-sharp minor	II/65/8	Tosca exits

his publisher intended for separate publication and performance. For example, we have Scarpia's aria "Ha più forte sapore," written in the key of A-flat major; his B-flat-major "Ed or fra noi parliam da buoni amici"; and Tosca's "Vissi d'arte," which begins in E-flat minor and ends in E-flat major. Even though these are musical numbers whose

key might be changed in accordance with a singer's preferences, or removed altogether, none of the given tonalities appears randomly chosen: B-flat and A-flat are members of the same whole-tone scale as F-sharp-E-D, and E-flat major and E-flat minor are the final keys of Acts I and III. The G-flat major of Scarpia's "Gia mi struggea" can be seen as an enharmonic reference to F-sharp. Several other keys are used in this act as well, but they seem to function only in transitional or leitmotivic capacities. The underlying path of F-sharp-E-D appears well trod. Ex. 8.3 demonstrates that the harmonic *loci* of F-sharp-E-D form a symmetrical, almost obsessive pattern.

Ex. 8.3: *Tosca*, Act II, F-sharp-E-D / D-E-F-sharp key areas

Perhaps Puccini listened to Sardou after all.

## *reversals*

Joseph Kerman has infamously called *Tosca* a “shabby little shocker.”<sup>25</sup> While it is not shabby, there are indeed shocks. These aspects of *Tosca*'s dramatic narrative do more than simply surprise, however; the story plumbs profound currents of sex, power and violence. After all, when Tosca stabs her would-be rapist, she penetrates him instead, turning the tables on her aggressor and reclaiming control (she thinks) of the situation.

This type of turnabout is strong stuff, and *Tosca*—custom-made for Sarah Bernhardt's provocative powers—unleashed primal emotions in many members of the première audiences. The writer Pierre Louÿs, after seeing the first production of *La Tosca* with Bernhardt, gushed, “Ah, Sarah! Sarah! Sarah is grace, youth, divinity! I am beside myself. My god, what a woman!...When shall I see you again, my Sarah? I tremble, I grow mad! I love you!”<sup>26</sup> The American author Willa Cather, after seeing Bernhardt in the play in Omaha, wrote: “Art is Bernhardt's

<sup>25</sup>Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 205.

<sup>26</sup>Quoted in English in Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, *The Divine Sarah: A life of Sarah Bernhardt* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 232.

dissipation, a sort of Bacchic orgy.”<sup>27</sup> Even Puccini himself succumbed to the opera’s sex appeal and kept for himself a pornographic version of a line of text in a sketch for Tosca’s phrase, “Oh, how well you know the art of making yourself loved!” [Oh come la sai bene/l’arte di farti amare!]; a bowdlerized rendering of his private lyric might read, “Oh, how well you know the art of getting in my pants!”<sup>28</sup>

Although the Tosca of the opera is properly horrified at Scarpia’s suggestion that she trade her virtue for Cavaradossi’s life, in the original play, Floria jokes flirtatiously with the policeman when they meet at a court fête—an interchange that can be seen both as an ironic foreshadowing of what is to come, and also as a playful version of deeper, more serious sexual fantasies. In that scene, Scarpia notes that Tosca is wearing a bracelet of diamonds, rubies and sapphires, which together constitute a sort of French “tricolor” (an illegal symbol) and laughingly states that he could arrest her for wearing it:

Scarpia, *galantly*: It would be such a pleasure to have you for a prisoner.

Floria, *gaily*: In a dungeon?

Scarpia, *likewise*: And under triple lock, to prevent your escape.

Floria: And torture also, perhaps?

Scarpia: Until you love me.<sup>29</sup>

As if taking a cue from this dangerously suggestive encounter, the writer Paola Capriolo, in her novel *Vissi d’Amore*<sup>30</sup> created a fantasy trope on the opera. In her version, which takes the form of Scarpia’s diary, the policeman goes to hear Tosca at the opera house, spies on the diva through a window while she is making love with Cavaradossi, and, in short, becomes completely obsessed by the singer. Then, in a stunning upset of power, Tosca appears to succumb to Scarpia’s

<sup>27</sup>William M. Curtin, ed. *The World and the Parish, Volume 1: Willa Cather’s Articles and Reviews* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 207.

<sup>28</sup>[Oh come tu sai bene l’arte d’entrarmi in fica.] This is found in an incomplete draft of Act I, housed at the Museo Puccini, Torre del Lago, Italy.

<sup>29</sup>[Scarpia, *galamment*: J’aurais plaisir à vous avoir pour prisonnière./ Floria, *gaiement*: Dans un cachot? Scarpia, *de même*: Et sous triples verrous, pour vous empêcher de fuir./ Floria: Et la torture aussi, peut-être? / Scarpia: Jusqu’à ce que vous m’aimiez.] Victorien Sardou, *La Tosca*, Act II, scene 5.

<sup>30</sup>Paola Capriolo, *Vissi d’Amore* (Milan: Bompiani, 1992). It has been translated into English and published as *Floria* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1997).



desires and makes passionate love to him inside his torture chamber (while voluntarily shackled to the wall), thus bringing into reality his most exciting sexual fantasies. But, in a twist worthy of Sardou, she then tortures him by simply refusing to repeat the experience.

Scarpia's shocking murder, with its many sexual undercurrents, can be seen as just a small part of a larger pattern of plot reversals, however. Sudden plot twists wield great dramatic power because they violate the audience's expectations, creating sudden change and increasing intensity. It is Sardou's breathtaking panoply of reversals that raises the level of excitement. For instance, the first audiences of *Tosca* did not expect an escaped convict to appear in a church setting at the outset of the play, nor did they anticipate Tosca's defiant suicide at the end. Reversals also surprise the characters themselves and result in plot complications. A case in point would be the early opening of the church for the celebratory *Te Deum*, which forces Angelotti to flee sooner than planned: this necessitates his requesting help from Cavaradossi, who then becomes implicated in a crime himself.

Of course, the greatest reversal is accomplished by Napoleon, who, in June 1800, won the Battle of Marengo, after having appeared to have lost it. In the opera, it is this stunning news that inspires Cavaradossi to exclaim "Vittoria!" and degrade his criminal status from accomplice to true enemy of the state. But in the spoken play, Sardou uses the announcement of this reversal to abruptly halt the Palazzo Farnese gala at which the enraged Tosca is about to perform: after the Queen faints from the news in mid-sentence, Tosca (and the actress portraying her) is saved from actually having to sing. Sardou's audiences would have been waiting anxiously to discover whether (and how well) Sarah Bernhardt would sing, and he played upon their curiosity.

Floria: But I can't! As though I felt like it now...I am in a wonderful state to sing!...Can I sing?

Scarpia: Badly or well makes no difference...but the cantata, if you please, the cantata.<sup>31</sup>

It is these reversals that form the main plot line: Tosca believes her betrayal of Angelotti's hiding place will free Cavaradossi; but

<sup>31</sup>[Tosca: Mais, je ne peux pas! J'ai bien envie...je suis bien en état de chanter!...Est-ce que je eux chanter? / Scarpia: Mal ou bien, peu importe...mais la cantate, si'il vous plaît, la cantate.] Sardou, *La Tosca*, Act II, scene 5.

instead, both she and her lover are more doomed than before. The final reversal—that of Cavaradossi's “simulated” execution—is given added suspense in the play by a “red herring” reversal: the soldiers want to remove Cavaradossi's body and Tosca, still believing her lover is alive, wants to keep hold of it. The first audiences were not yet sure that she had been misled:

Floria, *to the soldiers*: Where are you going?...What do you want?

The Sergeant: To take the body away.

Floria, *alarmed, barring their way*: You cannot take him! He is mine!...Scarpia gave him to me!...Didn't the captain say anything to you about it?...

The Sergeant: Nothing!

Floria: Call for him...Find him...<sup>32</sup>

Of course, Tosca soon learns the truth, and defiantly leaps into the void—a final and fatal attempt to gain power over her life.

Puccini's score also holds many surprises, following the twists and turns of the drama by suddenly shifting mode, meter, harmony, rhythm, and more. Swift musical contrasts are nothing new to this composer, but if we examine the first two scenes of *Tosca*, we can see the extremes to which Puccini has carried through this technique. When the escaped prisoner Angelotti appears, we hear very dissonant harmonies and chromatic melodies, set in variable phrase lengths with unstable dynamics. Then the Sacristan enters: his non-threatening, jovial and comedic nature is immediately telegraphed to the audience by light-hearted musical accompaniment in C major, with regular meter (6/8), and a diatonic melody. The sharp juxtaposition of these two scenes is an example of Davis's *stylistic plurality*<sup>33</sup> and, as noted previously, our *indirect conflation* at the level of the scene.

In *Tosca*, this type of musical contrast abounds. Later, at I/34/0, Cavaradossi tries to calm Tosca by explaining that he had seen the Marquise Attavanti only by chance: accordingly, his words are set in

<sup>32</sup>[Floria, *aux soldats* [...]: Où allez-vous?...Que voulez-vous? / Le Sergent: Enlever le corps. / Floria, *effrayée, lui barrant le passage*. On ne l'enlève pas! Il est à moi!...Scarpia me l'a donné!...Le capitaine ne vous a donc rien dit?... / Le Sergent: Rien! / Floria: Appelez-le...Trouvez-le...]Ibid., Act V, deuxième tableau.

<sup>33</sup>Davis, *Il Trittico*.

an ingratiating G major. Tosca is not convinced however, and her suspicions are illustrated by the highly chromatic passage that follows. All twelve tones of the aggregate are heard here: however, they appear not as structural elements, but as members of sliding verticalities that pass through half-diminished and whole-tone sonorities, in transition from C major to B-flat dominant seventh. This, in turn, leads to a diatonic resolution at the E-flat major of “Qual occhio al mondo.” [Ex. 8.4]

Ex. 8.4: *Tosca*, I/34/7-I/35/0, C major to B-flat dominant seventh, with chromatic aggregate

The musical notation for Ex. 8.4 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a series of chords: C major, a whole-tone triad (C-E-G), B<sup>b</sup>5 (B-flat major triad), another whole-tone triad (B-flat-E-flat-G), another B<sup>b</sup>5, another whole-tone triad (B-flat-E-flat-G), and finally B<sup>b</sup>7 (B-flat dominant seventh). The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a melodic line that descends chromatically from C4 to B<sup>b</sup>3. The labels C, whole-tone, B<sup>b</sup><sub>5</sub>, whole-tone, B<sup>b</sup><sub>5</sub>, whole-tone, and B<sup>b</sup><sub>7</sub> are positioned below the bass staff, aligned with the corresponding chords in the upper staff.

But perhaps the greatest musical reversal and contrast of the first act occurs at Scarpia’s entrance. Prior to that, the church of Sant’Andrea has become filled with noisy children, singers, priests and other clerics (in short, chaos descends), and the music follows suit. In this section, the tempo is fast and the harmony changes from A major to C major to E major to D major to F major to E major, back to A major, and then to B-flat major. The crowd is chaotic yet happy, and thus Puccini supplies harmony that is unstable yet always diatonic. However when the baron enters, all the dramatic and musical action freezes: in a stately yet threatening *andante sostenuto*, we hear the opening motive. The party is definitely over.

But these contrasting *innesti* are layered atop the underlying organization of the score, which, as we have seen, is very tightly controlled by motivic expansion. Following symmetrical pathways laid down by the MPI and Act II’s opening motivic material, the tonal motion ultimately leads to a straightforward resolution in E-flat minor.

Perhaps these paths were too restrictive, since in Puccini’s next opera, *Madama Butterfly*, the composer avoids ending both original acts with clear tonal conclusions. Nevertheless, that Puccini in *Tosca* was able to integrate the competing claims of setting an extremely volatile dramatic narrative and an unwavering but almost imperceptible musical organization (itself comprised of tonal and atonal elements) is an accomplishment that, in the end, should not surprise at all.



## Chapter 9

### *Madama Butterfly's transformations*

The metamorphosis of a butterfly has four stages,<sup>1</sup> but Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* had more: its principal versions result from the disastrous first performance at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan (17 February 1904), followed by revised versions at the Teatro Grande in Brescia (May 1904), the Opéra-Comique in Paris (December 1906), the Metropolitan Opera in New York (February 1907) and the Teatro Carcano in Milan (December 1920).<sup>2</sup> But the transmutations of *Madama Butterfly* are not limited to post-première additions and subtractions: transformations, both dramatic and musical, are so deeply embedded in the structure of the work that they take on a thematic quality of their own. The plot can be seen as the growth of a young Japanese girl into her own conception of an American wife and mother, finally emerging as a full-fledged tragic heroine.<sup>3</sup> But this opera also marks a dramatic

<sup>1</sup>The stages are egg, larva, pupa and adult.

<sup>2</sup>Only five days after the première, Puccini had decided on the revisions he would make. In a letter to Ippolito Bondi of 22 February 1904, the composer writes: "The reaction here of the public has started and the gesture of withdrawing the opera after the première has had an effect. Now I will make a few cuts in the first act and divide the second in two parts. Thus the equilibrium will be there. Certainly it pains me that part of the intermezzo will be abolished: the melody in 12/8 is out, but remaining are the humming chorus (where the second act finishes) and the dawn where the third act begins. With a few attacks, etc., I will put (now that there are) two or three more words for the tenor in the third act and bye-bye. [...] All these little things I saw during the last rehearsals but then, with the time so limited, I couldn't do them." [La reazione qui è cominciato nel pubblico e il gesto del ritiro dell'opera dopo le première ha fatto colpo—ora farò qualche piccolo taglio al 1o e dividere il 2o in 2 parti. Così l'equilibrio ci sarà—certo mi duole che l'intermezzo venga in parte abolito—la melodia in 12/8 se ne va ma rimane il coro a bocca chiusa (dove finire l'atto IIo) e l'alba dove cominciare il IIIo—con qualche attacco etc. metterò (già che ci sono) 2 o 3 parole di più il tenore nel 3o atto e ciao [...] tutte queste piccole cosuccie le avevo vedute alle ultime prove d'insieme ma allor per il tempo ristretto non potevo farle.] This is partially published, in English translation, in Marek, *Puccini*, 225.

<sup>3</sup>The story was derived from both John Luther Long's short story "Madame Butterfly," published in *Century Magazine* (1898) and David Belasco's play, *Madame Butterfly: A Tragedy of Japan* (1900).

change in Puccini's mature style away from both his use of the MPI<sup>4</sup> and adherence to unequivocal tonal closure at a work's end.

The score, as a whole, exhibits a gradual reshaping and loosening of organizational musical elements even more marked than that of *Manon Lescaut* or *La bohème*. Puccini, who originally conceived of two long acts with parallel beginnings and endings,<sup>5</sup> wrote the openings of Acts I and II in fugal style (the first is a strict fugal exposition for four voices, while the second is a three-voice fugato).<sup>6</sup> But by the end of both original acts, the sonic landscape has shifted to one of progressive, Modernist irresolution. (It was not until the Paris version that the opera was divided into three acts.) So if the opera commences with Western music's strictest rules, its most basic one (that of final tonal resolution) is put in doubt by the end.

### ***contrapuntal subjects***

In the later nineteenth century, fugues were most often associated with the sacred and "learned" styles. Lavignac, writing in 1899, notes that "the fugue is not an operatic form: it can never be dramatic. Its home is the church."<sup>7</sup> However, there were exceptions, such as the prelude to Gounod's 1867 *Roméo et Juliette*, and the finale to Verdi's 1893 *Falstaff*. Wagner also used a fugal exposition in the prelude to *Die Meistersinger*, an opera that the younger composer knew well, having made cuts to it for the first Milan production at Ricordi's behest.<sup>8</sup>

The profession of *maestro di capella* for which Puccini had been destined required highly developed skills in contrapuntal writing.<sup>9</sup> In Lucca, his studies at the Istituto Musicale "G. Pacini" (of which his father had been director until his death in 1864) were divided into three sections: vocal, instrumental and composition, which included

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter 3.

<sup>5</sup>A similar point is made in Girardi, *Puccini*, 235-6.

<sup>6</sup>Puccini's interest in fugal counterpoint did not wane after *Butterfly*: he wrote to Luigi Illica on 7 June 1904 in regard to Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, that he was composing "a stupendous, new, grandiose musical tableau, with a fugue in the style of Bach, and a gothic fugue for chorus." [Un quadro musicale stupendo, nuovo, grandioso, con fuga alla Bach, e per corale fuga gotica.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 275.

<sup>7</sup>Albert Lavignac, *Music and Musicians*, trans. William Marchant (New York: Hold, 1899), 339.

<sup>8</sup>See Chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup>For an in-depth study of Puccini's early musical training see Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, Chapter 2. Verdi also recommended that students should study fugue, in a letter to Francesco Florimo of 1871. Quoted in Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 47.

solfeggio and vocalization; instrumental studies; and theoretical and practical harmony, counterpoint and composition. Among other topics, this last included work in simple and imitative counterpoint, including canon and fugue. In all, Puccini had three years of thoroughbass and contrapuntal studies, even receiving a prize for composition and counterpoint.<sup>10</sup> Given this rigorous education, it is not surprising that he scored highest on the Milan Conservatory's entrance exam. Earlier in the same year he took this test, Puccini's *Messa* was performed in Lucca by members of the Istituto "G. Pacini"; his "Cum sancto spirito" was singled out by the *Provincia di Lucca* (as Budden has noted<sup>11</sup>) as a "a grand fugue with moustaches" [fugone coi baffi], implying that it included many showy contrapuntal devices.

The fugal openings of *Madama Butterfly*'s original acts begin in an almost formulaic manner, and bear no trace of the subtle contrapuntal techniques Puccini employed handily in his youth. A fugue that Puccini wrote for an examination at the Milan conservatory, for example, has a subject (in minor and with rising stepwise sequences) not dissimilar to the opening theme of *Butterfly*'s Act II. Here are the two themes: [Exx. 9.0a-b]

Ex. 9.0: Fugal subjects

a) *Madama Butterfly*, Act II, opening theme



b) Fugue subject assigned to Puccini for an examination, Biblioteca del Conservatorio G. Verdi, Milan, Manoscritti Aut. 30.8, 30.9. Used by permission.



<sup>10</sup>Battelli, "Giacomo Puccini all'Istituto Musicale 'G. Pacini,'" 4-5, 14.

<sup>11</sup>Julian Budden, "The Musical World of the Young Puccini," in *The Puccini Companion*, eds. William Weaver and Simonetta Puccini (New York: Norton, 1994), 55.

In the student work, Puccini's solution employs a tonal answer, a countersubject (a swath of which is the basis for several *stretti*), invertible counterpoint, modulations to VII, V, III, and v, a dominant pedal point, a *stretto maestrale* of the subject at the distance of two bars, and a final *stretto* at the distance of one bar. After examining this manuscript in comparison with Puccini's draft pages, Bassi concludes that the fugal style must not have been very challenging for the young student, since there are few corrections in the draft copy.<sup>12</sup> If so, one might conjecture that the simplicity of the fugal writing in *Madama Butterfly* could have been designed to signal or epitomize, rather than fully embody, the contrapuntal style.

Puccini provides written evidence in his sketches that he was thinking in contrapuntal terms. On Figure 7 of the sketches for *Madama Butterfly* housed at the Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna, Puccini writes "tema di polifonietta" [theme of the little polyphony<sup>13</sup>] [Ex. 9.1a<sup>14</sup>]. This is an early version in A minor (modulating to C major) of the theme that now appears at I/55/0 in F minor. In the final version, the falling eighth-quarter figure in the second bar has been transported from scale degrees 2 and 6 (the tritone B-F, which helps effect the move to C major) to the lowered 2 and lowered 5 scale degrees of F minor (the perfect fifth G-flat-C-flat). Since F is still heard as a pedal point, this change converts a completely diatonic model into a bitonal *direct conflation*<sup>15</sup> of two implied chords, F minor and C-flat, a tritone

<sup>12</sup>Adriano Bassi writes in "Puccini studente a Milano: analisi dei suoi lavori scolastici" *Civiltà Musicale*, V/2 (June 1991): 11: "[the fugue shows] agility in the dialogue between the voices, as well as following the classic layout of the fugue. Further, it is interesting to establish that for the young man, the contrapuntal style is undoubtedly easy, since there are few corrections in the draft copy (incomplete), sign of a clear vision of the playing-out of the parts. Finally, another testimony to his innate musicality is given to us by the recopying of the final copy [begun] just before the first of the final "stretti," a signal of a now-habitual affinity with this form." [la scioltezza nel dialogo delle voci, pur seguendo lo schema classico della fuga. Inoltre è interessante constatare che per il giovane, lo stile contrappuntistico è indubbiamente facile, poichè nella brutta copia (incompleta) esistono poche correzioni, segno di una visione chiara del gioco delle parti. Infine un'altra testimonianza della sua musicalità innata ci è offerta dalla stesa effettuata direttamente in bella copia poco prima degli "stretti" finali, sintomo di una ormai abituale affinità con questa forma.]

<sup>13</sup>Puccini also refers to this theme as "polifonietta" in Figure 12 of the sketches (Schickling 74.A.2/5) where he writes "and develop as the little polyphony" [e svolgere a polifonietta].

<sup>14</sup>Facsimiles of the original sketches from this collection appear in Arthur Groos, ed. *Madama Butterfly: fonti e documenti della genesi* (Lucca: Centro Studi Giacomo Puccini, 2005), 143-92.

<sup>15</sup>See Chapter 2.



apart [Ex. 9.1b], which ultimately returns to (and prolongs) F minor. In addition, the final version's upbeat sixteenth notes now more closely mimic the fugal theme opening the opera.

Ex. 9.1:

- a) *Madama Butterfly*, transcription of sketch Figure 7, Accademia Filarmonica, [Schickling 74.A.2/3] with annotations

tema di polifonietta      tritone B - F

A minor      C major

- b) *Madama Butterfly*, I/55/0

Gb - Cb

F minor      F pedal

Another sketch (Figure 16 of the same collection) shows Puccini reworking the “little march” [marcetta] theme (first heard at I/14/0 of the final version as the wedding officials and guests arrive) into a “canone a 4”—one of the theme’s variations, as he notates above the staff. [Ex. 9.2, next page] In the current performing score, we hear only a two-voice canonic incarnation of this theme, at I/61/3,<sup>16</sup> which he worked out on the same page of sketches in a different key.

<sup>16</sup>When the “marcetta” theme returns at I/63/0, it is accompanied by a complete rising D-flat major scale, another instance of Puccini’s elaboration of the traditional rule of the octave, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Ex. 9.2: *Madama Butterfly*, transcription of sketch Figure 16, Accademia Filarmonica, [Schickling 74.A.2/7], “four-voice canon” “Variations on the concertato little march”

figure 16  
canone a 4

Variazioni  
sul concertato  
marcetta

More imitative polyphony is heard near the beginning of the current second act, at II/2/5, where the opening fugal theme appears in *stretto* and *projected* onto the whole-tone scale at the second and third entrances. [Ex. 9.3] And in Act III, we hear canonic imitation of the D-major theme from Butterfly’s vigil (III/6/0) at III/9/0, which is later transposed to G major at III/14/0, F major at III/20/6 and E-flat major at III/45/1 [Ex. 9.4].

Ex. 9.3: *Madama Butterfly*, II/2/5, opening fugal subject in *stretto*, with whole-tone projections

whole-tone

whole-tone

Ex. 9.4: *Madama Butterfly*, III/9/0, canonic imitation

When parts of the original version were removed, some imitative counterpoint disappeared as well. There were two excised instances of “The Star-Spangled Banner” Leitmotiv that showed bits of imitation, which were at I/66/11 (in minor) and I/73/0.<sup>17</sup> [Exx. 9.5a-b, opposite]

<sup>17</sup>I/73/0 is now twenty-six measures after the original rehearsal marking.

Ex. 9.5: *Madama Butterfly*, excised appearances of “The Star-Spangled Banner” Leitmotiv with imitation, and annotations

a) original version, I/66/11

b) original version, I/73/0

Examples of imitative counterpoint are found throughout the opera in various dramatic situations, and so any easy association of the technique with any one character or setting would be strained at best. There is a wide range of opinions in regard to the opening fugal passage: Leibowitz feels it represents both gaiety and fatality,<sup>18</sup> Ashbrook sees Japanese talkativeness,<sup>19</sup> while Girardi believes it denotes American efficiency.<sup>20</sup> While it is possible that these moments could function as a denotation of the “learned” style (such as with Wagner’s Beckmesser) suggesting pedantry or predictability, that association does not seem particularly appropriate to the narrative events at hand. Several later musical appearances of the theme point to a possible link with physical rushing around, although this does not universally hold: the theme appears at I/12/0 where the servants

<sup>18</sup>Leibowitz, “L’arte di Giacomo Puccini,” 26: “let us think of the disturbing fugato with which *Madama Butterfly* begins [...] which seems to characterize both the gay aspect as well as a certain idea of fatality that appears from the beginning of the drama.” [pensiamo all’ inquietante fugato con cui inizia *Madama Butterfly*, e che sembra caratterizzare tanto l’aspetto gaio quanto una certa idea di fatalità che appare fin dall’inizio dell’azione].

<sup>19</sup>Ashbrook, *The Operas of Puccini*, 121: “The little fugato tune that opens the opera can almost be seen as a calligraphic line; its characteristic opening squiggle recurs at many points to emphasize the jocular talkativeness of the Japanese characters.”

<sup>20</sup>Girardi, *Puccini*, 217.

get up and run into the house, at I/19/0 where Goro and the servants arrive quickly, at I/27/13 where Goro runs away, and at I/57/3 of the 1904 version where Goro signals the servants to hurry.<sup>21</sup> If this were the case, Puccini could be making a transmedial pun—a talent he shows off frequently in his letters—with the meaning of the word “fugue” as “chase.”<sup>22</sup> The same, however, does not hold true for the (slower) fugue subject that opens the second act.

So perhaps the instances of “learned” counterpoint simply epitomize an old-fashioned compositional style—which will ultimately be overturned by a more chaotic modern sensibility. It is also somewhat conceivable that Puccini wished to demonstrate his own traditional training in order to inoculate the work from critics who would attack, among other innovative aspects of the score, the harmonically unresolved conclusion. Unfortunately it did not.<sup>23</sup>

### *musical transformations*

Motivic development is a species of musical transformation that appears in all of Puccini's mature operas, and *Madama Butterfly* is no exception.<sup>24</sup> Usually it takes the form of manipulation of small motivic cells, rather than longer themes. Rather than retrace paths others have trod,<sup>25</sup> we will focus here on only two motivic fragments from the opera: the arpeggio figure, labeled motivic cell A, which is derived from the opening of “The Star-Spangled Banner” and associated with

<sup>21</sup>The theme also appears at I/118/1 where Suzuki helps Butterfly change clothes; and at II/17/10 after Goro has just disappeared in the garden. The only other instances occur at I/114/0 when Pinkerton is surprised by Suzuki's prayers (“sorpreso per tale sordo bisbiglio”), and at II/29/3, 8 where Suzuki promises to tell Butterfly about Kate. In the first instance, Suzuki is hurriedly saying her prayers, and in the second she is probably thinking about rushing to tell Butterfly.

<sup>22</sup>In regard to Puccini as punster, when composing *Tosca*, he wrote to Illica that “Giacosa is playing a chess game with Ricordi, prolonging the Toscano black on white” [Giacosa fa la partita a scacchi con Ricordi, prolungando il nero sul bianco toscano.] This is a quintuple pun: it refers to Tuscan (i.e., about *Tosca*), the black and white of a chess game, the black on white of writing on paper, Giacosa's drama *A Chess Game* [*Una Partita a Scacchi*], and Tuscan black and white geometrical architecture. Gara, *Carteggi*, 148.

<sup>23</sup>The critics were indeed quite harsh, but not because of the unresolved ending. The première's fiasco started near the beginning of the opera.

<sup>24</sup>See Chapter 3.

<sup>25</sup>An overview of those writers who have identified Puccini's “motivic cell” technique can be found in Baragwanath, “Analytical Approaches,” §2-§9.

Pinkerton (shown below in “Amore o grillo,” I/29/0), and Butterfly’s entrance motive, or motivic cell B. [Exx. 9.6a-b]. When we first see the product of the couple’s union, their son, brought forth in the second act, these two motives are combined. [Ex. 9.6c]

Ex. 9.6: *Madama Butterfly*, motivic cells

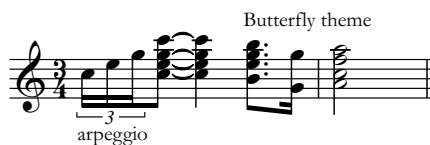
a) motivic cell A, in Pinkerton’s “Amore o grillo,” I/29/0



b) motivic cell B, Butterfly’s entrance motive, I/39/0



c) motivic cells A+B, entrance of their child, II/50/0



Puccini can also use brief motivic cells to create an overall musical “atmosphere” without clear semantic ties to identifiable aspects of the narrative, as a function of the MPI. For example, the motivic shape of Butterfly’s entrance motive (falling step, falling third, rising step) is also present in the melodies of Pinkerton’s “Dovunque al mondo” (I/21/6), in the love duet (I/133/4) and prior to the vigil (II/11/12), although the precise interval sizes (major or minor) can be altered.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the beginning of the humming chorus (II/90/0) is a retrograde version of the first elements of this cell (major third+1/2 step). The following example shows all of these instances transposed to C. [Exx. 9.7a-e]

Ex. 9.7: *Madama Butterfly*, motivic cell B and its variants, transposed to C

a) motivic cell B



<sup>26</sup>Some of these were also noted by Francesco Rocco Rossi, “Genesi e dialettica dei *Leitmotive* nel duetto d’amore di *Madama Butterfly*” paper presented at *Madama Butterfly: L’orientalismo di fine secolo, l’approccio pucciniano, la ricezione*. Convegno Internazionale di Studi nel primo centenario di *Madama Butterfly* (Lucca-Torre del Lago, 28-30 May 2004).

b) from Pinkerton's "Dovunque al mondo," I/21/6



c) Love duet, I/133/4



d) Suzuki and Butterfly before vigil, II/11/12



e) opening of humming chorus, II/90/0



One aspect of Butterfly's entrance motive, however, is that it serves as the melodic crest of a rising sequence that can be seen as derived from a traditional 5-6 linear intervallic pattern, a staple of the thoroughbass and contrapuntal traditions.<sup>27</sup> Puccini's transformed version—which would be an example of the *indosso* or *direct conflation*—touches each pitch-level of the whole-tone scale on A-flat (WT0), and is adorned with augmented triads. A hypothetical tracing of such a metamorphosis is shown in Exx. 9.8a-d: starting with a diatonic 5-6 sequence in A-flat major, the melody is *projected* onto the whole-tone scale, chromatic passing tones that create secondary dominants are added, followed by middle-voice chromatic passing tones that form augmented triads; finally, the melody is situated above.

Ex. 9.8, *Madama Butterfly*, hypothetical derivation of Butterfly's entrance theme

a) diatonic 5-6 sequence in A-flat major



<sup>27</sup>For example, Asioli, in his *Il Maestro di composizione* (1832), which was in use at the Milan conservatory when Puccini attended, shows such a rising 5-6 sequence as a harmonization of the scale, in his "Fundamental triads of the descending third and ascending fourth." Quoted and reproduced in Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 178. More on this topic can be found in David Damschroder, "Schubert, Chromaticism, and the Ascending 5-6 Sequence," *Journal of Music Theory*, 50/2 (Fall 2006): 253-75.

b) 5-6 sequence on the A-flat whole-tone scale



c) chromatic passing tones create secondary dominants

d) middle-voice chromatic passing tones create augmented triads

While Puccini uses the rising 5-6 sequential pattern in other works,<sup>28</sup> nowhere has he given it the prominence that it has in *Madama Butterfly*. Not only does it appear in Butterfly's entrance music (which is recalled in the love duet, at I/134/0, and when she sees his ship has returned, at II/70/0),<sup>29</sup> but both original acts end with an unresolved 5-6 motion.<sup>30</sup>

From I/136 to the end of the first act, F major is established as the concluding tonality through an F-major leitmotivic iteration and repeated motions F-C-F in the bass. The Leitmotiv is derived from Butterfly's "Io seguo il mio destino," which has a prominent C-D-C neighbor motion (that is, a pattern of 5-6-5 over F). So when the final D at the act's conclusion sounds, one expects a melodic resolution to C (and pure F major), which never arrives. [Exx. 9.9a-b]

Ex. 9.9: *Madama Butterfly*, end of Act I

a) Leitmotiv in F major with C-D-C neighbor pattern, I/136/0

<sup>28</sup>See Chapters 3 and 6 on the employment of the 5-6 pattern in *Manon Lescaut*.

<sup>29</sup>The rising sequence is particularly apt for Butterfly's entrance, since she is climbing a hill. But the ascending pattern also fits well with the increasing passions of the love duet, and her recollection of that when she believes he has returned.

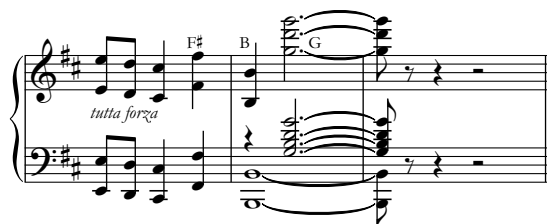
<sup>30</sup>Gustav Mahler's later *Das Lied von der Erde* (1907-9) also ends in a similar manner, with an unresolved A over C major.

## b) Act I, conclusion, unresolved 5-6 motion, I/136/9



Although this final verticality could also be considered an F added sixth chord, it seems unlikely that it could be heard, after strong dominant-tonic motions in F, as simply a D minor 6/3 chord.

A similar but more shocking musical event occurs at the end of the opera. B minor is fully established from III/55/0 with a bass *ostinato* begins that alternates between tonic and dominant (B and F-sharp) and lasts until III/57/0 (with one short Leitmotivic *innesto* at III/56/0), where the dominant F-sharp, now alone, is prolonged first in the bass and then in the soprano. Here it is accompanied by whole-tone fragments that include the leading-tone A-sharp, thus serving as dominant substitutions. At III/58/1, B minor is reached once again and the final cadence at III/58/8-9 is a unison dominant-tonic motion, F-sharp-B, in all parts. But Puccini appends what appears to be a G major 6/3 chord after this. The final high G is preceded in the same register by a sustained F-sharp, heard from III/57/2-58/0, which strengthens the aural impression that this G results from a 5-6 motion, inviting a resolution back to F-sharp. But it never arrives. [Ex. 9.10]

Ex. 9.10: *Madama Butterfly*, conclusion of opera

In addition to these prominent moments,<sup>31</sup> there are many other instances of the 5-6 transformation (or its reverse, the 6-5) in this opera. Occasionally it takes the form of a simple unresolved local neighbor note, such as the E to F-sharp motion over A at I/116/6. However, most 5-6/6-5 motions entail a harmonic shift, such as at

<sup>31</sup>A sonority identical to the first-act ending is also heard at I/64/24, and a transposition of it to G-flat major is heard at I/41/4.



“Ah triste madre!” (III/38/11), where A minor becomes F major 6/3, and G-sharp minor becomes E major 6/3.<sup>32</sup> Even one of Puccini’s sketches for *Butterfly* shows a 6-5 harmonic change from E-flat major to G minor when the E-flat moves to D [Ex. 9.11].

Ex. 9.11: *Madama Butterfly*, transcription of sketch, Figure 17, Accademia Filarmonica, [Schickling 74.A.2/8], with annotation



These last examples also demonstrate an essential feature of 5-6/6-5 motions: in a diatonic context, they involve a mode change from major to minor, or the reverse.<sup>33</sup> As such, these shifts can have semantic associations suggesting surprise, change of mood, etc.<sup>34</sup>

When a 5-6/6-5 linear motion occurs over a constant bass note, the root of the newly created triad will be related by major or minor third from root of the original chord. In these cases, two of three notes are common to both chords. Harmonic motion between chords related by shared tones has been referred to as “common-tone tonality,”<sup>35</sup> which blossomed in earlier 19th-century opera.<sup>36</sup>

Many of *Madama Butterfly*’s harmonic shifts can be read through this transformational prism. For example, at I/134/0, C-sharp minor changes to A major 6/3; this is enabled by the G-sharp, fifth of C-sharp, moving up a minor second to A, with C-sharp and E remaining as common tones. This could also be explained as a diatonic

<sup>32</sup>This pattern also occurs earlier, at II/89/12, with G-sharp minor transforming into E major 6/3 and G minor changing to E-flat major 6/3.

<sup>33</sup>For example, a diatonic 5-6 motion would change C major (C-E-G) into A minor 6/3 (C-E-A), and C minor (C-E-flat-G) into A-flat major 6/3 (C-E-flat-A-flat).

<sup>34</sup>The same sort of surprise can result if a motion from scale degree 5 to scale degree 6 occurs in a bass line. The harmony that results is often a deceptive cadence: the harmony moves from the dominant V to vi (or VI in minor) instead of the expected tonic. Here too the mode shifts surprisingly.

<sup>35</sup>As noted previously, the term was coined by Kopp in *Chromatic Transformations* and has also been adopted by Rothstein in “Common-tone Tonality.”

<sup>36</sup>As Rothstein writes, “in chromatic third-relations it was Rossini who set the pattern for the rest of Europe to follow.” Rothstein, “Common-tone Tonality,” §7.

5-6 motion, or even as a standard move to the diatonic submediant chord. However, just prior to this example, at I/133/0, D-flat *major* moves to A; although D-flat is enharmonically equivalent to C-sharp, we are now dealing with a different situation, as only one tone is shared (C-sharp/D-flat) and there is no mode change. These two chords are not related diatonically, then, but chromatically.

For both diatonic and chromatic common-tone shifts, transformational analyses have proven to be effective tools. Hepokoski has discussed “Un bel di” from *Butterfly* using such techniques: he writes that the harmonic motion in that aria from G-flat major to B-flat minor is a result of an L (*Leittonwechsel*) operation<sup>37</sup> that moves the tone G-flat down a half-step to F.<sup>38</sup> Of the numerous third-related common-tone shifts in *Madama Butterfly*, many are of the L variety and can also be understood diatonically.<sup>39</sup> R (Relative) transformations (such as at III/10/0, where B minor moves to D major) also stay within a key. Non-diatonic third-relations that move into chromatic space can be found at II/71/11 (D-flat major to F major) and II/89/7-9 (C major to E major 9).

If we view the concluding harmonies of *Butterfly*'s first and last acts as deriving from a traditional linear intervallic pattern, as above, both moments would be considered unresolved 5-6 motions. In the Neo-Riemannian view, however, Act I's final D minor sonority following F major would be considered an R (Relative) motion, while the opera's conclusion, G major after B minor, would be an L. In Kopp's variety of transformational analysis, both would be considered relative motions, but Act I's conclusion would be labeled with a lower-case r, while Act III's would be upper-case R.

<sup>37</sup>The three basic operations of what is known as neo-Riemannian transformational theory are: L (*Leittonwechsel*), which moves the bottom note of a major triad down a semitone or raises the top note of a minor triad up a semitone (e.g., C major to E minor, or C minor to A-flat major); R (Relative), which changes a triad into its relative one (e.g., C major to A minor); and P (Parallel), which changes a triad into its parallel mode (e.g., C major to C minor). There is also the S (Slide) relation, in which two chords of different mode share a third (e.g., C major and C-sharp minor).

<sup>38</sup>James Hepokoski, “Un bel di? Vedremo!': Anatomy of a Delusion” in *Madama Butterfly. L'orientalismo di fine secolo, l'approccio pucciniano, la ricezione*, eds. Arthur Groos and Virgilio Bernardoni, Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Lucca-Torre del Lago, 28-30 maggio 2004: 237. Reprinted in James Hepokoski, *Music, structure, thought: selected essays* (Farnham, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>39</sup>For example, at II/47/11, A-flat minor moves to E major, an enharmonically respelled F-flat major; similarly at II/69/19, F-sharp minor moves to D major; and at III/24/0, A minor moves to F major. All of these can be understood as diatonic motions from the tonic to VI.

Let us look more closely at the passage following II/89, before the humming chorus. It begins in C major, followed by two gestures to E-flat9, and, at II/89/7-9 as noted above, C major moves to E9—both chromatic mediant relationships. Then, at II/89/12 we get a chromatic sequence (which includes some 5-6 motions, as seen above), but which ultimately moves from F 6/3 to F7 (with some leitmotivic whole-tone additions). This, in turn, moves to clear B-flat major at II/90/0. In essence, then, the overall motion is from C to F to B-flat—a very traditional pattern of descending fifths.

Hepokoski suggests that the criteria for utilizing a transformational over traditional analysis includes the absence of a functional diatonic system and the sovereignty of maximally smooth voice leading.<sup>40</sup> In this situation, where smaller-scale motions are chromatic but embedded in a larger-scale diatonic motion—another instance of Puccini's *direct conflation*—the diatonic system is functional, but not on all musical strata.

There are also several chromatic passages in this work, such as that at III/55/10, where one chord transforms into another but in ways that transformational theory cannot (yet) explain: here, above the ostinato B–F-sharp pedal mentioned earlier, B minor melts into an augmented triad, which becomes D major, then D minor, G major-minor 6/5, and finally a C-sharp half-diminished seventh chord. In the end, though, it might be more useful to understand this passage as simply a harmonized descending chromatic line, from scale degrees 1 to 5 (at III/57/2) in B minor over a prolonged tonic/dominant pedal—a standard keyboard schema.

So how then should we view the opera's closing moment of musical non-final finality? Is the unresolved G a coda-like appendage to a conventional dominant-tonic motion? Perhaps. But, instead, if it is a little flutter of atonality, a brief rending of the tonal fabric, this tiny shift in the musical universe could be what opened the door to later, broader non-resolutions—in short, a butterfly effect.

<sup>40</sup>Hepokoski, "Un bel dì," 237: "In the view of neo-Riemannian theory, these color shifts operate on their own terms, apart from those of the functional diatonic system. They inhabit a different harmonic world, offering an otherness to normative tonality."



## Chapter 10

### Rhythms and redemption in *La fanciulla del West*

*Waltz in, waltz in, ye little kids, and gather round my knee,  
And drop them books and first pot-books, and bear a yarn from  
me. [...]*

*O little kids, my pretty kids, down on your knees and pray!  
You've got your eddication in a peaceful sort of way;  
And bear in mind thar may be sharps ez slings their spellin' square,  
But likewise slings their bowie-knives without a thought or care.*

Bret Harte, "The Spelling Bee at Angel's" (1878)<sup>1</sup>

This scene of rough-hewn Wild West types competing in a spelling bee, and getting their "eddication," conjures up images of David Belasco's 1905 *Girl of the Golden West*.<sup>2</sup> The homey narrator of Harte's poem, who does not in fact "sling his spellin' square," manages standard orthography for the words "waltz" and, later, "rhythm," (as well as "pray"),<sup>3</sup> which point to salient aspects of Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* as well. This opera's score has a rhythmic vitality that is most evident in the many dance patterns in the work (waltz, polka, bolero), but not only there: archival material presented below shows the emphasis that Puccini placed on rhythm and meter in the work as a whole. In this chapter, we will examine some of the rhythmic and metric aspects

<sup>1</sup>Bret Harte also wrote a short story about an independent woman thriving in the Wild West who ran an establishment called the Polka Saloon, and who could have been a model for Belasco's *Girl*: Bret Harte, "Miggles" *Overland monthly and Out West magazine*, 2/6, June 1869: 570-6.

<sup>2</sup>Belasco's novelization of his play is accessible at: [www.fanciulla100.org](http://www.fanciulla100.org), along with many source materials for this opera, scholarly articles, video clips and interviews with well-known performers of the opera.

<sup>3</sup>The poem also includes these verses: "The first word out was "parallel," and seven let it be,/Till Joe waltzed in his "double l" betwixt the 'a' and 'e' /For since he drilled them Mexicans in San Jacinto's fight /There warn't no prouder man got up than Pistol Joe that night — /Till 'rhythm' came! He tried to smile, then said 'they had him there.'/And Lanky Jim, with one long stride, got up and took his chair."

of the score, which are in dialogue with Puccini's use of some source materials; lastly, we will touch upon the Wagnerian influences at work in the opera's theme of redemption.

\* \* \* \* \*

“[the heart is] the metronome within us.”

Puccini, as quoted by Ricci<sup>4</sup>

Rhythmic structures in Italian opera have traditionally been tied to textual verse forms. Indeed, Puccini often requested specific verse forms from his librettists. But then, as Ashbrook and Powers observe, “once he got what he wanted he chopped and altered lines out of all metric recognition, to suit preconceived musical passages.”<sup>5</sup> And one need only observe the neatly rhyming *quinari* and *settenari* lines opening the libretto of *Tosca*<sup>6</sup>—scattered all over a chaotic musical scenetta—to conclude how little control the poetic structures can maintain over the forms and rhythmic patterns of Puccini's music. This divergence could have been the result of a progressive Wagnerian influence—musical prose and *Versmelodie* trumped traditional poetic meters. But whatever the cause, poetic meters had a diminished influence by Puccini's mature years. Summed up in a letter to the composer, Illica writes, “Méry rightly says, ‘the verses in operas are made only for the convenience of the deaf.’”<sup>7</sup>

Puccini's rhythmic training encompassed more than learning traditional poetic patterns, however. As Baragwanath has observed, his education involved a study of rhythm that was directly tied to expression and Affekt. One of Puccini's teachers in Milan, Amintore Galli, “[maintained] the distinction between a repetitive pulse, whether comprised of [poetic] feet or accents, and *ritmo*, which he defined as ‘an

<sup>4</sup>Ricci, *Puccini Interprete*, 12. [il Maelzel che sta dentro di noi]. As noted previously, Schickling has cast some doubt about the authenticity of Ricci's remarks in a private communication with this author.

<sup>5</sup>Ashbrook and Powers, *Puccini's 'Turandot'*, 8.

<sup>6</sup>[Ah! Finalmente! / Nel terror mio stolto / veda ceffi di birro / in ogni volto / La pila... la colonna... / “A piè della Madonna” / mi scrisse mia sorella... / Ecco la chiave!... / ed ecco la Cappella!]

<sup>7</sup>[E dice bene Méry quando sentenza: “I versi nelle opere in musica sono fatti solo per comodità dei sordi.”] Gara, *Carteggi*, 358. Illica refers to Joseph Méry (1797-1866), co-librettist of the original French version of Verdi's *Don Carlos*.

*aesthetic* ordering of a succession of musical values (figures).”<sup>8</sup> In fact, in notes from this class, Puccini wrote down, “Music imitates man’s internal phenomena, and it is therefore an essentially *subjective* product [...] rhythms complete this phonetic [illegible] (images expressed by means of sounds) reproducing the same movements.”<sup>9</sup> [emphasis added]

Perhaps Puccini took these ideas to heart, since his affective rhythmic “movements” were singled out for comment by Alaleona in a remembrance of the composer:

Puccini—a true musician—was a fortunate creator of “motive-gestures” [...] By saying ‘motive-gestures’ we mean not only exterior gestures, but also, and above all, the motions of the spirit; not only the “external dance” (“dance” in the usual sense of the word), but also that which I call (using an expression that is strange but not without meaning) “internal dance”: that is, the game, the contrast, the tumult of sentiments and passions.<sup>10</sup>

Let us first consider Puccini’s “external dance” in this opera—that is, the representation of physical motion. At his most literal, Puccini aspires to rhythmic mimesis when he writes that the rhythm at I/58 should be played “imitating a horse’s gallop.”<sup>11</sup> And, in a sketch housed at the Beinecke Library at Yale University, Puccini works out the rhythm for depicting the moment in Act II when Johnson re-enters Minnie’s cabin after being shot, lurching and stumbling: the composer writes, “Revolver shot off-stage” [colpo revolver interno] / “All[egr]o moderato agitato” / “irregular movement” [movimento irregolare] / “staggering from the wound” [traballamento del ferito] [Ex. 10.0, next page]

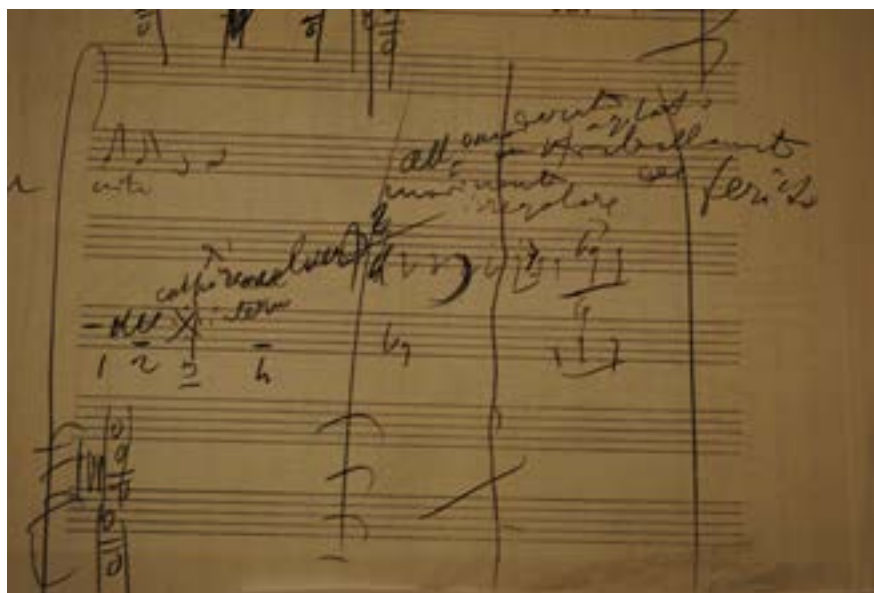
<sup>8</sup>Baragwanath, *The Italian Traditions*, 70.

<sup>9</sup>[La musica imita i fenomeni interni dell’uomo, ed è perciò un prodotto essenzialmente soggettivo, [...] i ritmi completano questa [?] fonetica (immagini espressa per via di suoni) riproducendo gli stessi movimenti.]

<sup>10</sup>[Puccini—musicista vero—è stato un felicissimo creatore di ‘motivi-gesto’ [...] Dicendo ‘motivi-gesto’ noi intendiamo non soltanto i gesti esteriori, ma anche e soprattutto i moti dell’animo; non soltanto la ‘danza esterna’ (danza nel senso abituale della parola) ma anche quella che io chiamo (con una espressione strana, ma non senza significazione) ‘danza interna’: cioè il gioco, il contrasto, il tumulto dei sentimenti e delle passioni.] Alaleona, “Giacomo Puccini”: 17-8.

<sup>11</sup>[Imitando il galoppo d’un cavallo]

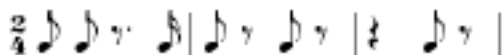
Ex. 10.0: Puccini's sketch of *La fanciulla*, II/56, Yale University, Frederick R. Koch Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.<sup>12</sup>



The rhythm notated in this sketch is



while the final version became: .



The irregularity of the rhythm is nevertheless apparent in both versions. And Puccini's off-hand comment to the *New York Times* after *Fanciulla's* première—"My heart was beating like the double basses in the card scene"<sup>13</sup> (which have rapid staccato sixteenth notes)—also speaks to a correlation of rhythm and physical impulse.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>*La fanciulla del West* (opera), box 183, folder 1525 n.d., FRKF 989.

<sup>13</sup>"Great Welcome for New Opera," *The New York Times*, 11 December 1910.

<sup>14</sup>This is also an early example of non-determinacy, as Puccini instructs the double basses at II/77/1 to continue playing the pattern as long as the poker game requires. The score reads "following the movement according to the exigencies of the game." [seguitando il movimento secondo le esigenze del giuoco].



The numerous dance rhythms in *Fanciulla* could have been inspired by an abundance of incidental dance music in the two Belasco plays that Puccini saw during his 1907 visit to New York: after attending these two dramas, Puccini would have heard a cachuca,<sup>15</sup> two waltzes, a polka, two boleros, a manzanillo, and another habanera.<sup>16</sup>

It is not only the recognizable dance rhythms that give *Fanciulla* its metric vitality, however. Girardi even writes that “the ever-changing rhythm becomes a prominent protagonist, reflecting the onstage situation and the crudeness of the gestures.”<sup>17</sup> That Puccini gave much thought to rhythmic patterns is attested to by the sketch below, housed at the Museo Puccini at Torre del Lago. At this point in the drama, III/12/4, voices of the miners chime in mostly without specified pitch, yet Puccini has precisely notated the length of each exclamation on plain paper without staff lines. [Ex. 10.1, next page] Carner also mentions having seen some of Puccini’s sketches for this opera that showed experimentation with syncopated and dotted figures.<sup>18</sup>

Puccini shows his progressive side in the opera’s rhythmic and metric parameters as well. He experimented, in early versions of *Fanciulla*, with notating multiple simultaneous meters, a sort of *direct conflation*<sup>19</sup> he had only briefly tried before (and specifically refused to do for the excised “toast” in *La bobeme*<sup>20</sup>). In the Lehman continuity draft housed at the Morgan Library, as noted by Allan Atlas,<sup>21</sup> the vocal line at I/2/6 is written in 4/8 while the accompaniment is in 6/8. In addition, in the final version of the second act, at II/59/8, Minnie’s “Resta! Resta! Resta!” sounds in triple meter, although it is written in duple. According to Ricci’s account of this section, Puccini told him, “I would have wanted to write the orchestra part in 2/4 and the voice in 3/4; but this marking is not part of my writing system. Such

<sup>15</sup>This dance type also appears in Gilbert and Sullivan’s 1889 operetta *The Gondoliers*.

<sup>16</sup>Belasco was not inventing the emphasis on dancing as a pastime in the period: miner William Perkins kept a journal in which he describes seeing a *samaueca* (“a kind of minuet”) and a *jaleo*. William Perkins, Dale Lowell Morgan, James R. Scobie. *Three years in California William Perkins’ journal of life at Sonora, 1849-1852* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1964), 163.

<sup>17</sup>Girardi, *Puccini*, 314.

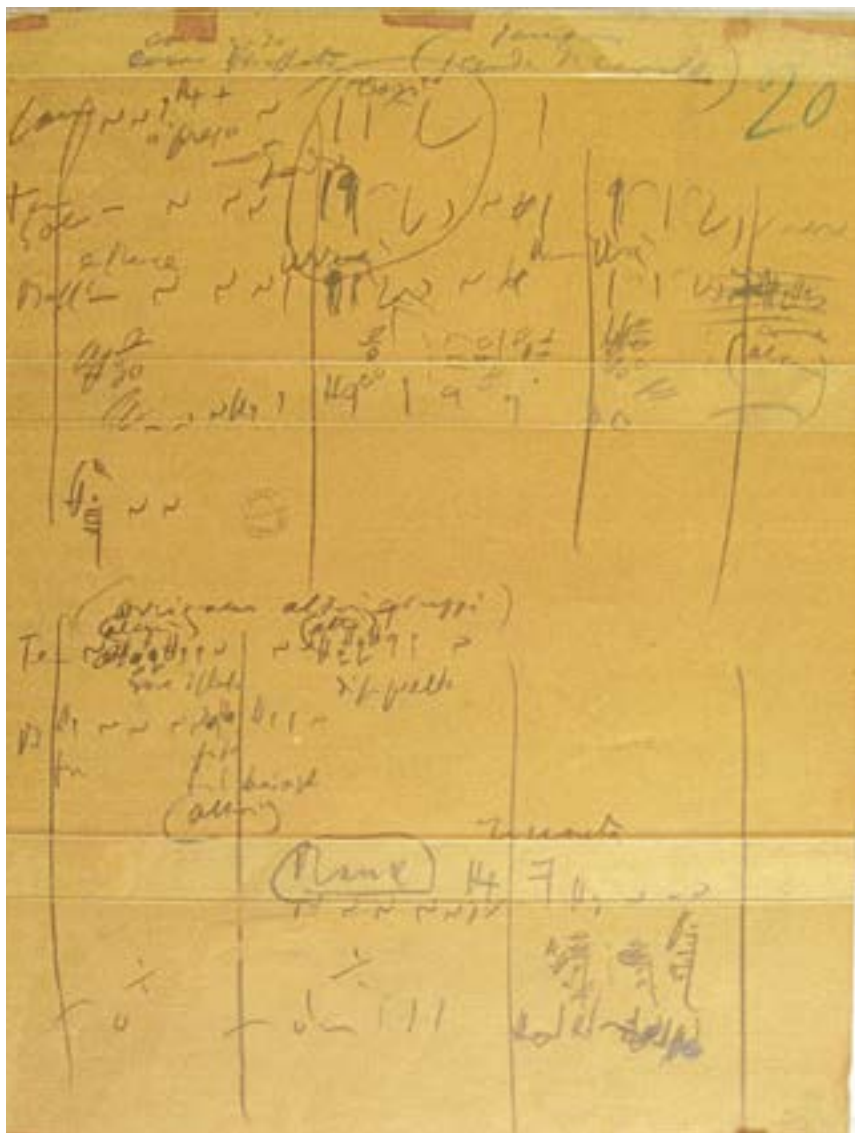
<sup>18</sup>Carner, *Puccini*, 408.

<sup>19</sup>See Chapter 2.

<sup>20</sup>See Chapter 7.

<sup>21</sup>Allan Atlas, “Lontano-Tornare-Redenzione: Verbal Leitmotives and their Musical Resonance in Puccini’s *La fanciulla del West*,” *Studi Musicali*, 21/2 (1992), 364.

Ex. 10.1: Puccini's rhythmic sketch of *La fanciulla*, III/12/4, Museo Puccini, Torre del Lago. Used by permission.



a notation does not exist in any of my operas, so to less-informed audience members it could seem like a pose.”<sup>22</sup> We also find unusual

<sup>22</sup>“Avrei voluto scrivere la parte dell’orchestra in 2/4 e il canto in 3/4; ma questa grafia non rientra nel mio sistema di scrittura. Tant’è vero che in nessuna delle mie opere esiste una siffatta notazione, che ai poco provveduti potrebbe sembrare una posa.”] Ricci adds, “Puccini, then, if it were not for his usual modesty, which kept him (cont.)

time signatures (such as 5/2 at II/27/2), and odd phrase lengths (such as three-bar units at III/7/6). And syncopation and dotted notes are in evidence almost throughout the work and hemiolas are often part of a theme, such as at the opening of Act II, the rhythm of which Puccini called “grotesque.”<sup>23</sup> [Ex. 10.2]

Ex. 10.2: *La fanciulla*, II/0/3, hemiolas



Puccini uses some sort of dance in every opera, with formal ballets in *Le villi* and *La rondine*. In this sense, the composer tips his hat to long-standing operatic traditions. But, as Greenwald points out, Puccini’s dances are “woven into the very fabric of the drama.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, they relate not only to “exterior” onstage dancing but to Alaleona’s “internal dance” of characterization and Affekt.

Puccini’s affective use of rhythm, meter and tempo is present throughout this work, from the sudden “Allegro brutale” of the barroom brawl, to the funereal pace at the desperate end of Act II. But a particularly affective moment is Puccini’s use of a complex metrical structure in his portrait of Jack Rance, whose first-act aria begins at I/67.<sup>25</sup> Here, Rance explains himself and the desperate love he feels for Minnie. He lays his cards on the table, literally and figuratively, and awaits her response. The metric “internal dance” of his longing and unease is made outwardly perceptible through the many irregular phrase lengths in this piece (as well as the tonal structure, which is

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distant from any apparent eccentricity, would have wanted to write it thus.” [Puccini, insomma, se non fosse stato il solito pudore che lo teneva lontano da ogni apparente stramberia avrebbe voluto scrivere così.] Ricci, *Puccini*, 162. Puccini did make some innovations in his writing technique for this opera, however. As Girardi observes, he uses a graphic sign for the first time at I/88/14 indicating sliding off a note: this will appear in a later opera, as the dying Suor Angelica sees her child. Girardi, *Puccini*, 304.  
<sup>23</sup>Puccini: “The second act, in Minnie’s cabin, opens with a duet of Indian servants, a short page of staccato music with a rhythm which has a strain of the grotesque.” “Puccini here; his opera views,” *New York Times*, 18 November 1910.

<sup>24</sup>Greenwald, *Dramatic Exposition*, 76.

<sup>25</sup>This selection is discussed further in Deborah Burton, “Men Who Love Too Much: Operatic Heroes and the Metric and Tonal Disturbances that Follow them.” In *Schenker Studies IV*, edited by Lynne Rodgers and Poundie Burstein, (New York: Olms, 2012), 279-97.

seemingly a series of half-cadences—the final tonic is only implied by a single note from the soprano.)<sup>26</sup>

The first section, bars 1-6, contains eleven beats (4-beat phrase +7-beat phrase), followed by a section comprising a regular 24 beats (8+8+8), and another of eleven (4+7). The final section, from bar 25 to the end, has seven beats marked *largamente*, followed by three beats marked *lentamente* with *rallentando*, which all but destroy any metrical feeling. This metrical organization (irregular-regular-irregular) is akin in its feeling of unease to the aria's phrase structure, in which the phrases end on an unresolved dominant with the stable tonic appearing only in transition.<sup>27</sup> The first section begins on an inverted minor tonic and finishes on V. The second, which at first appears to be simply a transposition of the main melody up a fifth, starts on a minor V but circles back and ends, like the first phrase, on a major V.

It is not inconceivable that Puccini was also encouraged to experiment with metric complexity, not only by the many dance themes he had heard as incidental music in the Belasco plays, but also by the transcriptions of Native American songs he consulted. Puccini wrote a letter to Sybil Seligman on 22 July 1907, in which he mentions three sources for Native American melodies: "Thank you for the Indian songs you sent me; I've also written to America to get them—and I await those you promised me."<sup>28</sup> We know that he owned two early ethnographic collections, still housed at the Museo Puccini at Torre del Lago: Alice Fletcher's *Indian Story and Song from North America*, and Natalie Curtis's *The Indian's Book*. It appears likely that the third source for the composer included transcriptions and arrangements of Native American melodies published in the Wa-Wan Press by Arthur Farwell, which are not extant in the museum collection.<sup>29</sup>

In the Fletcher book, the meter of "Ghost Dance Song," for example, is transcribed with five-bar phrases, and the lullaby "Kawas, thy baby is crying" shows alternating 6/8 and 9/8 meters.<sup>30</sup> The

<sup>26</sup>All the metrical groups begin with upbeat patterns, so they have been calculated from downbeats. In addition, because the meter frequently shifts from 4/8 to 2/8, metrical groups are counted in 2/8 (two in a 4/8 measure).

<sup>27</sup>This passage could exemplify what Ramon Satyendra terms a "dominant-based" piece. See Ramon Satyendra, "Liszt's Open Structures and the Romantic fragment." *Music Theory Spectrum* 19/2 (Fall, 1997): 184-205.

<sup>28</sup>Seligman, *Puccini Among Friends*, 138-40.

<sup>29</sup>For a discussion of Puccini's use of a Zuni melody published by Wa-Wan, see Allan W. Atlas, *Belasco and Puccini: "Old Dog Tray" and the Zuni Indians*, *The Musical Quarterly*, 125/3, 1991: 362-98.

<sup>30</sup>Alice C. Fletcher, *Indian Story and Song from North America* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1900), 100, 109.

Curtis collection also contains many examples of such indirect metric dissonance, such as the transcription of “Kisaka: Woman’s Song of Rejoicing” that alternates 2/8 and 3/8.<sup>31</sup>

One particular rhythm in *Fanciulla* has received much critical attention: the so-called “cakewalk” pattern



usually associated with Johnson/Ramerrez.<sup>32</sup> The rhythm has been linked by several writers with ragtime, and thus with that genre’s African-American roots, even though no African-Americans appear in the opera. Fairtile interprets this as a revelation of the character’s personality. She writes: “the hot rhythm of Johnson’s musical signature unmasks him by evoking such coon song stereotypes as thief, killer, dandy, sexual predator and educated fool.”<sup>33</sup>

However, this thesis is put in doubt by Puccini’s comments to the *Evening Mail*, “There isn’t a coon song in the opera!”<sup>34</sup> although he did have some interest in this once-popular African-American genre. And although the rhythm appears at Johnson/Ramerrez’s entrance, Randall and Davis note that Ashby’s appearance is also accompanied by a syncopated motive: they conclude that this rhythmic pattern seems to mark an “aspect of western American identity,” rather than symbolize a single character.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Natalie Curtis, *The Indian’s Book* (New York and London: Harper, 1907), 135.

<sup>32</sup>See, for example, Girardi, *Puccini*, 288-9: “At the end of the prelude a brief fragment appears in cakewalk rhythm: the popular Afro-American dance gives a touch of local color to the statement of the tonic”; Atlas, “Lontano-Tornare-Redenzione,” 360: “Johnson...characterized by an aggressively syncopated, ragtime-like motive that suggests something of his reckless abandon”; Linda Fairtile, “Real Americans Mean Much More’: Race, Ethnicity, and Authenticity in *The Girl of the Golden West* and *La fanciulla del West*,” *Studi pucciniani* 4 (2010): 94-5: “Johnson’s cakewalk figure, however, might also be understood as a signifier of his outlaw status, aligning him with derogatory markers of blackness perpetuated by the coon song craze.” See also Budden. *Puccini*, 306, who feels the orchestration gives the passage a Latin American flavor.

<sup>33</sup>Fairtile, “Real Americans,” 95.

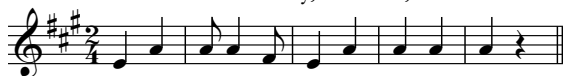
<sup>34</sup>Interview in *The Evening Mail*, Saturday 19 November 1910.

<sup>35</sup>Annie J. Randall and Rosalind Gray Davis, *Puccini and the Girl: History and Reception of ‘The Girl of the Golden West’* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 20. Randall, however, ties Johnson to the “cakewalk” rhythm later in the text, on 131.

the opera: in Native American melodies, and in music associated with Latinos and with Western whites. Three examples of the rhythm appear in Puccini's copy of the Curtis book of Native American melodies. [Exx. 10.3a-c]

Ex. 10.3: Native American "cakewalk" rhythms

a) "Song of the Buffalo-Hide Ceremony," Curtis, 203



b) "Lullaby," Curtis, 238



c) "Medicine Song," Curtis, 327



Puccini also heard this rhythm in the incidental music<sup>36</sup> of the two Western-themed Belasco plays he attended in 1907, *The Girl of the Golden West* and *The Rose of the Rancho*, both set in the West of the same period. [Exx. 10.4a-c]

Ex. 10.4: Belasco's *The Rose of the Rancho*, incidental music, "cakewalk" (habanera) rhythms

a)



<sup>36</sup>Incidental music to Belasco's *The Girl of the Golden West* by William Furst, New York Public Library at Lincoln Center, \*ZB3254, reels 1 and 2.

b)

Moderato

c) “Entr’acte”


Allegro

The “cakewalk” pattern is also contained within the Hispanic habanera rhythm:<sup>37</sup>

and is heard in “Manzanillo/Danza Mexicana,”<sup>38</sup> from *Rose of the Rancho*, labeled a habanera, as well as in the music for the play’s Act III, number 4. [Exx. 10.5a-b]

Ex. 10.5: Belasco’s *The Rose of the Rancho*, incidental music, “cakewalk” (habanera) rhythms

a) “Manzanillo/Danza Mexicana”

<sup>37</sup>The habanera, named for “Havana,” is also identified by a bass line that repeats the rhythm . The famous habanera from Bizet’s *Carmen* contains the “cakewalk” rhythm in the second bar.

<sup>38</sup>“Manzanillo / Danza Mexicana,” composed by A. G. Robyn, arranged by Otto Knaeble Balmer and Weber Music House, 1891. It available online at <http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections>.

## b) Act III, n. 4



If this rhythm is motivically associated with Johnson/Ramerrez, then, it does not point to specific ethnic origins but presents him as a trans-cultural figure. Indeed his ethnic identity is in doubt in the narrative: he is depicted as a Mexican bandit disguised as a white man, but his Hispanic roots are far from clear.

There are many musical cultural markers in *Fanciulla* that are used in what seems to be an incongruous manner. Perhaps this practice could signal the opera's stated message of universal harmony and redemption. As Fairtile writes:

A preoccupation with authenticity may blind us to a constructive aspect of Puccini's golden West [...] Puccini's conflation of various streams of American musical culture supports the opera's overall theme of reconciliation.<sup>39</sup>

In an interview just before the première, Puccini explicitly expressed his desire for a kind of universality in this score, while indicating that his choice of musical motives for the characters had been anything but accidental: "The Golden Girl is human... Love, treachery, death, happiness—these are universal motifs, peculiar to no particular country, period or people, and differing only in the degree of joy or suffering they bring."<sup>40</sup>

When Arthur Farwell attended the *Fanciulla* première as a critic for *Musical America*, he noted with disapproval that two Native American quotations were used inappropriately.<sup>41</sup> In fact, there are snatches of

<sup>39</sup>Fairtile, "Real Americans," 102.

<sup>40</sup>Interview, *The Evening Mail*, Saturday 19 November 1910.

<sup>41</sup>Arthur Farwell, "The Music in Puccini's Opera." *Musical America* 13/6 (Dec. 17, 1910): 5. Farwell's own arrangements of Native American pieces belie his commitment to authenticity. They are often heavy with chromatic harmonies and modernist touches, and he has admitted to altering his style to fit the American public's idea of a "savage's music." He writes, "It was at this time that I made my first really savage composition on Indian themes [...] I had earlier inclined to the more pastoral songs and peace chorals, and folks reasoned naively that these could not represent the Indian, since the latter was a savage. Evidently I must reform and do something really Indian. The theme of the *Navajo War Dance* was something to make your blood curdle and your hair to stand on end." Farwell, "Second Trip West," in *Wanderjahre of a Revolutionist and Other Essays on American Music*, ed. Thomas Stoner, (cont.)



Native American melodies from the Fletcher and Curtis collections that bear much resemblance to moments in the opera—moments when Native American characters are not referenced in any way. For example, the last five pentatonic notes of “Wokan Olowan,” from the Curtis book, could have been used, transposed down a minor third, during the Act II love scene between Minnie and Johnson. [Exx. 10.6 a-b]

Ex. 10.6

a) “Wokan Olowan,” Curtis, 77



b) *La fanciulla*, II/22/1



From Farwell’s “Song of the Leader,”<sup>42</sup> Puccini could have derived a musical moment between Minnie and Sherriff Jack Rance. [Exx. 10.7a-b]

Ex. 10.7

a) Arthur Farwell, “Song of the Leader”




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Eastman Studies in Music IV (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1995), 123. Quoted in Michael V. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 234. Pisani adds, “What was ‘blood curdling’ about the work, however, was not any particular ‘savageness,’ but rather Farwell’s experimentation with modernist techniques in harmony and rhythm in combination with the Navajo song. He peppered his accompaniment with nonfunctional dissonances and varied the length of successive phrases to avoid a sense of predictability [...] The cadences are all on stark open fifths, but the harmonies that accompany the melodic phrases are quite pungent.” Farwell’s harmonization of “The Lone Prairies,” a cowboy folk-song, shows a similar admixture of complex harmonies: it contains French augmented sixths, half-diminished sevenths, augmented chords, and unresolved sevenths and ninths. Arthur Farwell, *Folk-songs of the West and South: Negro, Cowboy and Spanish-Californian* (Boca Raton: Masters Music Publications, n.d.).

<sup>42</sup>Brodsky, *The Wa-Wan Press*, vol. 1, 48.

b) *La fanciulla*, I/64/7

Other Puccini borrowings from these sources might include a melody from the opening of Act II of *Fanciulla*. Here, after a modified D-major passage interspersed with whole-tone flourishes, we see the squaw Wowkle cradling a baby and singing on repeated Ds and Cs. This bears a striking resemblance to the “Song of the Laugh” from Fletcher’s collection.<sup>43</sup> [Exx. 10.8a-b]

## Ex. 10.8

## a) “Song of the Laugh”

*Ponka. He-dbu'-shka*

Ha, ha, ha    ba ba!    Ha ba!    bi bi!    ha ba!    bi!

b) *La fanciulla*, II/1/2

Wowkle’s sung text also includes the words “Hao Wari,” which are explained in the Curtis book thus: “Hao means sleep, and Wari signifies the rocking motion of the child to and fro.”<sup>44</sup>

Borrowings from Troyer’s arrangements of Zuni melodies, published by Wa-Wan, seem more convincing—but no less incongruously utilized. Here we find the source for (white) camp minstrel Jake Wallace’s “Che faranno i vecchi miei,” identified by Atlas,<sup>45</sup> but also a melody similar to one of the main themes of the

<sup>43</sup>Fletcher, *Indian Story*, 13.

<sup>44</sup>Curtis, *The Indian’s Book*, 128. Carner cites a melody in the Curtis volume (an “Indian medicine song”) as a possible source for Puccini’s lullaby. Carner, *Puccini*, 406. The song he cites can be found on Curtis, *The Indian’s Book*, 450.

<sup>45</sup>Atlas, “Zuni.” On page 15 of Belasco’s typescript of his play, a copy of which was given to Arturo Toscanini, and which is now in the collection of the Toscanini family, Belasco writes, “Jake sings in the uneven minstrel phrasing”; it is conceivable that Puccini’s unusual phrase lengths in this song reflect that original direction.

<sup>46</sup>Curtis, *The Indian’s Book*, 329.

opera, which first appears in the prelude at I/0/7; this is also very similar to a medicine song that, according to Curtis, was handed down by Geronimo.<sup>46</sup> [Exx. 10.9a-c] Troyer also includes a Zuni melody almost identical to one that appears at the farewell to the homesick miner Larkens at I/26/13.<sup>47</sup> [Exx. 10.9d<sup>48</sup>-e]

Ex. 10.9

a) Troyer, “Zunian Lullaby”



b) Geronimo, medicine song



Three new techniques that developed during this concentrated period contributed to the ongoing syntax in music that reflected native America—all of them in some way derived from folk cultures, though not necessarily American Indian cultures per se. These techniques encompassed (1) melodic parallelisms (also associated with primitivism, alterity, and orientalism); (2) modality (associated with ancientness as well as the sacred); and, less commonly, (3) dissonance (associated with the “rawness” of the primitive experience).<sup>49</sup>

Rather than utilizing these, though, Puccini associates the Native Americans with the following whole-tone passage—arguably the most sophisticated sort of European music in the opera—while using his trademark parallels and open fifths elsewhere.<sup>50</sup> [Ex. 10.10<sup>51</sup>]

Ex. 10.10: *La fanciulla* II/0/2-3, scene with Wowkle, whole-tone passages



In *Fanciulla*, the clearest use of parallel fifths and octaves—rather than accompanying scenes with Native Americans—appears in the musical depiction of falling snow, recalling the winter scene of 1840s Paris in *La bohème*. [Exx. 10.11 and 1.14b]

Ex. 10.11: *La fanciulla*, II/26/0



in this scene: “Puccini uses ‘Indian’ musical conventions that by 1910 had become standard (pentatonic scales, accompaniment by open fifths, low tessitura, narrow melodic range, and a *non vibrato*, monotone vocal style” and thus marks the Native American characters as culturally separate from the rest of the cast.” Randall and Davis, *Puccini and the Girl*, 24. Fairtile also strikes a similar note: “This [Native American] scene is distinguished by parallel whole-tone harmonies, repetitive melodies and unconventional instrumental combinations, traits that assume a variety of identities in Puccini’s other operas...Rather than evoking a specific ethnicity, such musical markers represent a generic Other, in this case, contrasting Billy and Wowkle with the ‘serious’ romantic couple, Johnson and Minnie.” Fairtile, “Real Americans,” 99.

<sup>50</sup>Puccini’s extensive use of whole-tone and other equal divisions of the octave throughout his *oeuvre* is discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>51</sup>This passage also appeared in a deleted scene (from rehearsal numbers I/53/15-1/58/0] with Native American Billy.

<sup>52</sup>Farwell wrote that Puccini used “The Chattering Squaw” in *Fanciulla*. Farwell, “The

And, while a typical contemporary depiction of Native Americans by C. Harvey Worthington Loomis, the 1904 “Chattering Squaw,” uses parallel fourths, a similar passage from *Fanciulla* accompanies a scene—not between Wowkle and Billy—but one with Minnie and the miners.<sup>52</sup> [Exx. 10.12 a-b]

Ex. 10.12

a) C. Harvey Worthington Loomis: “Chattering Squaw” from *Lyrics of the Red Man*



b) *La fanciulla*, I/43/4



Some pieces of incidental music that Puccini heard while attending these two Belasco plays might also have been sources for *Fanciulla*'s melodies. For example, the second full measure of the play's polka in G major is strikingly similar to Puccini's theme associated with the Polka Saloon in G minor, which first appears at I/5/0.<sup>53</sup> [Exx. 10.13a-b]

Ex. 10.13

a) Belasco's *The Girl of the Golden West*, incidental music, “Polka”



Music in Puccini's Opera.”: 5. Also see Fairtile, “Real Americans,” 99.

<sup>53</sup>Budden feels that Puccini's “Polka” theme derives from George M. Cohan's “Belle of the Barber's Ball”; however, the only similarity between the passages is in the syncopated beginning of the Cohan, which is a standard ragtime introduction. Budden, *Puccini*, 307.

<sup>54</sup>As reported by Curtis *The Indian's Book*, 329.

b) *La fanciulla*, “Polka” motive, I/5/0

Puccini also could have looked to the trio section of the play’s polka music, a rising stepwise fifth, now rhythmicized in triple meter as the theme for his waltz. [Exx. 10.14a-b]

## Ex. 10.14

a) Belasco’s *The Girl of the Golden West*, incidental music, trio of “Polka”b) *La fanciulla*, waltz theme, I/86/0

\* \* \* \* \*

*“The song tells how, as I sing, I go through the air to a holy place where Yusum will give me power to do wonderful things. I am surrounded by little clouds, and as I go through the air I change, becoming spirit only.”*

Geronimo’s description of an old medicine song<sup>54</sup>

After being pressed by his publisher Giulio Ricordi for many years to compose a “grand” opera with substantive moral import, and after a long period without producing a new work,<sup>55</sup> Puccini turned to *Fanciulla*, “a drama of love, and of moral redemption against a dark and vast background of primitive characters and untrammelled nature,” as the opera’s preliminary note explains. It seems to be Puccini himself who desired this transformation of a play that had been a straightforward Western romance: as the composer noted in a letter to

<sup>55</sup>Girardi notes that Puccini looked at more than thirty subjects between 1903 and 1910. Girardi, *Puccini*, 262.

<sup>56</sup>Randall and Davis, *Puccini and the Girl*, 191. [non tralasciando di tener d’occhio il

his librettist Carlo Zangarini in April 1908, “Do not forget to keep an eye on the redemptionist thought, which must hover above the whole work.”<sup>56</sup> It was Puccini’s idea to substitute the reading lesson of *Old Joe Miller’s Jokes* with a Bible passage,<sup>57</sup> and the composer confirmed the powerful influence he had had in this area during an interview given the year after the première: “The idea of the heroine as redeemer was given quite a small part: it was I who wanted from the librettists a greater development of this, so that this desire for purification, this breathless panting for a peace won with love and action, would become clearer, more sincere.”<sup>58</sup>

What Puccini intended by “redemption” in this opera seems to be more of a “reformation” of destructive ways, rather than a Wagnerian release into death from painful earthly bonds.<sup>59</sup> Although there are clear Wagnerian textual and musical references in this work, Minnie does not really risk her life when she interferes with the near-execution of Johnson, and the lovers do not perish together at the end. And, although they go East into the dawn like the Flying Dutchman and Senta, they are drawing back from the frontier and returning to worldly “civilization.”

[pensiero redenzionista che deve aleggiare su tutto il lavoro.] On page 153, Randall and Davis write, “While Puccini certainly met his goal of departing from the music of the past, he seemed impelled to wrap his new music, new dramatic conception, and new heroine in the old and very safe audience-pleasing language of Wagnerian redemption.” Although by 1910, Wagner’s ideas were certainly “old,” for Puccini they still could have represented a progressive stance. A fuller discussion of the concept of redemption in this opera, and its context within the American Wagnerism craze can be found in Randall and Davis, *Puccini and the Girl*, 148-69.

<sup>57</sup>In this sense, *Fanciulla* conflicts with the standard choices of film Westerns: Tompkins writes, “exchanging the cross for the gun is a theme played out countless times.” Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: the inner life of Westerns*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, 35. However, the Western hero will usually reject religion as presented by “temperance ladies,” a group to which Minnie, as the owner of a saloon, does not belong.

<sup>58</sup>Interview in *Gazzetta di Torino*, 11 November 1911, 52/311: 3. Quoted in Girardi, *Puccini*, 285. [Era stata data assai piccola parte all’elemento redentore della protagonista: io fui che volli dai librettisti uno sviluppo maggiore di esso, onde apparisse più evidente, più sincero questo desiderio di purificazione, questo anelito affannoso verso una pace conquistata con l’amore e l’operosità.]

<sup>59</sup>As Bryan Magee writes in *The Tristan Chord: Wagner and Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 178: “Redemption, when it comes at the end of [a Wagnerian] opera, means release from the need to exist at all; and it is made possible for him by the self-sacrificial love of a woman who is prepared, if one may so put it, to share his non-existence with him, which is to say, die for him and with him.”

<sup>60</sup>Carner, *Puccini*, 404.

Belasco, who directed the opera's première at the Metropolitan in 1910, working closely with the composer, wrote a novelization of his play the following year that adheres more to the Puccinian concept of redemption than his original did. At the close of the earlier drama, Johnson merely tells Minnie, "A new day... Trust me... Trust me... A new life." Whereas in the final chapter of the later novelization, Belasco shows us a more thoughtful aspect of the now-good badman:

Johnson pondered over the strange fate that had brought him under the influence—an influence which held him now and which he earnestly prayed would continue to hold him—and into close relationship with a character so different from his own. A contemplation of his past life was wholly unnecessary, for the realisation had come to him that it was her personality alone that had awakened his dormant sense of what was right and what was wrong, and changed the course of his life.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the differing flavors of redemption, there are many moments that indicate at least an attempt at quasi-Wagnerian resonances. Carner writes "like a *dea ex machina* Minnie arrives on horseback—a Valkyrie of the Wild West,"<sup>60</sup> and like Brunnhilde, Minnie disobeys ethical rules, by lying and cheating at cards to keep her man (yet she remains unpunished). As in *Die Walküre*, a traditional production of *Fanciulla* would have large trees, horses, and a door that flies open at an embrace (this time, however, opening to winter snow, not springtime).<sup>61</sup> The venal pursuit of gold<sup>62</sup> also brings to mind Wagnerian tropes.

Puccini's use of musical quotations from Wagner's operas has been discussed previously, including his version of the *Tristan* prelude's opening motive at the finale of *Fanciulla's* Act II, harmonized now with

<sup>61</sup>This last stage action was created for the opera, although in the Belasco drama, when Johnson says "I love you" it is equally earthshaking: "The wind blows the snow against the windows. The vestibule doors slam. The curtains of the bed flap in the wind. A small basket on the wardrobe blows down. A flower-pot topples over. The blankets in the loft flap. The lamps flicker. Suddenly the wind dies down. The clock on the mantel strikes two. The wind begins to rise again." Belasco, *The Girl of the Golden West*, Act II.

<sup>62</sup>For some Italians, America's fixation on lucre was not confined to the Gold Rush era. Puccini's librettist Ferdinando Fontana visited New York in the late nineteenth century, and wrote: "'Business! Business!...' 'Dollars! Dollars' — These are the imaginary words that seem to echo in the ears of that hurried crowd, with an insistence, with a vigorous crescendo of sound that has no equal in any other part of the globe." [‘Affari! Affari!...Dollari! Dollari!’ — Ecco le parole che vi echeggiano idealmente nelle orecchie in quelle folla frettolosa, e con una insistenza, con un crescendo gagliardo di diapason che non ha pari in nessun altro punto del globo.] Ferdinando Fontana and Dario Papa. *New York* (Milan: Galli, 1884), 54.

<sup>63</sup>These same tritone-related pitches, E-flat and A, open Act III, although E-flat is



tritone-related chords, E-flat and A minors.<sup>63</sup> (See Exx. 1.3e-f) Girardi writes, “The *Tristan* melody provides—to the knowing spectator—a psychological parallel between the ineluctability of the love between Tristan and Isolde, and that of Minnie, who prepares herself for a terrific trial to save the life of the man she loves, and who, like Tristan, is now wounded...Both are unarmed, both struck down by rivals.”<sup>64</sup>

One can also note a similarity between Minnie’s theme and a varied version of the *Tristan* motive, both of which are used sequentially. [Exx. 10.15 a-b]

Ex. 10.15

a) Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, Act I prelude, m. 24



b) *La fanciulla*, I/42/0



Also like *Tristan*, the resolution to a musical “problem” —in *Fanciulla* posed by the opera’s whole-tone prelude—arrives only at the end of the third act (see Exx. 3.11 and 3.12).

But *Fanciulla*’s “lieto fine” is not a Wagnerian love-death. It is, rather, an affirmation of (civilized) life. Past sins and troubles with the law of the land—along with a threatening hexaphonism—have been washed away.

ultimately enharmonically renamed D-sharp. Puccini (imaginatively) harmonized these two pitch classes with F major (the Neapolitan) and B major (the dominant) of the ultimate tonic, E.

<sup>64</sup>Girardi, *Puccini*, 292. Girardi adds, on page 290, that it has a “funeral-march rhythm.”



## Chapter 11

### *La rondine's* Masquerades and Modernisms

Imagine an opera written for a Viennese theater, with waltzes, polkas and other dance tunes, four-square phrases and catchy melodies. It involves two sets of lovers (one of which is an older, more experienced woman who ultimately separates from a younger man). Moreover, no one dies and the older woman, who sings a song about the unfulfilled love of a woman long ago, has a maid who tries for a singing career and borrows her mistress's clothes to go out at night. A work by Johann Strauss, Franz Lehár, or Richard Strauss might spring to mind—but the work's true identity is, of course, Puccini's *La rondine* (*The Swallow*).

In October 1913, Puccini was at the Karlteater in Vienna to supervise the Austrian première of *Fanciulla*, when he was approached by Siegmund Eibenschütz and Emil Berté;<sup>1</sup> they wanted to commission an operetta from him and offered a substantial sum of money.<sup>2</sup> After he received the libretto, however, he immediately rejected it as being “the usual slovenly and banal operetta [...] with parties and occasions to dance, without character study, without originality and finally without interest (the most serious thing).”<sup>3</sup> He apparently found those missing

<sup>1</sup>In the Puccini literature one can still find Emil Berté (1855-1922) erroneously identified as Heinrich Berté, who was his younger brother and achieved some renown with *Das Dreimäderlhaus*, an operetta based on Schubert's works. It is probable that Puccini was introduced to these men by Franz Lehár. Otto Schneiderreit, *Franz Lehár: Eine Biographie in Zitaten* (Innsbruck: Pinguin-Verlag, 1984): 180.

<sup>2</sup>News of Puccini writing an operetta moved fast and, on 21 March 1914, *Musical America* reported that Puccini had written an operetta for Andreas Dippel [the former Metropolitan Opera manager], who had supposedly suggested the theme to the maestro and who would be presenting the first performance. In a report dated 4 July 1914, *The New York Times* printed a similar notice. Dippel had announced a season of combined operetta and light opera on Broadway and, in an earlier article in the *Times*, on 6 April 1914, it was reported that “‘show girls’ are to be put through a routine of dancing and fencing lessons to make them more graceful and distinguished in stage presence.” See Kaye, *The Unknown Puccini*, 175.

<sup>3</sup>[È la solita operetta sciatta e banale...col solito oriente e...occidente in contrasto: feste da ballo e occasioni di danza, senza studio di carattere, senza originalità e infine senza interesse (cosa più grave).] 14 December 1913. Gara. *Carteggi*, 417.

qualities in a second proffered libretto, written by Alfred Willner<sup>4</sup> and Heinz Reichert,<sup>5</sup> which was sent to him in March 1914, and then reworked by Giuseppe Adami.<sup>6</sup>

*La rondine* was destined to be an opera, not an operetta,<sup>7</sup> yet in many ways, it still retains hallmarks of opera's more convivial cousin, as we shall see below. So, how are we to understand this work? Is it a comment on, or parody of, the operetta tradition, some new synthetic genre? An attempt to demonstrate to rivals his compositional versatility?<sup>8</sup> A closer look at the score might reveal an answer.

<sup>4</sup>Alfred Willner was a highly successful writer of operetta librettos. Some of his works include: *Die schöne Saskia* (operetta with Reichert), for O. Nedbal, 1917; *Wo die Lerche singt* (operetta with Reichert) for Lehár, 1918; *Frasquita* (operetta with Reichert) for Lehár, 1922; *Ade, du liebes Elternhaus* [Die Lori] (Singspiel, with Reichert) for O. Jascha, 1928; *Rosen aus Florida* (operetta with Reichert), Korngold, after Fall, 1929; *Walzer aus Wien* (Singspiel, with Reichert and E. Marischka) for J. Bittner and Korngold, after J. Strauss and J. Strauss (the elder), 1930.

<sup>5</sup>Heinz Reichert (1877-1940) was an operetta librettist who collaborated with Grünbaum, Willner, and Lehár.

<sup>6</sup>Giuseppe Adami (1879-1946), lawyer, critic, playwright and journalist, collaborated with Puccini on *La rondine*, *Il trittico* and *Turandot*. He also penned the biography *Il Romanzo della vita di Giacomo Puccini* (Milano-Roma: 1932) and the *Epistolario di Giacomo Puccini* (Milan: Mondadori, 1928; reprint 1958). A third collaborator named Dario Niccodemi, whom Puccini also contacted about help with *Il tabarro*, secretly intervened for the versification. Girardi, *Puccini*, 336.

<sup>7</sup>*La rondine* did not have its première not in Vienna as planned but, because of the disruptions of World War I—in which Italy and Austria were on opposite sides—it first took the stage in the neutral Montecarlo, on 27 March 1917. This first version is what is normally produced today, although two other versions followed: these involved a rewriting of the last act, with mostly textual and dramatic modifications. The dates of these are: version 1) 1917, the current version; version 2) 1920, in German and Italian versions; version 3) 1921-22. For further detail on the revisions, see Alfredo Mandelli, "Tre 'Rondini'. Un enigma e un Esperimento. Ovvero i 'casi' de *La rondine* (con un 'caso' in più)," in (Bologna: Teatro Comunale, 1986-87), program book: 12-56, and Girardi, *Puccini*, 353ff.

<sup>8</sup>Puccini was quite aware of his competition. In a letter to Luigi Illica on 24 January 1913, he writes: "Strauss (as others did) found a first subject and drowned himself in others believing that the fame acquired with the first would be a beautiful and good absolution for the successive...sins. Debussy? *Pelléas* and silence. I could speak of many others, of our own, but for these at the moment there is no resurrection to exalt." [Strauss (fu come altri) trovò un primo soggetto e si affogò in altri credendo che la fama acquistata col primo fosse un'assoluzione bella e buone per i successivi... peccati. Debussy? *Pelléas* e silenzio. Potrei parlare di molto altri, dei nostri, ma per questi al momento non vi è resurrezione da esaltare.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 408. It is not clear to which opera Puccini refers as Strauss's "first": this letter was written after the emergence of *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911), which was a huge success for Strauss, but which was certainly not his first operatic work, and, by 1913, Strauss had only subsequently written *Ariadne auf Naxos*; so perhaps Puccini is alluding to *Salome*.

## *masquerades*

There is little doubt that *La rondine* owes much to *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911): we have explicit evidence that Strauss's work was on Puccini's mind during the period in which he composed the opera. As he wrote to Angelo Eisner,<sup>9</sup> on 14 December 1913, "I shall never compose operetta: comic opera, yes, like *Rosenkavalier*, but more entertaining and more organic."<sup>10</sup> This statement is usually interpreted to mean that Puccini wanted to compose a work that was more entertaining and organic than *operetta*, which does make sense: a through-composed opera would certainly be more "organic" than a work in which closed numbers alternate with spoken dialogue. However, it is equally possible that Puccini's statement refers specifically to *Der Rosenkavalier*, an opera about which he expressed a somewhat dubious opinion. Witness this letter to Antonio Bettolacci (undated, but probably written on 2 March 1911, just after the disastrous Italian première of the Strauss work at La Scala in Milan<sup>11</sup>): "Dear Tonino, With a deeply moved spirit I share with you the death of *Rosenkavalier* last night at La Scala [...] Only one page is beautiful—the presentation of the rose."<sup>12</sup> As we shall see below, Puccini took this "page" to heart: the polytonality that Strauss employs in the presentation scene (and in its thematic recalls) will find resonances in *La rondine*.

<sup>9</sup>Angelo Eisner Eisenhof, patron of Italian opera and Puccini's friend, who helped negotiate the contract for *La rondine* with the Austrians. Ashbrook, *The Operas of Puccini*, 156. See also Eduardo Rescigno, "La rondine nelle lettere a Angelo Eisner" in *La rondine* (Venice: Teatro La Fenice, 1983), program book.

<sup>10</sup>[Io, operetta non la farò mai: opera comica sì: vedi *Rosenkavalier*, ma più divertente e più organica.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 417.

<sup>11</sup>Some sources indicate that the Milanese audience reacted negatively to the Italian names given in *Rosenkavalier* to the pair of intriguers, Valzacchi e Annina; others believe that the anachronistic use of waltzes was even more shocking. See, for example, Alfredo Mandelli, "Puccini e il 'caso Rondine'" in (Milan: Teatro alla Scala, 1968-70), program book, 73.

<sup>12</sup>[Caro Tonino, con animo commosso ti partecipo la morte del *Cavaliere delle rose* iersera alla scala [...] Una pagina sola è bella—la presentazione della rosa.] The Paul C. Richards Manuscript Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University. Antonio Bettolacci, was the household administrator for the nearby Ginori-Lisci family (*La bohème* was dedicated to the Marchese Ginori), as well as Puccini's hunting companion and good friend. See *Quaderni Pucciniani*, (1996): 227.

*Der Rosenkavalier*, coming after the stridently dissonant *Salome* and *Elektra* in Strauss's corpus of works, is usually (but not always<sup>13</sup>) seen as an about-face, a rejection of Modernism. Puccini voiced a similar sentiment about his own opera in a letter to Sybil Seligman in September 1914: “[*La rondine* is] a sort of reaction against the repulsive music of today.”<sup>14</sup> A third-hand report of Puccini's attitude seems to second this: it comes from Adami who relates to the composer how publisher Tito Ricordi thought this new, seemingly reactionary work should be presented to the public:<sup>15</sup> “Eliminate as much as possible the idea that it is a lyric opera, but a care-free musical comedy with a quasi-display of simplicity and with a spirit of reaction against modernism and ultra-modernism [...] This was always also your idea.”<sup>16</sup>

A “quasi-display of simplicity”? If this was truly Puccini's conception, as Adami suggests, then the score of *La rondine* perhaps should be seen to reflect a critical disjunct between its lighter dramatic content and the musical language in which the tale is told. Like Strauss anachronistically heaping polytonality, atonality and late-Romantic chromaticism upon his Mozartian story,<sup>17</sup> so does Puccini present events

<sup>13</sup>For example, Leon Botstein writes: “Within this paradigm [Modernism rendering Romanticism obsolete] Strauss's work after *Elektra* represents a backward turn. [...] There is, however, a more convincing revisionist argument. *Der Rosenkavalier* was, as Strauss and Hofmannsthal consistently argued, a breakthrough. It was a model and the beginning of an innovative period, one filled with evident linkages to Strauss's second period. There is a profound continuity between *Elektra* and *Der Rosenkavalier*. The use of extended tonal blocks and contrasts to delineate character and action, the line of experimentation regarding the setting of dialogue, the use of the orchestra with voice, the vocal ensemble writing, the structure of beginnings and endings, not to speak of specific thematic resemblances, can be identified.” Leon Botstein, “The Enigmas of Richard Strauss: A Revisionist View” in Bryan Gilliam, ed. *Richard Strauss and his World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992): 12.

<sup>14</sup>Seligman, *Puccini Among Friends*, 257-8.

<sup>15</sup>Ultimately Ricordi did not publish *La rondine*, which went instead to another firm, the rival Sonzogno—the only Puccini opera to do so.

<sup>16</sup>[Togliere cioè quanto è possibile l'idea che si tratti di un'opera lirica, ma d'una commedia musicale scritta senza preoccupazioni con una ostentazione, quasi, di semplicità e con uno spirito di reazione al modernismo e all'ultra modernismo. [...] È sempre stata anche l'idea vostra.] Quoted in Alfredo Mandelli, “Tre ‘Rondini,’” 25-26.

<sup>17</sup>The characters of *Der Rosenkavalier* are often compared with those of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*: The Marschallin and the Countess, Octavian and Cherubino, Baron Ochs and the Count, etc. Indeed, Strauss himself stated that Mozart's spirit was around him when he worked on this opera. Perhaps less obvious are comparisons with *Don Giovanni*, in which there also are exchanged clothes, a lustful older man, and humorous “commentary” from the composer (this would include, for example, the knowing winks to the audience about music borrowed from other operas including Mozart's own “Non più andrai” from *Figaro*, which Leporello disparages).

from the French Second Empire era through the musical camouflage of early twentieth-century popular syncopated dance tunes, polytonal gestures, tone clusters and more. But, as we shall see, many of the Modernist musical gestures are layered atop or inserted into traditional frameworks; that is, they are *direct* and *indirect confections*.<sup>18</sup>

The two plots both revolve around female protagonists who share some characteristics: Strauss's Marschallin and Puccini's Magda are older women nostalgic for youthful amorous adventures, and they ultimately end their relationships. However, the narrative paths that these two women trace are essentially different. Magda actually does get another chance at love and succeeds in finding a way to repeat the past. And when she goes in search of adventure, she pretends to be a simple grisette<sup>19</sup> named Paulette. But the disguise ultimately falls away: when Ruggero proposes marriage, a home with his family and even children, Magda owns up to her un-simple, un-innocent past, and breaks it off.<sup>20</sup>

The similarities of the two operas lie rather more in their compositional strategies, in which shifting musical styles reflect narrative voices independent from, or at least non-congruent with, the dramatic material. In regard to Strauss's technique, Julius Korngold writes, "The Marschallin and her Cherub are suddenly breakfasting in Mozartian style; Frau Maria Theresa suddenly becomes pensive in

<sup>18</sup>See Chapter 2.

<sup>19</sup>A French working-class girl, especially a pretty or flirtatious one. Grisettes also appear in Lehár's *The Merry Widow*, which is also set in Paris.

<sup>20</sup>In the third version of *La rondine*, it is Ruggero who ends the relationship. Nevertheless, several writers have noted the similarities in plot with Verdi's *La traviata*, in which the heroine Violetta, a courtesan, sacrifices her love for the sake of her lover's family's moral values. Paduano writes: "The repression in *La rondine* is more complete because it brings to extreme consequences the paradox that constitutes the true and qualifying contact with *La Traviata*: it is the person excluded from social norms who, more than any other, respects and exalts those norms, remaining trapped in the vicious circle, so that to confirm her own marginization is the only way to conquer it." [il messaggio comune alla *Rondine* e alla *Traviata* – il conflitto tra l'eros e la morale borghese – è espresso dall'opera pucciniana con radicalità maggiore...lperchè porta a conseguenze estreme il paradosso che costituisce il vero e qualificante contatto con *La Traviata*: quello per cui è la persona esclusa dalle norme sociali quella che più di ogni altra rispetta ed esalta le norme stesse, restando intrappolata nel circolo vizioso per cui ribadire la propria emarginazione è il solo modo di superarla] Guido Paduano, "Doretta e le altre" in *La rondine* (Milan: Teatro alla Scala, 1994), program book, 78. Puccini does seem to show a concern for societal propriety that his previous works, such as *La bohème*, ignored and even flouted. A letter to Sybil Seligman 23 December 1911 reads: "I want to express moral sufferings without blood or strong drama." Seligman, *Puccini Among Friends*, 212.

the style of Lortzing; Octavian and Sophie finally fall into each other's arms in the naive, folk song-like style à la "Sah' ein Knab' ein Röslein steh'n." And a flood of waltzes announces the pact that has been concluded with the operetta."<sup>21</sup>

Puccini's styles are just as slippery, passing quickly from waltz to tango to dissonant clusters to *Tristan*-esque harmonies—examples of Davis's *stylistic plurality* and our *indirect conflation* at the scene level. *Direct conflations* (and *indossà*) play parts here as well.<sup>22</sup> The scores of both *Rosenkavalier* and *rondine* are compounds of tonal and non-tonal elements, and diatonic constructions appear, but are sometimes utilized in such non-traditional manners that any sense of standard tonal functioning is weakened, if not completely submerged. In both operas, the diatonic chords are juxtaposed and layered in polytonal gestures, but in such a way as to give the impression of "wrong notes"—near misses of diatonicism that are almost ironic Modernist weapons.<sup>23</sup>

An example of this is the "Rose" theme from *Rosenkavalier*: at II/25, after establishing F-sharp major, Strauss places major chords on G and F, the roots of each a half-step away from the F-sharp "tonic." In essence, Strauss here is utilizing neighbor *chords*, borrowed from nearby (i.e., "wrong") tonalities, rather than more standard single neighbor *notes*. He then subverts the G major into G minor and jumps to E-flat major as well. [Ex. 11.0a, opposite] At the opening of Act II of *Rondine*, Puccini also opts for major neighbor chords (this time, at the distance of a whole-step): in the key of C minor we hear D major (preceded by its dominant A major), and B-flat major [Ex. 11.0b], a pattern that becomes the basis for variations at the start of this act. The overarching harmonic motion, however, is from tonic to dominant, C minor to G major, an example of *direct conflation*.

<sup>21</sup>Julius Korngold, "Der Rosenkavalier: Comedy for Music by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Music by Richard Strauss," *Neue Freie Presse* (9 April 1911), Vienna. Reprinted in English translation in Gilliam, *Richard Strauss and his World*, 355. The earliest use of the waltz in opera is generally credited to *Una cosa rara* by Martín y Soler (1786). However, there have been many operatic waltzes since. Of course Puccini's most famous waltz is not danced at all—Musetta's waltz from *La bohème*, which plays up the seductive reputation of the genre. Another steamy, if out-of-tune, waltz will appear in *Il tabarro*. See Cori Ellison, "Do I hear a waltz?" Metropolitan Opera International, online at: <http://www.operainfo.org>, accessed 7 August 2011.

<sup>22</sup>See Chapter 2.

<sup>23</sup>In Strauss's *Salome*, a somewhat related ironic use of diatonicism occurs: as Salome lovingly admires John the Baptist's decapitated head (arguably the most horrific moment in opera), the score shows a perfect authentic cadence to a bright C-sharp major at "du warst schön" (rehearsal number 332/6).



## Ex. 11.0

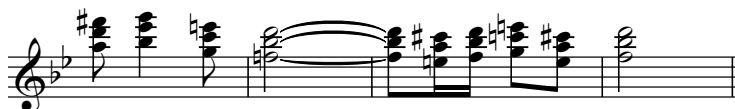
- a) Richard Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, “presentation scene,” with neighbor chords



- b) *La rondine*, opening of Act II, with neighbor chords



A related procedure with parallelism occurs at I/6/9, where Puccini writes a sequence of the following parallel, root-position major chords: B-flat, E, E-flat, C-sharp, D, E-flat. And there are other sorts of “wrong” polytonal moments in *La rondine* as well: at II/1/7, an interjection of B major follows a phrase in B-flat. And at III/19/4, we hear diatonically related E-flat and B-flat-major chords glossed with neighbor harmonies of D, C and A majors. [Ex. 11.1]

Ex. 11.1: Polytonality in *La rondine*, III/19/4

What has been described elsewhere as a bitonal overlay at the minor second<sup>24</sup> is the entrance of the maid Lisette<sup>25</sup> at I/18/0. A closer reading will show, however, that the ostinato pattern of the lower voice in F major becomes superimposed with its own pattern

<sup>24</sup>See, for example, Mandelli, “Puccini e il ‘caso Rondine’”: 79-80, or Girardi who, taking a slightly different tack, writes that the passage of *martellate* minor seconds “does not aim at bitonality, but at livening up the atmosphere, preparing for the second, intense lyric section.” Girardi, *Puccini*, 343.

<sup>25</sup>Lisette and Prunier, along with Magda and Ruggero, make up the two sets of lovers that are usual staples of the operetta stage, but who also can be found in Mozart operas, as Girardi has pointed out: “a double pair of lovers, one upper class, one lower class, like *Die Entführung*, *Nozze*, *Così*, *Zauberflöte*.” Girardi, *Puccini*, 340.

displaced in a continually rising pattern F-sharp major-G major-A-flat major-A major-B major, an *indosso*. [Ex. 11.2] At that point, the distance of a tritone between the parts is reached (F-B) and the whole complex moves upward together, so that we then hear the following simultaneous tritone-related pairs of major keys: F-sharp+C, G+D-flat, and A-flat+D, leading ultimately to E-flat major.

Ex. 11.2: *La rondine*, entrance of Lisette, I/18/0



Alongside these dissonant moments in *Rondine* is also the cognitively jarring use of dance music from another time and place, such as the fox-trots<sup>26</sup> and tango. Puccini also anachronistically employs closed forms and almost classical recitatives: an old-fashioned recitative is heard at III/32/0 and “Bevo al tuo fresco sorriso,” not far from a traditional drinking song, ends with a clear cadence just before II/38/0.

One means of framing the anachronistic use of music in this work is through the concept of “music squared,” from the Italian “musica al quadrato” (that is, “music x music” or “musica per se stessa”—a pun indicating “music for its own sake.”) The term denotes the sincretical use of pre-existing material in a way that marks it for special attention, such as the tenor’s aria in *Der Rosenkavalier*. *La rondine*’s anachronistic dances and older musical styles follow suit and, by opting to use them, Puccini affirms a twentieth-century sensibility that would not be alien to a Stravinsky or a Weill.

This temporal incongruity is also in dialogue with the work’s pervasive theme of remembering and reliving past events. *La rondine* begins at sunset, a time of day redolent of endings and beginnings. Soon Magda completes Prunier’s song “Ch’il bel sogno di Doretta,” which engages with the theme of time and memory in many ways:<sup>27</sup> Magda sings of Doretta, whose capacity to love is re-ignited, as her

<sup>26</sup>Puccini probably would not have been happy with (and indeed might have sued) Paul Whiteman for his 1921 arrangement of music from *Madama Butterfly* as a fox-trot, entitled “Cho-Cho-San.” It can be heard online at: <http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/7907>.

<sup>27</sup>Greenwald writes, this aria “enjoys the unique status of being narrative, autobiographical by projection, and a song.” Greenwald, “Dramatic Exposition,” 133.

own shall be.<sup>28</sup> Because Magda sings this at the start of the opera, she is also predicting her own future.<sup>29</sup> But finally, like the swallow of the title, she returns to her nest, forsaking this new/old love. Given the textual intertwining here of past, present and future (which is also Magda's past), the musical anachronisms could be read as more apt than ironic.

As Mandelli writes, "those twentieth-century dance materials inserted in the opera give it a curious, vaguely winking sense."<sup>30</sup> This suggests not only narratological commentary, but also a comedic distance that shows up in many other guises throughout the work.<sup>31</sup> The most obvious musical jokes are the citations from Strauss's *Salome* at I/35/10, immediately following Prunier's<sup>32</sup> description of his ideal women: Galatea, Berenice, and Salome (repeated at II/34/8 the second reference to the Prinzessin), and the "Marseillaise" at I/43, when Paris is mentioned. But also quite humorous are Puccini's mimetic instrumental renderings of Lisette's memories of the whistles (that is, boos) and derisive laughter that greeted her debut as a performer, at III/21/8 (repeated at II/23/9) and III/26, respectively.<sup>33</sup>

The comic mask is only one of the musical habiliments *La rondine* shares with operetta. Comic operetta had been very much *alla moda* in Italy in the 1880's, thirty years earlier. And the prominent inclusion of dances—the *sine qua non* of Viennese operetta,<sup>34</sup> derived in part from the French grand opera tradition (*opera ballo* in Italian)—was much in evidence in the Italian lyric works of that era.<sup>35</sup> (Puccini's first opera,

<sup>28</sup>This piece is notated in  $\frac{3}{4}$ , like the many waltzes in the opera. However, the sounded meter is  $\frac{2}{4}$  if one counts the pickup as downbeat—a type of hemiola. When the theme is recalled at I/55/11, the rhythmic values are altered to match the notated  $\frac{3}{4}$  meter.

<sup>29</sup>A similar point is made in Paduano, "Doretta e le altre," 85.

<sup>30</sup>[Quei materiali ballabili novecenteschi che, inseriti in un'opera, le danno un curioso senso vagamente ammiccante.] Alfredo Mandelli, "Il 'caso-Rondine'" in (Treviso: Teatro Comunale, 1974), program book, 30.

<sup>31</sup>In a letter to Sybil Seligman of 19 November 1911, when he was still searching for a subject, Puccini wrote: "I have a desire to laugh and to make other people laugh," and so he does in this opera. Seligman, *Puccini among friends*, 212.

<sup>32</sup>Girardi contends that Prunier is a satirical version of Gabriele D'Annunzio, the Italian Decadent poet with whom the composer tried to collaborate several times. Girardi, *Puccini*, 342.

<sup>33</sup>Although there is humor in his previous operas, a full-fledged comedy will not appear until *Gianni Schicchi* in 1918.

<sup>34</sup>Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, for example, has waltzes, polkas and marches; Lehár's *The Merry Widow* has marches, a mazurka, a polonaise as well as many waltzes.

<sup>35</sup>See Salvetti, "Edgar di Puccini," 73: "In 1881 at La Scala the ballet *Excelsior* had garnered a noisy success [...] That success lasted the entire decade and quickly (cont.)

*Le villi*, was subtitled an *opera ballo*.<sup>36</sup>) Yet, although his contemporaries wrote operettas as well, especially Leoncavallo,<sup>37</sup> Puccini claimed he never did. In a letter to Eisner of 25 March 1914, he exclaimed: “Let the enemies talk. Even here they say that I lowered myself to do operettas like Leoncavallo!! This never, and again never.”<sup>38</sup>

In operettas, as in *La rondine*, catchy tunes and dances take center stage. This does not sound at all like “standard” Puccini: up to this point, the composer had mostly been known for his musically fragmented scores that intimately reflect each nuance of the drama. In fact, one of Torre Franca’s complaints was that taking away the words from Puccinian scores would render the notes meaningless.<sup>39</sup> In *La rondine*, however, Puccini seems to write music that can almost stand alone, upon which a text floats semi-detached. This impression is made even stronger when one notes that, in the revisions of *La rondine*, completely different words have been set to the original, identical music. An extreme instance of this is a change in Act III from the first to second versions that keeps the same musical setting for “M’hai rovinata” [You ruined me] as “Innamorata!” [My love!].<sup>40</sup>

But the invariance of this *musique accompli* in the presence of altered text is not necessarily another example of compositional recycling, as some have suggested.<sup>41</sup> It is part and parcel, as Puccini

lent support to the fashion for Viennese operetta in Italy.” [Nel 1881, alla Scala, uno strepitoso successo avesse accolto il ballo *Excelsior* – [...] Quel successo attraversò tutto il decennio e si affiancò ben presto alla moda dell’operetta viennese in Italia.]

<sup>36</sup>Dance is a component of almost all Puccini’s operas. See Greenwald, “Dramatic Exposition,” 76-80. She also writes, “the dance is an emblem of the operetta genre in *La rondine*” Ibid., 32.

<sup>37</sup>Leoncavallo composed the following operettas: *La reginetta delle rose* (1912), *La candidata* (1915), *Prestami tua moglie* (1916), *A chi la giarrettiera?* (1919), *Il primo bacio* (1923, posth.), and *La maschera nuda* (1925, posth.). Mascagni wrote *Il re a Napoli* (1885), and *Si* (1919). Grove Music Online, accessed 6 August 2011, s.v. “Leoncavallo” and “Mascagni.”

<sup>38</sup>[Anche qui si dice che mi sono abbassato a far l’operetta come Leoncavallo!!! Questo mai e poi mai.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 422. In regard to this quote, D’Amico poses question of whether Puccini means he would never write operettas, or never write operettas like Leoncavallo. Fedele D’Amico, “Un’opera sopra un’operetta” in *La Rondine* (Venice: Teatro la Fenice, 1972-73), program book: 268.

<sup>39</sup>Discussed in Budden, *Puccini*, 337.

<sup>40</sup>Budden finds this especially problematic: “the new text [does not] always sit easily on the old music.” Ibid., 367.

<sup>41</sup>See Budden on this subject, who compares this to Puccini’s re-use of his “Agnus Dei for the Madrigale in *Manon Lescaut*, the romanza “Malinconia” that supplies part of the love duet in *Le villi*, and the lullaby “Sogno d’or” which became “Bevo al tuo fresco sorriso” in *La rondine*. Julian Budden, “Traversie di un’opera sentimentale” in *La rondine* (Milan: Teatro alla Scala, 1994), program book: 55-6.

may have noted, of the operetta tradition. One example from Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*<sup>42</sup> occurs at the beginning of Act III, where the second theme of the famous waltz supports both the text "Ha, what a party, what a joyful night!" [Ha, welch ein Fest, welche Nacht voll Freud!] and "I don't believe in this pimple! No, he won't be stopped by the pimple!" [An das Wimmerl glaub' ich nicht! Nein, das Wimmerl schreckt ihn nicht!] [Ex. 11.3]

Ex. 11.3: Johann Strauss, *Die Fledermaus*, Act III

The image shows a musical score for a piano accompaniment. It is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The melody begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a quarter note B4. The lyrics "Ha, welch ein Fest..." are written below the first three notes. The melody continues with a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note A4. The lyrics "An das Wimmerl glaub' ich nicht!..." are written below the next three notes. The score includes various chords and rests, ending with a double bar line.

Here, the *Fledermaus* characters are singing along with the onstage waltz, so perhaps the re-use of the melody might be understood as a quasi-diegetic gesture.

The interplay of diegetic and non-diegetic is an integral (and clever) aspect of the operetta genre. At the beginning of the same work, Rosalinda (like Puccini's Magda and the Marschallin, an older woman looking for love) complains about her beau Alfred: "Oh, if he only would stop singing! [Oh wenn er nur nicht singen wollte!]. But it occurs often in opera as well. In *Rosenkavalier*'s Act III, for example, to the Leitmotiv known as "Luck of the Lerchenaus," Octavian and Baron Ochs comment, "What lovely music! It's my favorite song, you know?" [Die schöne Musik! Is mei Leiblied, weiss Sie das?] *La rondine* has no such explicit comments,<sup>43</sup> but Puccini does engage with the diegetic/nondiegetic issue by putting a piano onstage for Prunier to play in Act I, and including an onstage waltz in Act II (at II/14/0). (The setting for it is the Bal Bullier, a real dance hall that was also known as the "Bal des Étudiants.")<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Budden has commented that Puccini's Act II "Bevo al tuo fresco sorriso, as a concertato, unhurried drinking song, owes much to "Bruderlein und Schwesterlein" from *Fledermaus*. Budden, *Puccini*, 344-5. Both pieces are also developed canonically.

<sup>43</sup>Puccini does do this, however, in *Il tabarro*, a score he was writing simultaneously. At 25/9, the orchestra plays the opening motive of "Mi chiamano Mimi" from *La bohème*, while the minstrel describes "the story of Mimi."

<sup>44</sup>A 1901 description of the Bal Bullier reads as follows: "You pass along with the line of waiting poets and artists, buy a green ticket for two francs at the little cubby-hole of a box-office, are divested of your stick by one of half a dozen white-capped matrons at the vestiaire, hand your ticket to an elderly gentleman in a silk hat and funeral clothes, at the top of the stairway sentineled by a guard of two (cont.)

Most of the dance tunes that permeate the score of *La rondine* are nondiegetic, however, which is not to say that they are unrelated to characterization or narrative elements. In addition to the many waltzes,<sup>45</sup> Prunier's theme is a tango, first heard at I/3/0 (with a touch of the blues, seven bars later), a polka appears at I/47/0 when dance halls are mentioned,<sup>46</sup> a one-step pops up at the mention of Ruggero's home town of Montauban (II/10/0), and so on.<sup>47</sup> [Exx. 11.4a-c]

Ex. 11.4: Dance rhythms in *La rondine*

a) Tango, I/3/0



b) Polka, I/47/0



c) One-step, II/10/0




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soldiers, and the next instant you see the ball in full swing below you. [...] There is nothing disappointing about the 'Bal Bullier.' It is all you expected it to be, and more, too. Below you is a veritable whirlpool of girls and students—a vast sea of heads, and a dazzling display of colors and lights and animation. Little shrieks and screams fill your ears, as the orchestra crashes into the last page of a galop, quickening the pace until Yvonne's little feet slip and her cheeks glow, and her eyes grow bright, and half her pretty golden hair gets smashed over her impudent little nose. Then the galop is brought up with a quick finish." F. Berkeley Smith, *The Real Latin Quarter* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901), 58-60.

<sup>45</sup>The majority of the waltzes are French-style, with a strong accent on the first beat, as opposed to Viennese with a *Luftpause* on the second beat. In sketches for *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini considered using a Boston waltz, with accents on all three beats; see "Gli abbozzi dell'Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna" in Groos, ed. *Madama Butterfly: fonti e documenti*, 163.

<sup>46</sup>Polkas were very much part of the Viennese operetta and ballroom traditions. They were composed by the Strausses, Josef Gungl, Hans Christian Lumbye and Emile Waldteufel, among others. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>, s.v. "polka," accessed 16 June 2011.

<sup>47</sup>See also Alfredo Mandelli, "Fox, tango, ragtime e due finali per capire *La rondine*" in *La rondine* (Milan: Teatro alla Scala, 1994), program book: 68-75.

One operetta composer who had enormous influence on Puccini, however, was neither of the Strausses, but Franz Lehár, a close friend after their meeting in Vienna in 1913. Puccini kept an autographed photo of Lehár on his piano, and the Austro-Hungarian composer was in attendance at the posthumous première of *Turandot* in 1925 at La Scala. There is documented evidence that Puccini saw Lehár's *Die ideale Gattin* (1913), *Endlich allein* (1914), and *Wo die Lerch singt* (1918), and he most certainly had heard *Die lustige Witwe* (1905), the only stage work of the period to be more popular than his own operas.<sup>48</sup>

The two men shared more than a casual friendship. Lehár's brother Anton tells of a dinner in Autumn 1920 at Franz's home where they traded musical ideas as well:

Franz invited my wife and I to a simple dinner party. The only guest was Puccini. Franz spoke pretty good Italian, Puccini only a little German. Soon the two maestros were discussing things almost exclusively by means of citations of their works, which they indicated by lightly singing and then explaining. Then they both sat at the piano. Close together, Puccini played the right hand, Franz the left, switching back and forth, or accompanying wonderful harmonies, Puccini-isms and Lehárisms, each trying to outdo the other in chord effects and improvisation. An unforgettable evening.<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps it was at this dinner that one or both composers came across the bitonal "slide"<sup>50</sup> complex of D minor and C-sharp major that appears, with similar voicing, in their works set in China: Lehár's *Die gelbe Jacke* (1923)<sup>51</sup> and in Puccini's *Turandot* (1925, posth.). Puccini uses this sonority in a much more thematic manner than Lehár, who employed it only as a transition. [Exx. 11.5a-b, next page]

<sup>48</sup>William Ashbrook, "La rondine" in *The Puccini Companion*, ed. William Weaver and Simonetta Puccini (New York: Norton, 1994): 247. Ashbrook also reports that Lehár was the only composer Puccini envied, as per a conversation with Maria Bianca Gaddi-Pepoli.

<sup>49</sup>[Franz bat meine Frau und mich aueinem einfachen Abendessen. Der einzige Gast war Puccini. Franz sprach ziemlich gut italienisch, Puccini nur wenig deutsch. Schon während des Essens unterhielten sich die beiden Meister fast ausschliesslich vermittels Zitaten aus ihren Werken, die sie leise singend andeuteten und erläuterten. Dann setzten sich beide an den Flügel. Eng umschlungen spielten Puccini mit der rechten, Franz mit der linken Hand abwechselnd oder sich gegenseitig begleitend die wunderbarsten Harmonien, Puccinismen und Lehárismen, sich in Klangwirkung und originellen Wendungen überbietend. Ein unvergesslicher Abend.] Otto Schneiderreit, *Franz Lehár: Eine Biographie in Zitaten* (Innsbruck: Pinguin-Verlag, 1984), 180-181.

<sup>50</sup>A "slide" is a term in transformational theory in which two chords whose roots are a half-step apart share a common tone.

<sup>51</sup>This operetta, revised as *Das Land des Lächelns* (1929), retains this feature.

## Ex. 11.5: Bitonal “slides” of D minor+C-sharp major

a) Lehár, *Die gelbe Jacke*

b) *Turandot*, I/1/5

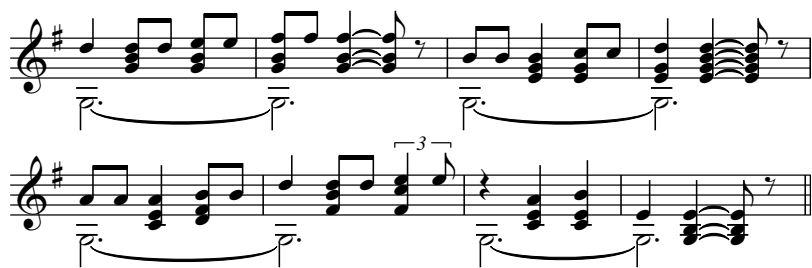
A quick glance at *Die lustige Witwe* reveals that Lehár’s musical vocabulary, even in 1905, was not as far from Puccini’s as one might think. For instance, he uses parallel augmented triads in the overture at rehearsal 5/2 (as well as its reprise in n. 12), and dissonant pedal points at the start of the overture (C under B-flat major) and the Act II finale, n. 17 (D under C major and A major). N. 15 even ends on an E-major seventh chord. It is also conceivable that Puccini had in mind the aria “Vilja” from *Die lustige Witwe*, when composing Magda’s “Rondine” theme. Both melodies are in G major, and rise to an F-sharp leading tone, which does not reach the tonic, but ultimately falls back down to E. [Exx. 11.6a-b]

## Ex. 11.6

a) Lehár, *Die lustige Witwe*, “Vilja”



## b) "Rondine" theme, I/41/0



The admiration Puccini had for Germanic friends (and their music<sup>52</sup>) led to his wearing of a different sort of mask. The outbreak of World War I, in which Italy and Austria were on opposite sides, forced the composer to openly defend his *italianità*.<sup>53</sup> As Puccini wrote to Tito Ricordi in November 1914: “although I may be a Germanophile, I have never wanted to be seen publicly for either side.”<sup>54</sup> In some unpublished notes for an interview, however, written around this time, Puccini attempts to define his open-border attitude toward foreign musical influences while simultaneously affirming his Italian roots:

I always believed that the music of *La rondine* (like that of my other operas) was an affirmation of Italianness abroad [...] Let us then treasure all the harmonic and technical progress that comes to us from over the mountains and seas, but let us conserve the clarity, the spontaneity and the simplicity that characterize our music.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup>As we have noted previously, Puccini’s admiration for Germanic composers began early on and lasted for his entire career. So it is tempting to hear a thematic reference to Wagner’s *Meistersinger* quintet “Selig, wie die Sonne” in Act III, scene 4, at I/19/0 of *La rondine*. There is also a *Tristan*-esque passage at II/40/24, in which the “Sehnsucht” motive rises chromatically in sequence, as Magda professes her love.

<sup>53</sup>Puccini published a letter in *Corriere della Sera*, 10 April 1917, responding to attacks on him by Leon Daudet in the French newspaper *Action Française*, writing, in part, “My life and my art are the most valid witnesses to the world of my Italianness.” [La mia vita e la mia arte sono i più validi testimoni davanti a tutto il mondo della mia italianità.] In order to meet with his Austrian contacts, Puccini had to travel to neutral Switzerland.

<sup>54</sup>Previously cited in Chapter 1. [Benché io sia un germanofilo non ho voluto mai mostrarmi pubblicamente] Torre del Lago, November 1914, in Claudio Sartori, *Giacomo Puccini* (Milan: Edizioni Accademia, 1978), 306. Puccini was a Germanophile in a more literal sense as well: he was having a long-term affair with the German Baroness Josephine von Stengel.

<sup>55</sup>[La musica della *Rondine* (come quella delle altre mie opere), ho sempre creduto che fosse un’affermazione di Italianità all’estero. [...] Facciamo pur tesoro di tutti i progressi armonici e tecnici che ci arrivano d’oltre monte e d’oltre mare ma conserviamo la chiarezza la spontaneità e la semplicità che caratterizzano la (cont.)

This comment applies to more than *La rondine*, and if it can be believed, sheds some light on Puccini's technical procedures. As noted previously, we believe that it is Puccini's simple, clear (and often diatonic) structural frameworks, disguised with layerings of "foreign" progressive sonorities, that can be seen to constitute the *direct conflation*s characterizing much of his style.

### *simulacra*

In *La rondine*, Modernist flourishes exist side-by-side, usually as *indirect conflation*s, with singable and danceable tunes. A case in point is Puccini's abundant use of parallelism. Here, the composer is not out of synch with Lehár and others. But while *Die lustige Witwe* contains a few parallel augmented chords, *La rondine* has a plethora of numerous sorts of parallelisms. In addition to the many parallel consonances (octaves, fifths and triads<sup>56</sup>), Puccini offers a profusion of lines that trace each other's paths at dissonant intervals like the distorted images in a fun-house mirror.

Parallel seventh chords appear at I/19/14, I/25/18, I/45/33, I/47/9, III/1/3 (with a ninth and a French sixth in the mix), III/3/18, and III/16/6. Several of these are shown in Exx. 11.7a-d, opposite, some of which are in inversion.

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nostra musica.] Frederick R. Koch Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Apparently this message was coming through later music as well, since Alberto Gasco wrote, in *La tribuna*, 13 January 1919, of the Italian première of *Il trittico*: "In terms of harmonic technique, *Il tabarro* and *Schicchi* advance quite startling elements of novelty. Nothing that contemporary art has produced escapes the studious and astute Giacomo Puccini. From Debussy to Stravinsky, every successful composer has been the fertile subject of his investigation. But (a miracle even more surprising than that of *Suor Angelica!*), our composer has lost none of his own personality through his assiduous contact with dangerous foreign composers, the feared sirens of France and Russia; he has seized their secrets and used them to construct new and solid structures of a markedly national style." Quoted in Girardi, *Puccini*, 369-70.

<sup>56</sup>These can be found at I/0/0, I/1/0 (the "Love" Leitmotiv, which returns in some places without common tones between the chords, such as at I/22/0, I/5/35, I/14/11, I/38/0, I/44/20, I/47/19, III/0/0, III/27/2-3 (over a pedal point), and III/40/3.

Ex. 11.7: *La rondine*, parallel seventh chords

a) I/19/14



b) I/25/18



c) I/45/33



d) III/1/3



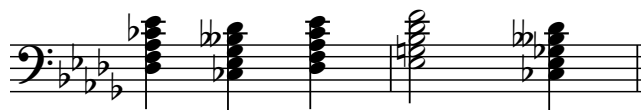
Puccini voices some parallel seventh chords in 4/3 inversion, such as at I/46/17 [Ex. 11.8], and at III/24/25 where it prolongs G dominant 7 going to C major. And parallel sevenths can also occur in 4/2 position, as at III/14/20, or without thirds, as at III/18/0.

Ex. 11.8: *La rondine*, parallel seventh chords in 4/3 inversion, I/46/17



Other parallel constructions include ninth chords, such as at II/18/21, and at III/14/15. [Ex. 11.9, next page]

Ex. 11.9: *La rondine*, parallel ninth chords, II/18/21, revoiced



Puccini even includes parallel tritones accompanying a rising whole-tone scale, at III/31/33 [Ex. 11.10]

Ex. 11.10: *La rondine*, parallel tritones, II/31/33



It is also in *La rondine* that Puccini, for the first time, writes tone clusters as accompaniment to a melody at III/24/8, and over a sometimes-dissonant pedal point at III/26/0. [Exx. 11.12a-b]

Ex. 11.11: *La rondine*, tone clusters

a) III/24/8



b) III/26/0



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“Ist eine wienerische Maskerad und weiter nichts.”

Marschallin, *Der Rosenkavalier*

How then should we understand *La rondine*? We might take a cue from D'Amico, who writes: "*La rondine* is not an operetta but an opera. [...] But this does not exclude 'operettism,' [...] If some manners are taken from it, it is like a masquerade."<sup>57</sup> In other words, Puccini's work is an opera *disguised* as an operetta. Thus it maintains a critical Modernist distance—both textually and musically.



## Chapter 12

# Amore, dolore e buonumore: dramatic and musical coherence in *Il trittico*

“Love and suffering were born with the world.”

Puccini, letter to Luigi Illica, 8 Oct 1912<sup>1</sup>

Puccini's operatic triptych, *Il trittico*, is comprised of the three one-act operas: *Il tabarro*, a story of illicit love; *Suor Angelica*, a tale of a nun's suffering at the loss of her illegitimate child; and *Gianni Schicchi*, a dark comedy in which both love and loss are given a morbidly humorous twist. The *Trittico*<sup>2</sup> was always intended by the composer to be performed in a single evening, and it will be treated as a tripartite entity in this chapter. The first two editions, from 1918 and 1919, group all three works together, which was at Puccini's insistence. In an unpublished letter to Carlo Clausetti, dated 3 July 1918, the composer reveals how he clashed with publisher Tito Ricordi over this issue:

There remained the question of the editions—that is, [Tito Ricordi] spoke of them immediately and pacified me by saying that they will publish the works together and separately. But I think that he was not truthful because the *separated ones* will never see the light of day. And what will happen with the enumeration? There will certainly not be two types of *clichets* [printing plates], one with numbers progressing through the three operas, and the other with numbers for each score, starting from number *one*. So, he deceived me.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[L'amore e il dolore sono nati col mondo] Gara, *Carteggi*, 404-5.

<sup>2</sup>Marotti claims credit for the title “Trittico,” which was never printed in any edition. Marotti, *Giacomo Puccini Intimo*, 175-7. Cited in Budden, *Puccini*, 375.

<sup>3</sup>[Rimase la questione delle edizioni—cioè se ne parlò subito e mi acquietò dicendomi che editaron le opere unite e divise. Ma io penso che non si è stato veritiero perchè le *divise* non vedranno la luce—E come farà per la numerazione? Certo non sarà due tipi di clichet—uno di numeri progressivi per le 3 opere e l'altro coi numeri per ciascuno spartito a partire dal numero *uno*. Dunque mi ha imbrogliato.] From the catalogue of the Kenneth Rendell Gallery (New York and Massachusetts,) January 1994, original seven pages, octavo.

Although Puccini's thoughts about a triple bill—progressive for its time<sup>4</sup>—began as early as 1904,<sup>5</sup> it was not until 1916, when Puccini contacted playwright Didier Gold for rights to his work *La Houppelande* (which he had seen in 1912 at the Théâtre Marigny in Paris, and which became *Il tabarro*), that the project began in earnest.<sup>6</sup> The other two libretti were supplied by Giovacchino Forzano,<sup>7</sup> who, for *Gianni Schicchi*, drew upon a few lines of Dante's *Inferno*<sup>8</sup> and a more elaborate account from an anonymous 14th-century Florentine.<sup>9</sup> The

<sup>4</sup>Girardi notes that other Italian opera composers followed Puccini's example and wrote one-act trilogies: Malipiero's *Orfeide* (1925) and Respighi's *Maria Egiziaca* (1932). Girardi, *Puccini*, 374n.

<sup>5</sup>Ashbrook, *The Operas of Puccini*, 170.

<sup>6</sup>Puccini also contacted Dario Niccodemi, then resident in Paris, to get an Italian version of Gold's Parisian argot for *Il tabarro*, and Pietro Panichelli for verses for the angels in *Suor Angelica*. Budden, *Puccini*, 373-4.

<sup>7</sup>Giovacchino Forzano (1884-1970), after studying violin and medicine, had careers as a baritone, journalist, playwright, the first stage director in Italy, and, later, film director. He wrote libretti for Wolf-Ferrari, Leoncavallo, Lehár, Mascagni, Franchetti, Riccitelli, Giordano, Marinuzzi and Peregallo, and was the stage director for the posthumous première of Puccini's *Turandot* at La Scala in 1926. Forzano worked directly with dictator Benito Mussolini on the "heroic" trilogy: *Campo di maggio* (1930), *Villafranca* (1932) and *Giulio Cesare* (1939). *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, s.v. Forzano, Giovacchino. [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovacchino-forzano\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovacchino-forzano_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29). Girardi adds that Forzano was an acolyte of Gabriele D'Annunzio; Forzano directed the fascist propaganda film *Camicia Nera*, and was stage director for the posthumous première of Boito's *Nerone* in 1924. Girardi, *Puccini*, 366. Castelnuovo-Tedesco relates an anecdote of meeting Puccini who said: "Forzano is a man who always has a hundred ideas. In general, ninety-nine of them are wrong, but one is right: you have to know how to choose the right one." Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, "From a Lifetime of Music: Puccini, Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Others," trans. Harvey Sachs. *Grand Street* 9/1 (Autumn 1989), 151.

<sup>8</sup>Longfellow's translation of the Dantean passage (Canto XXX) reads: "And the Aretine, who trembling had remained / Said to me: That mad sprite is Gianni Schicchi / And raving goes thus harrying other people. / O, said I to him, so may not the other / Set teeth on thee, let it not weary thee / To tell us who it is, ere it dart hence. / And he to me: That is the ancient ghost / Of the nefarious Myrrha, who became / Beyond all rightful love her father's lover. / She came to sin with him after this manner, / By counterfeiting of another's form;/ As he who goeth yonder undertook, / That he might gain the lady of the herd, / To counterfeit in himself Buoso Donati, / Making a will and giving it due form." [http://www.divinecomedy.org/divine\\_comedy.html](http://www.divinecomedy.org/divine_comedy.html), accessed 8 August 2011.

<sup>9</sup>Forzano probably had access to the edition published by Pietro Fanfani, 3 vols., (Bologna: Gaetano Romagnoli, 1866). The Schicchi story can be found in I/ 637-9, and can be accessed at <http://www.puccini.it/cataloghi/anonimo.htm>. Slightly different information on the characters can be found in *Dizionario storico, geografico, universale della Divina commedia di Dante Alighieri: contenente la biografia dei personaggi, la notizia dei paesi, e la spiegazione delle cose più difficili del sacro poema* (Turin: Paravia, 1873), accessible at [books.google.com](http://books.google.com). On pages 216-7, Gianni Schicchi is described (cont.)



work had its première on 14 December 1918 at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.<sup>10</sup>

While it is certain that the operas were intended to be performed together, the question of their interrelatedness has been hotly debated. Witness the following two statements:

1. Puccini has always considered *Il trittico* organic [...] It is an opera of three different acts, but unitary in spirit and conception.” (Claudio Sartori)<sup>11</sup>
2. Puccini writes a triptych that has, as a purpose, to show that he can write three operas having nothing in common but this: to be completely different from each other. (Fedele d’Amico)<sup>12</sup>

And we should distinguish between elements of general dramatic coherence and those of musical connectedness. In regard to the former, several scholars have noted that all three operas deal with the theme of death.<sup>13</sup> While this is certainly the case, one would be hard put to find

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thus: “he was from the Florentine family of the Cavalcanti and famous for mimicking other people. [...] Buoso Donati, having died intestate, Gianni, induced by the prize promised him by Simon Donati, of the most beautiful of his mares, lifted the cadaver of the dead man from bed and hid it. Then, he got into the same bed and tricked the notaries and witnesses making them believe he was Buoso Donati. With this prank he made a will completely in favor of Simone and gained the mare ‘the lady of the herd.’ Pietro di Dante affirms that Gianni Schicchi suffocated Buoso Donati before mimicking him [...] but this new and atrocious crime is not sufficiently certain.” [Fu della famiglia fiorentina de’ Cavalcanti e famoso nel contraffare le altrui persone [...] Essendo morto senza aver fatto testamento messer Buoso Donati, Gianni indotto dal premio promessogli da Simon Donati della più bella tra le sue cavalle, fece levar di letto e nascondere il cadavere del defunto; quindi messosi egli nel medesimo letto, ingannò i notai e i testimoni facendosi loro credere per Buoso Donati. Con questa gherminella fece testamento tutto in favore di Simone, e guadagnò la cavalla donna della torma. Pietro di Dante afferma che Gianni Schicchi soffocò Buoso Donati prima di contraffarlo [...] ma di questo nuovo e atrocissimo delitto non vi è bastante certezza.]

<sup>10</sup>After a revival at Bologna in 1921, Puccini replaced the baritone aria in *Il tabarro* “Scorri, fiume eterno!” and for the La Scala performance in January 1922, he removed the so-called “aria dei fiori” from *Suor Angelica*. Budden, *Puccini*, 378-9.

<sup>11</sup>Claudio Sartori, “*Il trittico* di Puccini o tre uguale a uno” 46° *Maggio Musicale Fiorentino* [House program.] (1983), 87 [Puccini ha sempre considerato [*Il trittico*] organica [...] È opera di tre atti diversi, ma unitaria nello spirito e nella concezione.]

<sup>12</sup>Fedele D’Amico, “Conferenza: Vacallo (Mendrisio) 15 Luglio 1985” *Quaderni pucciniani* (1996): 19. [Puccini scrive un trittico che ha come scopo di far vedere che lui scrive tre opere che non hanno in comune che questo: di essere completamente diverse tra loro.]

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, Mario Morini, “‘Gianni Schicchi’, l’ultimo saggio dell’umorismo operistico italiano,” *Teatro La Fenice*, (Venice: Stamperia di Venezia, 1979-80), program book: 115-20, or Ashbrook, who adds: “if these three operas present diverse (cont.)

an opera that did not. Some have noted a progression in mood from darkness to light, or from negative to happy emotions.<sup>14</sup> Another link has been forged by both Girardi and Hepokoski, who have noted the retrograde time line of the three operas' settings: 20th-century Paris, a convent in the late 17th century, and Florence of 1299.<sup>15</sup> Puccini seems to have granted special emphasis to the modernity of the first opera, which opens with updated, almost Futurist, sounds of a tugboat siren and a car horn (the "city sounds" of the original play were made by horses stamping and shaking their bells, and drivers cracking their whips.)<sup>16</sup> Perhaps Greenwald's observation regarding the extraordinary silent beginning of the first opera could be a support for the Girardi/Hepokoski thesis: "*Il tabarro* begins with silence because it begins at the end."<sup>17</sup>

Hepokoski also suggests a parallelism in the conclusions of *Il tabarro* and *Suor Angelica*: both of these operas end with a guilt-ridden woman asking for pardon.<sup>18</sup> It is hardly a great leap from there to the observation that Gianni Schicchi also asks for, if not a pardon, then

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views of death, each contains its varied affirmation of life. In *Il tabarro*, Luigi and Giorgetta speak nostalgically of the crowded, bustling life of their suburb, Belleville. They both hope to escape the dreary life on the barge and go to another place where they can feel more intensely alive. [...] *Suor Angelica* is concerned more with spiritual life. [...] In *Gianni Schicchi*, the final emphasis on the young lovers and their future affords the strongest possible contrast with the grief and torment of the barge-master and his wife and of Angelica." Ashbrook, *The Operas of Puccini*, 178.

<sup>14</sup>See Girardi, *Puccini*, 375.

<sup>15</sup>Girardi, *Puccini*, 375-6 and Hepokoski, "Structure, Implication," 262. Girardi also points out that the use of time is essential to each opera: in *Tabarro* the dialogue and the language is focused on the past; in *Suor Angelica*, the characters make note of time passing and in *Gianni Schicchi*, the main character defies eternity. Hepokoski's article focuses on the rotational aspect of much of the opera, from rehearsal numbers 61 to 66: "The cyclic repetition of this music, with some variants and interpolations, begins immediately and continues to the end of the opera, which thus closes with an enhanced restatement of the music that has led us into rehearsal no. 66. Such an obvious double-cycling at the close can trigger the suspicion that a more generalized impulse toward circularity and rotation might also have been at work, albeit less self-evidently, in earlier portions of the opera" [243]. He relates this to the "obsessively circular madness and suicide of Angelica." [264]

<sup>16</sup>Didier Gold, *The Cloak: One Act in Prose* (Paris: G. Oudet, 1910). By this time, the Futurist movement had already been exalting the use of noise onstage. Their 1910 *Manifesto of Futurist Artists*, which bears some similarities to the earlier tenets of the *scapigliati*, can be accessed at: <http://futurismo.freeservers.com>.

<sup>17</sup>Greenwald, "Puccini, *Il tabarro*," 535.

<sup>18</sup>Hepokoski, "Structure, Implication," 262.

leniency at the conclusion of the third opera during the *licenza*.<sup>19</sup> It then follows that Giorgetta, Angelica and Gianni all must have all committed, or felt they committed, sins (adultery, suicide and fraud, respectively.)

There are other common thematic gestures as well. If we examine the musically undulating opening of the first opera, *Il tabarro*, we hear, according to Budden, a “navigational topos, an andante in compound rhythm over pizzicato basses”<sup>20</sup> that suggests the Parisian river Seine; the parallel fifths and octaves reference Debussy’s *Cathédrale Engloutie*<sup>21</sup> and other works that exhibit planing.<sup>22</sup> [See Ex. 3.23a] The constant rocking of rhythmic threesomes in 12/8, 9/8 and 6/8<sup>23</sup> suggests a barcarolle, perfectly suited to the watery setting. But it also evokes another *topos*: the lullaby. Lullabies almost always appear in triple rhythm<sup>24</sup> and a quick look at all three scores shows evidence of triple

<sup>19</sup>A *licenza* is a standard device in Italian theater in which a character addresses the audience directly at the end of a work. See Davis, *Il Trittico*, 148.

<sup>20</sup>Budden, *Puccini*, 380: “The rise and fall of the melodic line is calculated to suggest the irregular swirl of a busy waterway, while the widely spaced quavers of the double basses, reaching down to the bottom of their compass, convey a sense of depth, within the hollow.”

<sup>21</sup>As Sartori writes, Puccini does not describe the Parisian river but “recalls the Seine of his musician friends. He rehears it and renews it, and behold that the heavy river knows of sunken cathedrals, and around it echoes of Stravinskian grimaces echo playfully.” [Ricorda la Senna dei suoi amici musicisti, la riascolta e la rinnova, ed ecco che il fiume pesante sa di cattedrali inghiottite e che intorno echeggiano scherzosi gli echi di sberleffi stravinskiani.] Sartori, “Il trittico,” 87. Alberto Gasco, writing in *La tribuna* after Italian première of *Trittico*, 11 January 1919 immediately recognized the influences of Debussy and Stravinsky: “Nothing that contemporary art has produced escapes the studious and astute Giacomo Puccini. From Debussy to Stravinsky, every exceptional composer has been the subject of his fertile investigations. But (a miracle even more surprising than that of *Suor Angelica*), our composer has lost none of his own personality through his assiduous contact with dangerous foreign composers, the feared sirens of France and Russia; he has seized their secrets and used them to construct new and solid structures of a markedly national style.” (13 January 1919) Gara, *Carteggi*, 477. Quoted in Girardi, *Puccini*, 369-70.

<sup>22</sup>“Planing” is a term used to describe the use of parallel fifths and octaves in the music of the French Impressionists, although Puccini had used the technique as early as his second opera *Edgar* in 1889. See, for example, William E. Benjamin, “Pour les Sixtes: An Analysis” *Journal of Music Theory* 22/ 2 (Autumn, 1978), 253-90 or Peter DeLone, “Claude Debussy, Contrapuntiste Malgré Lui,” *College Music Symposium* 17/2 (Fall, 1977), 48-63. For its application to Puccini, see Davis, *Il Trittico*, 39, and Chapter 2.

<sup>23</sup>See Greenwald. “Dramatic Exposition,” 56, for the metric structure of the opening scene.

<sup>24</sup>See Aldo Nicastro, “Reminiscenza e populismo nella poetica di Puccini (appunti sul *Tabarro*)” *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana* (November-December, 1968): 1099, who writes, “It is interesting to note how the opera begins with a movement in 12/8 [...] the meter in 12/8 is a typical ‘cradling’ one.” [È interessante notare come l’opera inizi su un movimento in 12/8 [...]: il tempo in 12/8 è un tipico tempo ‘cullante.’”]

rhythms and meters linked to imagery of cradling. A theme closely related to the opening one appears at *Tabarro's* rehearsal number 80, when Michele tries to win back his adulterous wife Giorgetta, recalling the happy days when they and their child would rest in his cloak, at "Resta vicina a me!"<sup>25</sup> In *Suor Angelica*, the *only* extended triple meter occurs in two places: from rehearsal numbers 55 to 58, where there is mention of her child and his death (this section is the most dissonant of the opera, like a nightmarish version of a lullaby), and during the aria "Senza mamma," which is also about the boy. Even *Gianni Schicchi* has a quasi-lullaby moment, when the female trio of Zita, Ciesca and Nella dress the trickster for bed, starting at 61/1, in a lulling 6/8 meter and close harmony.

And the *Trittico's* main female protagonists, Giorgetta and Angelica, are alike not only in their perorative requests for clemency, but they are both mothers who have lost sons. It was the death of Giorgetta's child (a boy named Georges in the play) that has made her life on the houseboat suffocatingly unbearable; it led to her alienation from her husband and finally to adultery. In *Gianni Schicchi*, a farcical look at feigned familial love, this tragic image is turned on its head (as often happens in good comedy): the triptych finishes, not with a mother losing a son, but with a father saving, or at least helping, a daughter. (Schicchi, the deceiver, is ironically one of the few characters in the opera that is sincere about familial love.) In sum, all three operas deal with consanguineal—especially parental—love, either furtive, forthright or fraudulent.

Surely, one might argue, the diverse Affekts of these operas argue against dramatic coherence. We think, in fact, not: *lachen und weinen* are closer than they seem. Puccini, who was (and is) known for his ability to provoke tears in audiences, was no stranger to laughing in the face of misery. Of the former talent, Giulio Ricordi wrote to him on 19 July 1899 to find in *Tosca* "one of those beautiful Puccinian moments in his operas that have the power to move half the world! [...] Ahead then, Master Giacomo! to make thousands and thousands of people weep, from whose number, ahimè!...I myself will not be absent!"<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup>A similar point was noted in Conati, "Lettura del *Tabarro*," 154.

<sup>26</sup>Copialettere, Archivio Ricordi, Milan. [uno di quei bei momenti Pucciniani, che hanno avuto il potere di commuovere mezzo mondo nelle opere sue! [...] Avanti dunque, Sor Giacomo!...a far lagrimare migliaia e migliaia di persone, fra le quali, ahimè!...non mancherò io pure!"] "Sor Giacomo" was Ricordi's pet name for Puccini and could be an ironic reference to the comic character in Molière's *L'avare* [The Miser], Maître Jacques, cook and coachman, who confronts his master's stinginess. Puccini, quite poor in his early days, often requested extra funds from Ricordi.

Puccini put great stock on those lachrymose moments, and stressed their value to librettist Illica: “I told you to make them want to weep: that is everything. But do you think it is easy? It is horribly difficult, dear Illica.”<sup>27</sup>

But when completing the scoring of one of the most lachrymose moments of his *oeuvre*, the death of Mimì at the end of *La bohème*, he drew a skull and cross bones in the manuscript. [Ex. 12.0, next page] In *Il trittico*, the composer turns the tables in such a way. After the conclusion of *Suor Angelica*, another tearful moment for many audience members—the nun is miraculously reunited with her son in heaven, if actually staged according to the composer’s wishes<sup>28</sup>—we hear the opening of *Schicchi* with its mocking lament.<sup>29</sup> The joke, in other words, is on the audience. Along these lines is Zita’s weepy aside in this last opera after discovering that she and the other greedy relatives had been disinherited, at 22/7: “(Who would have ever thought that when Buoso went to the cemetery, we would have wept for real!)”<sup>30</sup> And the entire family is delighted and sings “requiesat in pace” *allegramente* when they discover that the tolling church bell is not for Buoso’s death but for that of someone else,<sup>31</sup> at 58/3.

<sup>27</sup>Gara, *Carteggi*, 404-5, letter, 8 Oct 1912 [Ti dissi di voler far piangere: è qui tutto. Ma credi che sia facile? È orribilmente difficile, caro Illica.]

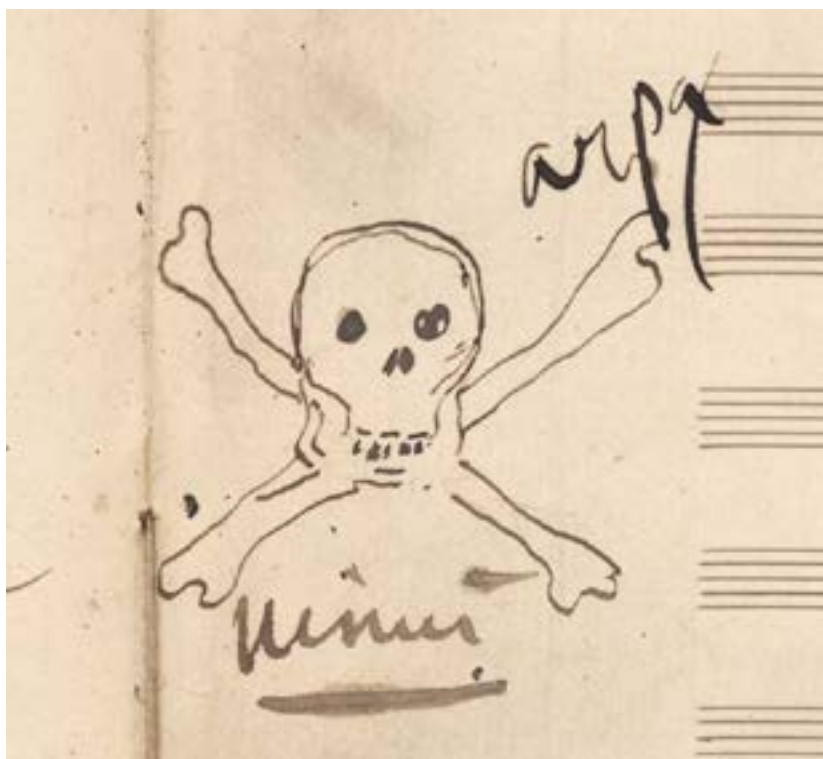
<sup>28</sup>There is a trend in both the theater and in academic studies of this opera to problematize the miracle: is it real, or real only to Angelica in her hallucinatory state? It is curious why other such supernatural scenes, such as the fiery descent to hell at the conclusion of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* or the many appearances of the *deus ex machina*, have not garnered such critical skepticism.

<sup>29</sup>A traditional marker for laments is the appoggiatura, or accented descending minor or major second, which has been utilized, for example, in Dido’s lament, Pamina’s “Ach, ich fühl’s,” and Tosca’s “Vissi d’arte,” in imitation of sobbing. By rhythmically displacing the two-note figure by a half beat, Puccini borrows from another musical tradition: that of the scherzo, in which the joke is on the listener who assumes an incorrect metrical structure, and whose foot-tapping is soon discovered to be off the beat. Known as *metrical reinterpretation*, a well-known example is found at the beginning of the scherzo movement of Beethoven’s *Symphony no. 9*. For more on the opening of *Gianni Schicchi*, see Davis, *Il Trittico*, 148. As this opening proceeds, the tempo slows by more than half from Allegro (132 beats per minute) to Largo (60 bpm), while the same appoggiatura figures continue. This tempo change suggests a mimetic shift from imitating laughter to mimicking sighs.

<sup>30</sup>[(Chi l’avrebbe mai detto / che quando Buoso andava al cimitero, / si sarebbe pianto per davvero!) (piagnucolosa)]

<sup>31</sup>That is, the captain’s moor. Davis points out that this character, like others in *Gianni Schicchi*, is derived from the *Commedia dell’Arte*. Davis, *Il Trittico*, 143.

Ex. 12.0: *La bohème*, autograph score, Mimi's death with skull and crossbones  
Property of Ricordi & C. S.r.l. Milano. Used by permission.



\* \* \* \* \*

But is there musical coherence in *Il trittico*? An anonymous commentator<sup>32</sup> wrote in the *Idea Nazionale* (January 1919) that there was, and that it resided in the modern sound of the music: “Puccini’s three acts can constitute a united show. And the unity, if that is the case, is gotten from the character of the contemporary music.”<sup>33</sup> That writer takes a critical stance, complaining that there is too much uniformity of the contemporary sound, which “equalizes the characters, whether they are boatmen of the Seine or nuns in a convent.”<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Pinzauti suggests that the writer could have been Fausto Torrefranca. Leonardo Pinzauti, “Il ‘Trittico’ di Giacomo Puccini” Teatro Comunale di Firenze, *46o Maggio Musicale* [House program.] (1983): 591-3. Rep. Teatro Comunale di Firenze [House program.] *51o Maggio Musicale*, 1988: 67-80.

<sup>33</sup>[I tre atti pucciniani possono costituire uno spettacolo unito. E l’unità, se mai, è data dal carattere della musica contemporanea.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 478.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. [il carattere della musica contemporanea è quello di averne uno di uniformità [...] che uguaglia i personaggi, siano barcaioli della Senna o suore di un convento]

But of what are these “modern” sonorities comprised, and are they special to *Il trittico* within Puccini’s *oeuvre*? Budden identifies a “second-encrusted language”<sup>35</sup> in the opening of *Suor Angelica*, a term that can apply to much of the *Trittico*. Giacomo Setaccioli, a contemporary of Puccini, identified these “wrong notes” as unresolved appoggiaturas (in *Suor Angelica*) and as “changed” notes [note cambiate], derived from Basevi’s concept, in *Gianni Schicchi*.<sup>36</sup> Puccini uses half-step relationships at the level of chords and keys as well: examples include the “slide” of E major + F minor (G-sharp/A-flat is the common pitch-class) in *Suor Angelica* at 39/6, and the bitonality that appears in *Il tabarro* at 85/1 with A minor and B-flat major. [See Ex. 1.16b]

This “language” might also include inversions of half-steps—diminished octaves (the enharmonic equivalents of major sevenths).<sup>37</sup> Diminished octaves, written as such, most famously appear in the out-of-tune barrel organ of *Tabarro*, reminiscent of Stravinsky’s *Petrouchka*<sup>38</sup> and also are heard later in the same work at 63/13, repeated with variation at 65/7 during Giorgetta’s and Luigi’s duet about their adulterous love. [Exx. 12.1a-b]

Ex. 12.1: *Il tabarro*, diminished octaves

a) imitation of an out-of-tune barrel organ, 13/4

The musical notation for Ex. 12.1a is written in 13/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The music features a series of chords and intervals, including diminished octaves, which are indicated by a double sharp symbol (x) above the notes. The notation is arranged in four measures, with the first measure containing a complex chord structure in the treble and a simpler one in the bass. The subsequent measures show a progression of chords and intervals, with the final measure featuring a prominent diminished octave in the bass staff.

<sup>35</sup>Budden, *Puccini*, 403. Budden does not feel, however, that the three operas have a common musical vocabulary, and writes that *Gianni Schicchi* is “quite distinct from that of *Il tabarro* or *Suor Angelica*: diatonic with no trace of modality, sparing of chromatic inflection, quick-paced, and rhythmically vigorous. Violent dissonance is not altogether avoided, but it is never of the searing, anguished variety.” *Ibid.*, 405.

<sup>36</sup>Giacomo Setaccioli, *Note ed appunti al ‘Trattato di Armonia’ di Cesare De Sanctis in rapporto allo sviluppo della armonia moderna* (Milan: Ricordi, 1923). Quoted in Sanguinetti, “Puccini’s Music,” 234. Basevi’s concept of “nota cambiata” developed into “nota supplente” or “replacement note.” *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>Ashbrook and Powers discuss half-step relationships small and large in regard to *Turandot*. Ashbrook and Powers, *Turandot*, 102-3

<sup>38</sup>Budden points out that Leoncavallo’s *Zazà* [1900] uses simultaneous major sevenths (enharmonically equivalent to diminished octaves) to represent an out-of-tune instrument. Budden, *Puccini*, 382.

b) 63/13

A musical score for piano accompaniment in 2/4 time, key of D major. The right hand plays a melody of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The left hand plays a bass line with diminished octaves: F#3, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. A dynamic marking 'dim. 8, F#-F natural' is placed above the second measure of the bass line.

In *Suor Angelica*, diminished octaves rear up in several spots. At 4/9 and 11, at the words “afflicted” and “sin” [afflitti, peccato], there are diminished octaves between G-sharp-G and D-sharp-D; the inclusion of a D in the former and an A in the latter, turns these sonorities into combinations of a perfect and an augmented fourth, which resolve up by half-step as if they were leading-tone chords.<sup>39</sup> Puccini also uses the diminished octave as one element of the harmonic support for some iterations of the “grief” [Sorge] Leitmotiv borrowed from Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger* (See Exx. 1.4g-h and 12.9), at 79/2 and later, when Angelica begs the Madonna for salvation for the love of her child. [Exx. 12.2a-b]

Ex. 12.2: *Suor Angelica*, diminished octaves

a) 4/9

A musical score for piano accompaniment in 4/4 time, key of D major. The right hand plays a melody of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The left hand plays a bass line with diminished octaves: B-flat3, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5. A dynamic marking 'dim. 8' is placed above the second measure of the bass line.

b) 79/2

A musical score for piano accompaniment in 2/4 time, key of D major. The right hand plays a melody of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The left hand plays a bass line with diminished octaves: E3, D-sharp4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4. A dynamic marking 'dim. 8' is placed above the second measure of the bass line.

One might hypothesize that Puccini has saved this particular sonority (notated as such) for moments containing a reference to sin (or at least error, in the case of the barrel-organ) and salvation. Such

<sup>39</sup>A similar sonority occurs in *Suor Angelica* at 29/1, (B-flat-E-A, with a major seventh not a diminished octave), intended to mimic the braying of a donkey. Major sevenths are also prominent at 48/13, when the Zia Principessa loses her temper (B-flat-A, D-flat-C, C-flat-B-flat), and at 50/7 (E-D-sharp) where it treated as an appoggiatura that resolves to C-sharp minor.



an interpretation might even gain some support from the diminished octave in *Gianni Schicchi* between E and E-flat on the text “save us!” [salvarci!] inserted into a whole-tone passage at 39/6. [Ex. 12.3]

Ex. 12.3: *Gianni Schicchi*, diminished octave

The operas of *Il trittico* also all exhibit the use of Budden’s “second encrusted” chords that mimic tone clusters: In *Il tabarro*, at 51/9, a cacophonous cascade of these sonorities follows the mention of “noisy Sundays” [domeniche chiassose]. [Ex. 12.4] Puccini also places these sonorities over pedal points: there are parallel whole-tone cluster-like iterations of his “signature” at 67/10 that descend, over a G-sharp pedal; the same pattern appears at 77/4 over a diatonic bass of ostinato Gs and Ds,<sup>40</sup> and at 87/6-7, where the parallel “clusters” develop into half-diminished seventh chords over a G pedal. The pedals at these moments point to the layering technique of *direct conflation*.<sup>41</sup>

Ex. 12.4: *Il tabarro*, “clusters,” 51/9

*Suor Angelica* has true whole-tone clusters (alternating whole-tone collections 0 and 1) at 54/3 when Angelica demands news of her son. Over a pedal at 80/0, in the climactic final scene, cluster-like “signatures” are heard. But syncopated *diatonic* clusters (in D major) are also present at 75/0, when she happily (at first) takes her leave of mortal life. [Ex. 12.5, next page]

<sup>40</sup>The combined sonority heard at 77/5 is a half-diminished seventh chord (E-G-B-flat-D). For Puccini’s “signature” see Chapter 2.

<sup>41</sup>See Chapter 2.

Ex. 12.5: *Suor Angelica*, diatonic “clusters,” 75/0

In *Gianni Schicchi*, “clusters” are layered above a diatonic alternation of C dominant seventh and its tonic F at 20/31. Later, at 31/23, a repeated tonic F in the tenor’s vocal line is accompanied by additive chromatic pitches that form clusters, prolonging F major through the diatonic progression (I)-ii-V-I, at 32/0. [Ex. 12.6] A similar additive chromatic process grows from a unison E-flat at 39/0, to tone clusters, to whole-tone and half-diminished sonorities at 39/7, and finally to E-flat major at 39/10—again a diatonic basis can be seen to underlie this dissonant *indosso*: the prolongation of E-flat.

Ex. 12.6: *Gianni Schicchi*, 31/23

Zoological musical mimesis plays a role in several moments of the *Trittico* as well. In *Il tabarro*, Puccini writes “cu cu” [cuckoo] in the horn part at 51/10, and where he imitates Frugola’s cat Caporale at 35/12 (the score says “imitando il gatto” [imitating the cat]) [Ex. 12.7a], 37/0 and 47/10. And *Suor Angelica* contains musical depictions of birds (1/4), sheep (19/12), wasps (25/3) and a donkey (29/1). [Ex. 12.7b]

## Ex. 12.7: zoological mimesis

a) *Il tabarro*, 35/12, cat

b) *Suor Angelica*, 29/1, donkey

But Puccini's mimetic skills are utilized for more than faunal imitation in the *Trittico*: imagery of bodily functions is called up as well. In *Suor Angelica*, laughter is suggested at 20/9, as is Angelica's heartbeat in the accompaniment at 40/0, 62/0 and 69/0. Girardi even claims to hear rhythmic chewing at 34/10.<sup>42</sup> In *Gianni Schicchi*, the rhythmically displaced opening appoggiaturas convey (mock) weeping, while, according to Girardi, the word "benefissio," [bowel movement] is indicated by a rapid descending run at 46/8.<sup>43</sup>

As in most other Puccini operas, musical reminiscences of Wagnerian operas also make appearances.<sup>44</sup> In *Il trittico*, however, all recall the same opera, *Die Meistersinger*. In *Il tabarro*, the opening motive of Giorgetta's wishful description at 48/1 of a changed life (and partner), "My dream is quite different." [È ben altro il mio sogno!] bears a strong resemblance to Eva's outpouring to Sachs (Act III, scene 4) of her own wish for a different man: "for, if I had the choice, I would choose none but you; you would have been my husband."<sup>45</sup> [Exx. 12.8a-b]

Ex. 12.8:

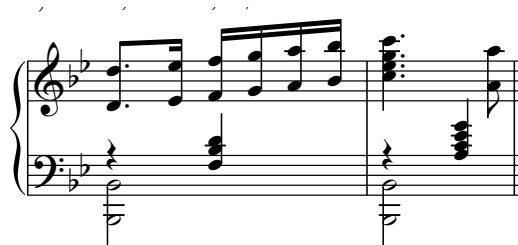
a) Wagner, *Die Meistersinger*, Act III, scene 4

<sup>42</sup>Girardi, *Puccini*, 404.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 425.

<sup>44</sup>Setaccioli attempts to make the case that Puccini's leitmotivic technique is not Wagnerian, defining a distinction between Wagner's "leading motives" [motivi conduttori] and Puccini's "dominant motives" [motivi dominanti]. Setaccioli, *Il Contenuto Musicale del Gianni Schicchi*, 29.

<sup>45</sup>[Denn, hatte ich die Wahl, nur dich erwählt' ich mir; du warest mein Gemahl]

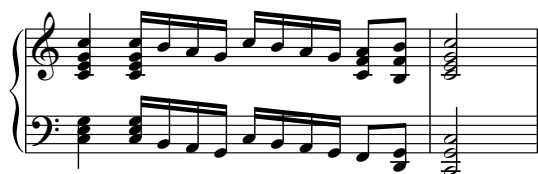
b) *Il tabarro*, 48/1

The “grief” [Sorge] Leitmotiv from *Meistersinger* (Act I, scene 3), as noted previously, appears barely disguised in *Suor Angelica* at 53/2, as she begs to hear news of her son. An earlier, simpler version can be heard at 43/9. [Exx. 1.4g-h and 12.9]

Ex. 12.9 *Suor Angelica*, 43/9

Budden writes that the C-major theme from *Gianni Schicchi*, first heard at 13/15, is reminiscent of *Meistersinger*,<sup>46</sup> and perhaps he is referring to an “academic” theme that appears in Act II, scene 6, which has similar scalar motions. [Exx. 12.10 a-b]

## Ex. 12.10

a) Wagner, *Die Meistersinger*, Act II, scene 6b) *Gianni Schicchi*, 13/15

<sup>46</sup>Budden, *Puccini*, 407.

In addition to these diverse links on the musical surface of the three works of *Il trittico*, it is also possible to individuate some structural connective tissue. In her article on *Il tabarro*,<sup>47</sup> Greenwald explores the importance of pitch class C-sharp in relation to the final tonic of the opera, C minor. The latter pitch class, C, is present at many critical moments of the opera: the quasi-brindisi in C major, (7/0), Giorgetta asking Luigi to dance in C minor (12/5), Michele's "Nulla! Silenzio!" in C minor (86/1) and, of course, the dramatic conclusion of the opera. In its original version, the second Giorgetta-Luigi duet was also in C minor, but was later transposed to C-sharp minor by the composer; this made the duet, in Greenwald's view, "incompatible" with the premeditated monochromaticism of the framework," creating a tritone with the opening G-based sonority that highlights the tonal tension of the work.<sup>48</sup> Greenwald explores many instances of the C/C-sharp conflict on the musical surface, such as at 72/9, and concludes that the C-sharp is ultimately revealed to be D-flat, the Neapolitan (here, as D-flat minor not major), moving (in parallel motion and without an intervening dominant) to C as Luigi is murdered at 96/0. [Exx. 12.11a-b]

Ex. 12.11: *Il tabarro*, C/C-sharp

a) alternation of C and C-sharp, 72/9

b) parallel motion from D-flat minor to C minor, 96/0

She also notes a similar pitch-related tension in *Suor Angelica*, where "C-sharp once again supplants C to italicize a profoundly emotional exchange."<sup>49</sup> In another article, Greenwald further explores

<sup>47</sup>Greenwald, "Puccini, *Il tabarro*, and the Dilemma of Operatic Transposition," 521-58.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 532.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 548-9.

the large-scale tonal relationships of C and C-sharp in this second opera, suggesting that there is a tonal unfolding of the augmented triad F-A-C-sharp over the first half of the work, following by a “corrected” unfolding of F-A-C.<sup>50</sup> This analysis is not radically dissimilar to the one presented here in Chapter 3 (see Ex. 3.21), in which the unfolded augmented triad with C-sharp resolves to C earlier, at rehearsal number 66, in a perfect authentic cadence in C major, followed by a long pause.

C and C-sharp also conflict on the musical surface of *Suor Angelica*. For example, at 10/7, there is a Lydian-flavored C-sharp in the context of a G-major passage, quickly returning to C, and at 62/8, Puccini adds a C diminished chord to a whole-tone bass containing C-sharp. When Angelica nearly swoons at the shocking news of her son, in a whole-tone passage on C, there is a repeated figure C-B-flat-E in the higher wind and lower string parts; just afterward, at 57/0 this figure changes to C-sharp-B-E over a C-sharp-minor seventh chord. [Exx. 12.12a-b]

Ex. 12.12: *Suor Angelica*, C/C-sharp

a) 10/7



b) 57/0

<sup>50</sup>Greenwald, “Verdi’s Patriarch,” 232.

But the most dramatic occurrence of this motivic clash is at 42/0, when Angelica is about to meet her Princess Aunt; here, a C-sharp-minor figure is repeatedly juxtaposed with a C-minor chord.<sup>51</sup> [See Ex. 3.15a]

The C-sharp/C conflict is not lacking in *Gianni Schicchi* either. Budden notes an anomalous “Lydian C-sharp” in the aria “Addio Firenze” at 64/0, followed by C two bars later.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the opera’s opening gesture is a diminished seventh chord containing C-sharp, over an F<sup>♯</sup> dominant pedal, resolving to a B-flat-major theme, in which C is frequently iterated; and at 71/21, D-flat appears over a C pedal.

It is also possible to identify a more structural struggle in *Gianni Schicchi* between C and C-sharp/D-flat, which becomes apparent at the end of the opera, and which affects how we understand the tripartite work as a whole. After Schicchi’s dirty deed is done, the notary leaves with the false will, accompanied by pure C major; at 80/0, the voices of the family erupt in anger on unison Cs, accompanied by rising chromatic parallel triads that return to—and in effect prolong—C major at 80/10. This theme is reiterated at 81/0, again in C, after which comes the ironic Leitmotiv of familial love, a superimposition of whole-tone scales 0 and 1 (based, respectively, on C and C-sharp) [see Ex. 1.6]. To this is soon joined a low pedal on G, sounding very much like the dominant of C major, and which alternates with G-flat, seemingly a neighbor note.

At this point, Puccini could very well have ended the opera in C, which would have allowed all three operas to conclude on the same final tonic. But what occurs instead is that G-flat becomes the eventual tonic, with pitch class C-sharp/D-flat emerging as the dominant of G-flat major just before 84/0. Thus, the overall tonal trajectory of *Il trittico* is C minor-C major-G-flat major. And, with that final, macrocosmic leap of a tritone, C to G-flat, the tonal world of the triptych is thwarted in the most radical way possible—overturning tonal niceties in a gesture redolent of comic insubordination.

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>51</sup>In the excised “aria dei fiori,” which originally appeared in the score of *Suor Angelica* at rehearsal number 70, there is a *layering* of a whole-tone sonority in the bass (G-C-sharp-D-sharp-A) with a pentatonic melody above (C-sharp-D-sharp-F-sharp-G-sharp). At what had been rehearsal 71, this combination is transposed up a perfect fourth to C-F-sharp-G-sharp-D in the bass and the pentatonic melody F-sharp-G-sharp-B-C-sharp above: here too, we hear C and C-sharp in conflict.

<sup>52</sup>Budden, *Puccini*, 413.

“I have been begun to translate *La Houppelande* into notes.”

Giacomo Puccini to Tito Ricordi, 30 October 1915<sup>53</sup>

Puccini's statement raises issues of musical narration and depiction, if not echoes of Wagnerian concepts of musical prose. Yet just a few years earlier Puccini wrote that music is “that divine art which begins or ought to begin where the words cease.”<sup>54</sup> Can one translate into a new medium where “words cease”? And if one could indeed translate transmedially, any narratological strategies would have to be adapted to the exigencies of the new “language.”

Music, unlike language, is inherently multivalent: it can present numerous events simultaneously and coherently, where spoken text cannot. And *Il trittico* is not short of such moments. In *Il tabarro*, for example, at rehearsal numbers 3-6, we hear *direct conflation*, or as Conati writes, “three synchronic planes”:<sup>55</sup> simultaneously, we hear a sung conversation between Michele and Giorgetta, the song of the stevedores in the background, and the sounds representing the river below. Similar *layerings* occur when a song vendor passes by and a tugboat whistles in the distance (19/0), and at rehearsal 84-85, as Michele ruminates on his painful situation, two lovers pass by<sup>56</sup> and a bugle sounds the “All quiet.” In the latter case, as noted previously, Puccini uses bitonality to express a multi-focal dramatic situation: two co-existing but vastly different worlds. Noted also by Leukel in regard to *Il trittico*,<sup>57</sup> this *layering* is part and parcel of Puccini's technique.

<sup>53</sup>Gara, *Carteggi*, 439. [mi sono messo a tradurre in note l'*Houppelande*.]

<sup>54</sup>Letter to Sybil Seligman, 8 February 1911. Printed in English translation in Seligman, *Puccini Among Friends*, 206.

<sup>55</sup>[piani sincronici] Conati, “Lettura del *tabarro*,” 10.

<sup>56</sup>The passing-by of unrelated characters was suggested to Puccini many years earlier, for the third act of *La bohème*, by Illica, whose unpublished sketches for such a scene can be found among the papers of Giuseppe Giacosa in the Archivio Privato Eredi Giacosa: “from the Boulevard d'Enfer are heard, distant at first, voices that sing as they get nearer. They are masked couples a little tipsy who are coming from the gardens of the Grand Charnière and cross the stage.” [dal boulevard d'Enfer si odono dapprima lontane voci che cantano avvicinandosi. Sono coppie di maschere un po' alticcie che vengono dai giardini de la Grande Charnière e attraversano la scena.] The couples sing the following verses and, as Illica notes below, the asterisks indicate places for ritornelli.

Vien me baiser, Titine,	Sur ton sein palpitant;
cela me rend content;	* cela n'est pas, Titine,
* ne me fais pas la mine.	* Pour toi bien important!
* Hélas! je t'aime tant!	(Gli * possono essere ritornelli)
Laisse ma main caline	



As we have seen, dissonant pedal points were in Puccini's toolbox from the beginning, as was proto-bitonality. It is a bit surprising, then, that a salient feature of *Gianni Schicchi*—not of the other two members of the triptych—is a narrative technique that rejects multi-focal simultaneity for discontinuous alternation. As Leibowitz writes,

I am referring above all to the technique used by the composer to interrupt a dramatic event (and consequently a specific musical structure), and to continue the initial event (completing the corresponding musical structure) only later, so to speak. [...] In *Gianni Schicchi* this will become then the fundamental structural principle of the opera in its totality.<sup>58</sup>

However, it is not just formal schemata that are interrupted (as in *Manon Lescaut*), but swaths of music are interposed with others in completely different styles: that is, here the composer privileges *indirect conflation* over *direct conflation*, for moments in which the latter would have worked well.

As noted previously one type of *indirect conflation* seen in *Il trittico* is termed *stylistic plurality* by Davis, who defines it as: “heterogeneous music in which diverse styles are exploited to such a degree that the contrasts among them—rather than the styles themselves—become the focal point for the listening audience.”<sup>59</sup> The abrupt shifts from a Modernistic “second-encrusted language,” to the fauxbourdon of “Requiesat in pace” at 58/3, to one of Puccini's most “sugary” [zuccherate] arias (as he termed them), “O mio babbino caro,” is striking, given that the composer has shown himself most capable of smooth transitions.

Some contemporaries of Puccini certainly did not appreciate the discontinuity and stylistic shifts. The younger composer Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco<sup>60</sup> relates:

<sup>57</sup>Leukel *Studien zu Puccinis 'Il Trittico'*. On pages 65ff, Leukel discusses Puccini's use of layering, pedal point and their relation to bitonality.

<sup>58</sup>Leibowitz, “L'arte di Giacomo Puccini,” 21. [mi riferisco innanzi tutto alla tecnica assai precisa usata dal compositore per interrompere un avvenimento drammatico (e conseguentemente una specifica struttura musicale), e per continuare l'avvenimento iniziale (completando la corrispondente struttura musicale) solo in un secondo tempo, se così si può dire. [...] In *Gianni Schicchi* diventerà insomma il principio strutturale fondamentale dell'opera nella sua totalità.]

<sup>59</sup>Davis, *Il Trittico*, 4.

<sup>60</sup>Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (Florence, April 3, 1895-Los Angeles, March 16, 1968) Italian-born American composer, studied piano and composition with Ildebrando Pizzetti. He attained considerable eminence in his native country between the wars, until political events and his Jewish heritage forced him to leave Italy. In 1939, he settled in the USA. He wrote film scores in Hollywood but also continued to teach and to write operas, oratorios, orchestral and chamber music. His opera *La mandragola*, after Macchiavelli, won the Italian National prize in 1926.

I played [my opera] *La mandragola* for [Puccini] in a number of sessions [...] After I had played the first act, he said, “Don’t you think that right here”—pointing to the middle of the act—“after so much dialogue, an aria for the tenor would go well?” [...] I then had the nerve to tell him: “Maestro, I’m sure you’re right, because no one has as much theatrical experience as you. But don’t you think that if, in *Gianni Schicchi*, you had left out that aria, ‘O mio babbino caro,’ the opera’s stylistic unity would have gained by it?” He smiled and said, “Perhaps you’re the one who’s right, in this case.”<sup>61</sup>

One of the moments of greatest discontinuity in *Gianni Schicchi* is at 42/2, when Schicchi exclaims that nothing can be done about Buoso’s will. Without any transition, the young lovers Lauretta and Rinuccio lament the situation. Ten bars later, at 43/1, Schicchi repeats his exclamation and the lovers reiterate their impassioned outburst. [Exx. 12.13a-b] Davis writes about this scene in regard to filmic techniques, as has this writer,<sup>62</sup> and the technique seems to function as a cognate of cinematic intercutting, known as the *alternating syntagma*, in which simultaneity is implied through quick the alternation of opposing shots.<sup>63</sup>

Ex. 12.13: *Gianni Schicchi*, indirect conflation, “intercutting” or “alternating syntagma”

a) 42/2

“Ad - di - o, sper-an-za bel - la”

“Ni - en - te da fare!”

<sup>61</sup>Castelnuovo-Tedesco, “From a Lifetime of Music,” 152. It is conceivable, but completely unverifiable, that Puccini had been smiling at the younger man missing the point; i.e., that *Gianni Schicchi*’s lack of stylistic unity had been a conscious musical strategy.

<sup>62</sup>Davis, *Il Tritico*, 153-6 and Burton, “Ariadne’s Threads.”

<sup>63</sup>For example, if person A is pictured speaking and person B is shown listening, the *alternating syntagma* leads us to conclude that A and B are having a conversation in the same space and time. The term is from Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Prior to the general acceptance of the *alternating syntagma*, simultaneity in film had to be shown through multiple events in the same image, or superimposition (double exposure).

b) 43/1

The image shows a musical score for two vocal parts. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The music is divided into two measures by a double bar line. The first measure contains the lyrics "Ad - di - o, sper-an-za bel-la" and the second measure contains "Ni-en-te da fare!". The notation includes various rhythmic values, rests, and dynamic markings.

The question is not, as Davis writes, whether *stylistic plurality* is present but “rather *how* and *for what expressive purpose* the various styles are used.”<sup>64</sup> If we believe that, in *Gianni Schicchi*, bits of various styles are juxtaposed for some artistic end—Davis’s *stylistic integration*<sup>65</sup>—what is that end?

Perhaps an answer might lie not in the discontinuity of the styles itself, but rather in the speed and abruptness with which that discontinuity is effected. As the decelerating opening of *Schicchi* has shown us, tempo is a powerful musical tool: it can turn comedy into tragedy and vice-versa. Perhaps, then, the exaggerated, speedy shifts of *Gianni Schicchi* foster and enhance fast-paced comedic timing.

In *Il trittico* we see the concepts of *indirect conflation* (and *stylistic plurality*) extended to the largest possible scale, that of the self-contained work. At the seams of the triptych there are shifts in *tinta*, time period and temperament. Even so, as we have suggested, these are balanced by cohering structural elements—both musical and dramatic—which can be individuated throughout.

<sup>64</sup>Davis, *Il Trittico*, 10.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.



## Chapter 13

# Dawn at dusk: Puccini's trademarks in *Turandot*

The unknown prince: "And at dawn I will die!"

Turandot: "It is dawn! It is dawn! Turandot's  
sun is setting!"<sup>1</sup>

A central image in Puccini's *Turandot* is that of death at dawn, an ending at a beginning. For the composer as well, his final, incomplete opera at the conclusion of a life's work also marks a broad leap into a new, more dissonant sound world. At the same time, *Turandot* is the culmination of the process of intertwining opposing forces—traditional and progressive—that distinguish his entire creative operatic output. But there is no resolution here. The dichotomy has only become more intense: the musical language of Puccini's last work simultaneously delves much deeper into the past and reaches further into the future than that of its predecessors.

Not surprisingly, the opera has created two divergent critical impressions. Ashbrook and Powers see the work as the end of the Great Tradition of Italian Romantic opera. They cite its division into definable units as evidence of the opera's place in the numbers opera tradition: "*Turandot* [is] a fitting Finale for the Great Tradition, [...] a numbers opera in the grand manner of *Semiramide* and *Aida*."<sup>2</sup> Others also recognize long-established traits in the opera: Titone sees neo-Classic strategies in the work,<sup>3</sup> while Budden and Davis place it in the tradition of Grand Opera. For Davis, the opera's large scale is the determining factor:

<sup>1</sup>[Il Principe ignoto: "E all'alba morirò" / Turandot: "È l'alba! È l'alba! Turandot tramonta!"]

<sup>2</sup>Ashbrook and Powers, *Turandot*, 6-7, 13.

<sup>3</sup>Titone, *Vissi d'arte*, 103. Quoted in Girardi, *Puccini*, 456.

*Turandot* is [...] a grand opera in the truest sense: an enormous, late-Romantic, Germanic orchestra with large percussion forces and an on-stage band [...] the piece also includes Puccini's largest and most active chorus, cast as a Pekingese crowd of onlookers, but also including servants of the executioner, attendants to *Turandot*, a group of phantoms (spirits of dead suitors), imperial guards and soldiers, priests, banner bearers, sages, mandarins, and other of the emperor's dignitaries.<sup>4</sup>

In an interview with Edoardo Savino in May 1924, Puccini seems to second this: “[*Turandot*] has above all a character of grandiosity.”<sup>5</sup>

Certainly with the new *Turandot*, Puccini was turning away from his own success with naturalism and *piccoli* protagonists towards a more traditional storyline of fantasy and legend.<sup>6</sup> Not since his first opera, *Le villi*, had the composer attempted this; as Carner writes, he was coming full circle.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, however, D'Amico looks to the work's ceremonial pacing as a signifier of a modern sensibility: “more than any stylistic character, in *Turandot* the ‘newness’ arises from the structure, from the general pacing that governs it, conferring on the opera its gait of cruel, affected, impassive ceremony.”<sup>8</sup> Wilson has explored the detachment of the title character as “a deliberate, if tentative, move on Puccini's part towards updating his operatic style, an exploration of the ways in which opera might engage with modernist preoccupations in the other arts.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Davis, *Il Trittico*, 171-2, and Budden, *Puccini*, 446.

<sup>5</sup>[Ha soprattutto carattere di grandiosità] Edoardo Savino, “*Turandot*, la nuova opera di Puccini,” *Il Mezzogiorno* (Naples) [May 1924], n.p. Puccini goes on to say: “all the elements of the theater are included: the sentimental character of Liù, the comic element of the three masks, the dramatic element and grandiose scenes such as the ceremonies at court and the riddle scene.

<sup>6</sup>The libretto for *Turandot*, written by Renato Simoni and Giuseppe Adami, was based on a play by the Venetian Carlo Gozzi, *Turandotte* (1762) from his *Fiabe teatrali*. Before that, the Arabian folktale was told in *Les Mille & un jour: contes persans*, (1710-12) translated by François Pétis de la Croix as “l'Histoire du Prince Calaf”. Friedrich Schiller had written a version for the Weimar court in 1802, *Turandot, Prinzessin von China: ein tragikomisches Märchen nach Gozzi*, to which Weber later contributed some incidental music. See Budden, *Puccini*, 424-5.

<sup>7</sup>Carner, *Puccini*, 462.

<sup>8</sup>[Ma più che da particolarità di stile, in *Turandot* la ‘novità’ nasce dall'impianto, dall'andatura generale che la governa, conferendo all'opera il suo passo di cerimoniale crudele, prezioso, impassibile.] Fedele D'Amico, “L'opera insolita,” *Quaderni Pucciniani* (1985): 73-4.

<sup>9</sup>Alexandra Wilson, “Modernism and the Machine Woman in Puccini's *Turandot*,” *Music & Letters*, 86/3 (2005): 433.

Ashbrook too sees modernity in *Turandot's* “highly individualized orchestration that capitalizes on clashing timbres and unexpected harmonies”<sup>10</sup> And Salvetti also locates the “new Puccini” in aspects of the score: he writes that *Turandot* is:

a very singular opera because of the boldness of the harmonic and orchestral writing: the use of dissonance gets angular and provocative in the “comic” scenes; polytonal chords, orchestral sonorities with great resonances of the gong open the third act [...] This true absence of intimacy, this crowding of the scenes in the culminating moments [...] are aspects of a new Puccini, like the impersonal, icy, alienated song of the princess Turandot.<sup>11</sup>

Stoianova claims to hear in *Turandot's* more modern musical vocabulary echoes of other contemporary works: Prokofiev's *Suite scythe*, Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloe*, Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* and Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Celli has noted that the melody for “Tu che di gel sei cinta” derives from *Pelléas* (Act III, scene 1, “Un des tours du château”).<sup>13</sup> And Puccini quotes, at II/21/1, the main melody from the “Danse des Nounous” of Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*.

Always interested in new musical developments, Puccini went out of his way near the end of his life to attend a performance of Schoenberg's revolutionary *Pierrot Lunaire*—another work, like *Turandot* and Strauss's *Salome*, that deals with moon imagery—at the Pitti Palace in Florence during the spring of 1924.<sup>14</sup> After that concert, according to Marotti, Puccini said, “Don't think that I'm a traditionalist! [...] I am happy to have had a means of touching with my hand, or rather with my ears, the facts as they are today.”<sup>15</sup> The composer Mario

<sup>10</sup>Ashbrook, *The Operas of Puccini*, 216.

<sup>11</sup>[opera singolarissima anche per l'arditezza della scrittura armonica e orchestrale: l'uso della dissonanza giunge ad essere angoloso e provocatorio nelle scene ‘comiche’; accordi politonali, sonorità orchestrali con grandi risonanze di gong, fanno dell'inizio del terzo atto [...] Questa vera assenza di intimità, questo affollamento delle scene nei momenti culminanti [...] sono aspetti di un nuovo Puccini, come il canto ‘straniato’ gelido, impersonale della principessa Turandot.] Guido Salvetti, *La nascita del Novecento*, Storia della Musica 10 (Turin: Edizioni di Torino, 1991), 275.

<sup>12</sup>Ivanka Stoianova, “Remarques sur l'Actualité de *Turandot*” in *Esotismo e colore locale nell'opera di Puccini* (Pisa: Giardini, 1983), 202.

<sup>13</sup>Celli, “Gli abbozzi per *Turandot*,” 43-65. Originally published as two articles: “Scoprire la melodia” *La Scala* (April 1951) and “L'ultimo canto,” *La Scala* (May 1951), 62n.

<sup>14</sup>There is much less moon imagery in the original Gozzi *Turandotte*. *Turandot* also shares with *Salome* a visible severed head and seductive dancing girls.

<sup>15</sup>Marotti, “Incontri e colloqui col Maestro,” 56-7. [Non penserai ch'io sia un passatista! [...] sono contento di avere avuto modo di toccare con mano, anzi con le orecchie, i fatti come si presentano oggi.]

Castelnuovo-Tedesco,<sup>16</sup> who was also in attendance, confirms the fact that Puccini indeed followed the score to *Pierrot Lunaire* while listening to the performance.<sup>17</sup>

Castelnuovo-Tedesco spent the month of July 1924—just four months before Puccini's death—in Viareggio and had frequent encounters with the composer there. His description shows how interested Puccini was in the latest musical innovations:

I met him on one of my first days there, on the seaside promenade, and he invited me to visit him. [...] Puccini had often been described to me as a typical Italian opera composer, completely absorbed in his work and having few general interests. But in talking with him I soon realized that he was very curious about others' works and that he followed, with great interest, everything that was happening in modern music.<sup>18</sup>

Later, Puccini showed the younger man his latest project, *Turandot*:

He played me various parts and he discussed the scoring with me; then, at one point, he shut the piano score and said: "But I'm tired, now, of writing these operas, in which three acts of chatter are needed *in order to get to the catastrophe, for better or for worse.*" These were his exact words: I remember them precisely because they made such an impression on me. "I would like something that would provide me with *lyrical possibilities*, without requiring so much talk; perhaps some separate scenes, connected only through the music: tragic episodes, comic episodes, dances." [...] I was profoundly struck and surprised to realize that Puccini, who had always been essentially an exponent of "traditional" opera, had, at the end of his glorious career, arrived at a concept of the theater that was very similar to the one Malipiero attempted to achieve with his *Sette canzoni!*<sup>19</sup>

But Puccini may have intuited by this time in his life that younger composers were willing to go where he was not. His most frequent complaint is that new works lack a sense of melody, as in this note of 1 May 1922 to Renato Simoni, one of the librettists for *Turandot*: "Nobody writes melody any more, or if they do it is vulgar. They believe that 'symphonism' should reign, whereas I think that would be the end of opera. In Italy they used to sing; now no more. Blows,

<sup>16</sup>See Chapter 12, note 60.

<sup>17</sup>Castelnuovo-Tedesco, "From a Lifetime of Music," 151.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 152-3.



discordant chords, false expression, transparency, opalescence, lymphaticism. All Celtic diseases, a real pox from across the seas."<sup>20</sup>

Puccini's turn of phrase here is striking, since he was known as a "symphonist" himself in the early days. And he seems to reverse his earlier statements welcoming foreign influences. Perhaps Puccini felt more patriotic in his later years, or was more concerned with projecting *italianità* now that he had the chance to become a *senatore* (or as he jokingly called the title, "suonatore").

In the interview with Savino, Puccini emphasized the Italian nature of *Turandot's* libretto, if not the musical language: "the subject is Italian, very Italian. I know that in Vienna everyone was happy that I chose what, according to them, is a German subject. Instead I demonstrated that Schiller translated the *Gozzi* [tale], which was and remains Italian."<sup>21</sup> But the German spirit was not banished from his mind: as mentioned previously, Ugo Ojetti, during a visit to the composer's home in Viareggio, saw portraits of Beethoven and Wagner on his music stand, standing guard over the *Turandot* manuscript.<sup>22</sup>

Davis has framed the conflict of traditional and modern aspects of the work as a problem of form:

how to achieve a near-total integration of conventionality with unconventionality—that is, an approach that arranges kinetic and static movements into set pieces analogous to conventional melodramatic prototypes and one that simultaneously deploys a series of shorter episodes articulated according to a complex array of musical styles.<sup>23</sup>

One prototype to which Davis refers is the "solita forma," following Ashbrook and Powers. The term was first used by Abramo Basevi in relation to works of Verdi's period and earlier: "The usual form of duets, that is a *tempo d'attacco*, the *adagio*, the *tempo di mezzo*,

<sup>20</sup>[La melodia non si fa più o, se si fa, è volgare. Si crede che il sinfonismo debba regnare e invece io credo che è la fine dell'opera di teatro. In Italia si cantava, ora non più. Colpi, accordi discordi, finta espressione, diafanismo [transparency], opalismo, linfatismo. Tutte le malattie celtiche, vera lue ultramontana.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 524. In a poem written to Buzzi-Peccia, Puccini also complains about the lack of melody in modern scores: "E l'armonia/Sola, soletta/Da tanto aspetta/Quel tal di luce/Che gliela dia/La melodia" [And poor harmony/ All alone / has been waiting a long time for/ that sparkle of light/ that melody can give it.]

<sup>21</sup>[il soggetto è italiano, italianissimo. So che a Vienna erano tutti lieti che io avessi scelto quello che—secondo loro—è un soggetto tedesco. Invece dimostrai che lo Schiller tradusse il *Gozzi*, il quale era e resta italiano.]

<sup>22</sup>Ojetti, *Cose Viste*, 336-7. See Chapter 1.

<sup>23</sup>Davis, *Il Trittico*, 168.

and the *cabaletta*.<sup>24</sup> This schema was considered *passé* early in, if not before, Puccini's career. By 1899, librettist Luigi Illica had placed it firmly in past, saying that musical forms determined by verse structure used to work well in the days of the *cabaletta*, but were no longer of use.<sup>25</sup> Although some scholars have been critical of investing Puccini's operas with links to the older forms,<sup>26</sup> the possibility might be entertained that the composer, while reversing his own tracks in other areas at this late stage, may also have decided to make reference to an earlier formal rubric. Indeed, Ashbrook and Powers manage to trace the *solita forma* in *Turandot*<sup>27</sup> in Acts II and III, and Davis suggests that Puccini may have used it as a "background" framing device, the distortion of which offered expressive potential.

Ashbrook and Powers also suggest four distinct *tinte* (generalized harmonic colorings): the Chinese, the Dissonance, the Middle Eastern Orientalism, and the Romantic-diatonic.<sup>28</sup> Davis re-organizes these into three *style types* (deriving the term from musical semiotics): Romantic, Dissonant and Exotic, with the last subdivided into Chinese, Primitive and Persian. He writes: "the styles in *Turandot*—Romantic and non-Romantic alike—are so strongly asserted and the contrasts among them so apparent that they naturally produce independent, autonomous formal units—*episodes*—on all levels of the structure, global to local."<sup>29</sup> In our terminology, the juxtapositions of these styles are instances of large-scale *indirect conflation*, or *innesiti*, as discussed in Chapter 2.

If we look at this formal situation through the lens of old/traditional vs. new/progressive techniques, Davis's *style types* delineate shorter episodes (new/progressive) that can coincide or conflict with

<sup>24</sup> [La solita forma de' duetti, cioè quella che vuole un *tempo d'attacco*, *l'adagio*, il *tempo di mezzo*, e la *Cabaletta*.] Abramo Basevi, *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi* (Florence: Tipografia Tofani, 1859), 191. Quoted in Powers, "Form and Formula," 13. See also David Rosen in "La solita forma' in Puccini's Operas?" *Studi Pucciniani* 3 (2004): 177-99. Ashbrook and Powers define it as "the sequence of four movements is usually introduced with a recitative scena; the first and third lyric movements are "kinetic"—open-ended as to both stanzaic and musical design, with little or no text repetition for musical purposes—while the second and fourth lyric movements are 'static,' that is, cast in regular stanzas, formally rounded and closed musically, with much musical extension carried on repeated fragments of text already heard in full." Ashbrook and Powers, *Turandot*, 115.

<sup>25</sup>[Il verso andava bene al tempo delle cabalette.] Gara, *Carteggi*, 186.

<sup>26</sup>See, for example, Philip Gossett, "The Case for Puccini," *New York Review of Books*, March 2003, 42. Quoted in Rosen, "La solita forma": 2n.

<sup>27</sup>Girardi has also found the solita forma in *Manon Lescaut*. Girardi, *Puccini*, 94.

<sup>28</sup>Ashbrook and Powers, *Turandot*, 93.

<sup>29</sup>Davis, *Il Tritico*, 172-3.

the “number” units (old/traditional). These are shown together in Ex. 13.0 (next page) for Act II, where, for example, the two formal strategies converge at rehearsal numbers 25 and 50, but do not at 40-43.

Each of these styles, in Davis’s terminology, is identified by *style tokens*, or specific compositional procedures, such as certain harmonic progressions, rhythms, motives, etc. Davis also employs the idea of *stylistic integration* to denote something similar to what we have termed *direct conflation*. He applies it to situations in which a style token may be combined with a diverse—he writes, “incompatible”—style type to create new meaning, which could be, for example, the addition of dissonant harmony to diatonic melody.<sup>30</sup> Unlike *direct conflation*, Davis’s *stylistic integration* is audibly perceptible on the musical surface, not disguised through layered dissonant prolongations or compound sonorities.

One style token of Davis’s Exotic-Chinese *tinta* is the use of traditional Chinese melodies. Puccini discovered these in two known sources. The first was a music box belonging to Baron Fassini Camossi, a former diplomat in China whom the composer met at Bagni di Lucca in August 1920.<sup>31</sup> The other was a book, *Chinese Music* by J.A. Van Aalst,<sup>32</sup> which had been sent to him by Carlo Clausetti.<sup>33</sup> The specific borrowings of these tunes have been well documented many times over and will not be reiterated here.<sup>34</sup> We will add, however, that Puccini probably took note of some salient characteristics of the melodies, such as the lack of leading tones. This seems evident from the large swathes of *Turandot*’s music in which a lowered seventh scale degree is employed in the accompaniment (for example, the setting of “Mo-li-hua” in the children’s chorus at I/19/0.)

Puccini could have noticed another feature of Chinese music in the Van Aalst volume as well: the pentatonic scale depicted as five

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 181-4.

<sup>31</sup>Budden, *Puccini*, 427.

<sup>32</sup>J.A. Van Aalst, *Chinese Music*. China: Imperial Maritime Customs, II. Special Series, no. 6 (Shanghai: Inspectorate General of Customs, 1864)

<sup>33</sup>Kii-Ming Lo, “*Turandot* auf der Opernbühne. Perspektiven der Opernforschung 2. (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), 11. Cited in Girardi, *Puccini*, 450n.

<sup>34</sup>Recently, W. Anthony Sheppard has argued that a music box in the Murtogh D. Guinness Collection at the Morris Museum, Morristown, N.J. contains two Chinese tunes from *Turandot* and also supplied a melodic source for *Madama Butterfly*. He writes that the tune “Mo-li-hua” is consistently referred to on the music box sheets as “Sinfa” [fresh flowers]. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/17/arts/music/puccini-opera-echoes-a-music-box-at-the-morris-museum.html?\\_r=1&emc=eta1](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/17/arts/music/puccini-opera-echoes-a-music-box-at-the-morris-museum.html?_r=1&emc=eta1). Accessed 17 June 2012.

Ex. 13.0: Table of formal numbers and style types in Act II

rehearsal number	action	Ashbrook-Powers's numbers	Davis's style types
II/0	introduction, ministers appear	A. 0 <i>scena</i>	dissonant
1	ministers lament	A. 1 <i>tempo d'attacco</i>	exotic (Chinese)/ romantic
9	ministers recall country homes	A. 2 andantino	exotic (Chinese)/ dissonant
13	ministers recall executions, hope for wedding	A. 3 <i>tempo di mezzo</i>	exotic (Chinese)/ dissonant
21	"non v'è in Cina"	A. 4 <i>stretta</i>	exotic (Chinese)
25	transition / scene change	B. 1	dissonant
26	processional	B. 2	dissonant/ exotic (Chinese)
34	confrontation between Emperor and Calaf	C. 1	dissonant
39	ceremonial conclusion	C. 2	dissonant
40	reprise of proclamation	D. 1	dissonant
42	reprise of children's chorus	D. 2	exotic (Chinese)
43	Turandot: "In questa reggia"	D. 3	romantic
50	first enigma	E. 1	dissonant
54	second enigma	E. 2	dissonant
59	third enigma	E. 3	dissonant
63	Turandot wants to renege	E. 4	exotic (Chinese) / romantic/ dissonant
65	Prince's enigma	F. 1	dissonant/romantic
67	Emperor's reaction	F. 2	exotic (Chinese)
68	ceremonial conclusion	F. 3	exotic (Chinese)

whole-tone steps. In addition, Van Aalst gives accompanimental figures to be performed during the final strophe of the "Hymn to Confucius" that include the set class (026), Puccini's "signature."<sup>35</sup> The alignment of these "authentic" elements with one of his own trademarks (that, as we have seen, had been used in non-exotic operas such as *Manon Lescaut* and *Tosca*) could have appealed to the composer.<sup>36</sup> [Exx. 13.1a-b] This convergence, however, poses a challenge to the division of harmonic and melodic materials into separate *tinte*: and how these materials interact: the whole-tone scale is both "exotic" and Modernist.

<sup>35</sup>See Chapter 2.

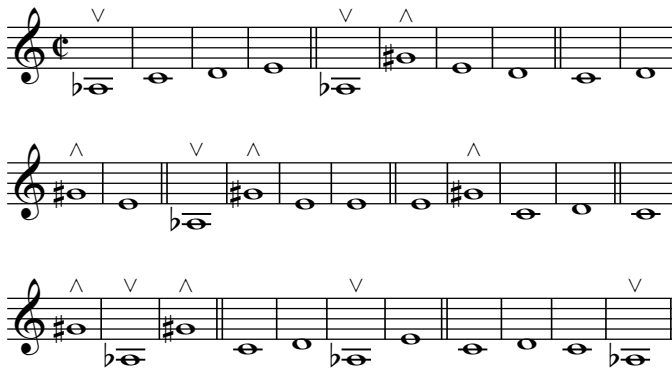
<sup>36</sup>As noted in Chapter 2, several of the Japanese tunes Puccini chose for *Madama Butterfly* also have passages that belong to this set class.

Ex. 13.1: Illustrations from Van Aalst, *Chinese Music*

a) the whole-tone pentatonic scale, page 23



b) Accompanimental figures for the “Hymn to Confucius” containing set class (026), page 50



## *I am Puccini*

In the interview with the composer cited previously, Savino raises the issue of *Turandot's* place in the Puccini *oeuvre*:

ES: Is the genre of music close to the preceding one?

GP: I believe to have distanced myself from it. But it is the critics, not I, who must judge this, at the right time. I believe that *Turandot* has its own physiognomy that has no comparison with my other musical creatures. The soul of the author, however, does not change, neither can style change, without becoming insincere. Therefore, it will still be Puccinian. [...]

ES: Did you want to write an opera of a popular character or did you want to bring about a new musical form?

GP: I told you: I am Puccini...I am, that is, what I sincerely am, even in my *Turandot*.<sup>37</sup>

Evading Savino's second question nicely, Puccini's equivocal statements here only emphasize the conflicting forces at work in the creation of this opera: it is new, but not new.

But is the surface, the "physiognomy," of *Turandot* really so unique? The score shows nearly all of Puccini's trademark devices. Any new "physiognomy" lies mostly in the two areas: the use of bitonality as a norm, and the increased layers of dissonant *indossi*.

Let us now take a closer look at Puccini's tried-and-true devices that appear in this work. First, as was common practice for Puccini (as well as for some of his contemporaries<sup>38</sup>), he strays into alternative pitch collections in *Turandot*: pentatonic melodies are employed, for example, in Liù's "Signore, ascolta" at I/42/0, and the ministers' "Addio amore, addio razza" at II/18/2. The Emperor's statements to Calaf at II/34/0 could be classified as either pentatonic or Dorian. The Lydian mode is heard as an inflection of D major at I/17/7 during the moonrise, and at Liù's "Tanto amore segreto" at III/24/0 on B-flat.

Major-third cycles are present in *Turandot* as well. Augmented triads in expanded form are employed at the opera's beginning: an opening tonality of F-sharp minor moves to D minor (with a bitonal topping of C-sharp major), and then to B-flat major (with A major) at I/1/2. In the second act, a clear major-third cycle can be deciphered beginning at II/47/0: here we have G-flat major at II/47/0; the same music (the Love motive) is transposed to B-flat major at II/47/4 and then D major four bars later. [Ex. 13.2] The next act contains a major-third cycle beginning at III/18/2 where we hear a C-minor statement

<sup>37</sup>[ES: Il genere della musica si avvicina a quello precedente?]

GP: Credo di essermene allontanato. Ma di questo non debbo essere giudice io, ma i critici, a suo tempo. Credo che "Turandot" abbia una fisionomia sua propria che non trova riscontro nelle altre mie creature...musicali. L'anima dell'autore però, non muta, nè può mutare lo stile, a meno di non diventare insincero. Quindi sarà sempre del Puccini. [...]

ES: Ella ha voluto scrivere un'opera di carattere popolare oppure ha inteso realizzare una forma musicale nuova?

GP: Le ho detto: io sono Puccini...sono cioè, quello che sono sinceramente, anche in questa mia "Turandot".]

<sup>38</sup>As Tymoczko writes: "The young Stravinsky, like Debussy and Ravel, made frequent use of a variety of collections, including whole-tone, octatonic, and the melodic and harmonic minor scales." [...] [Stravinsky uses the] superimposition of elements belonging to different scales." Dmitri Tymoczko, "Stravinsky and the Octatonic: A Reconsideration" *Music Theory Spectrum* 24/1 (Spring 2002): 68.

of the “recognition” motive, followed at III/19/0 by the same material in A-flat minor, and by an arrival on E minor at III/20/0.

Ex. 13.2: Major-third cycle at II/47/0

Diminished sevenths do appear on the surface of the music at, for instance, II/19/10 and II/50/0, but they are rarely used as structural minor-third cycles.<sup>39</sup> However, a sketch for the third-act finale, which Maguire has claimed is a twelve-tone passage,<sup>40</sup> can also be interpreted as a series of non-resolving diminished seventh chords, within a larger pattern of three-chord groups that is itself rising chromatically. Further, the bass notes of each chord spell out major triads on C, C-sharp and D, an example of multi-level *direct conflation*—here, the synchronic interpenetration of symmetrical, diatonic and chromatic elements embedded in each other. [Ex. 13.3]

Ex. 13.3: From Puccini’s sketch 22 for finale

A similar example of multi-level *direct conflation* occurs at III/36/0. Here, diminished sevenths lie atop a standard pattern of descending fifths (F-B-flat-E-flat). Each leg of the underlying schema alternates in the bass with its tritone (F+B, B-flat+E, E-flat+A). [Ex. 13.4, next page]

<sup>39</sup>See, for example, I/15/0.

<sup>40</sup>Janet Maguire, “Puccini’s Version of the duet and Final Scene of *Turandot*,” *Musical Quarterly* (1990): 339.

Ex. 13.4: *Direct conflation* at III/36/0

Puccini's trademark parallel constructions are plentiful in this opera as well. In the first act alone, there are parallel octaves and fifths at I/9/9, chromatically descending parallel triads on the musical surface at I/18/13; parallel seventh chords at I/25/18, and parallel ninths at I/39/11. Later in the opera, we hear parallel 4/2 chords over a pedal at II/10/12, and at III/28/6 are found parallel quartal harmonies. [Ex. 13.5]

## Ex. 13.5: Parallel quartal harmonies, III/28/6

And there is no shortage of Puccini's trademark dissonant pedal points. A striking example is the low D pedal point that begins at II/20/6: above we hear, after D major, the chromatically rising diatonic triads of E-flat major, F major, and G minor, followed by whole-tone sonorities alternating with D major. Later in the same act, a D-flat pedal begins at II/30, and the overlaid rising melody begins on B-flat, at II/30/8, and then B at II/31/0, after which the melody is truncated to two-bar units that include a rising step. Overall, the melody ascends B-flat-B-C-D-E-flat-F-G-flat-A-flat-B-flat, completing an octave ascent B-flat to B-flat, prolonging that pitch class. [Ex. 13.6]



## Ex. 13.6: Dissonant pedal point and octave ascent, II/30-31

The musical score for Ex. 13.6 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and shows a melodic line with an octave ascent from B-flat to B-flat. The lower staff is in bass clef and features a dissonant pedal point. A bracket spans across both staves, indicating the relationship between the pedal point and the octave ascent. The score is labeled with 'II/30' and '(etc.)'.

As with earlier operas, Puccini employs pedal points for traditional functions, such as the tonic pedal on F-sharp at I/4/0: here it underlies a descending stepwise motion from C-sharp to G-sharp, harmonized with F-sharp minor, E major, D major, C-sharp major (avoiding parallel fifths with chord inversions). The local key of F-sharp is confirmed with a half cadence at I/4/7, and a return to F-sharp in the next bar. [Ex. 13.7] Other sorts of extended pitch classes in *Turandot* are also employed for common-tone modulations, such as at II/9/0 and II/47/13.

## Ex. 13.7: Pedal point as tonic prolongation, I/4/0

The musical score for Ex. 13.7 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and shows a descending stepwise motion from C-sharp to G-sharp. The lower staff is in bass clef and features a tonic pedal point on F-sharp. A bracket spans across both staves, indicating the relationship between the pedal point and the melodic line. The score is labeled with 'pedal point on F#' and 'V'.

If we examine the symmetrical structural elements in Puccini's toolbox, we find them present in *Turandot* as well. Tritone shifts marking structural borders occur between E-flat minor and A minor at I/25/0, when Timur begs the Prince not to pursue Turandot's challenge, and at III/35/0 after Liù's cortège. Another is found just before the confrontation between Calaf and the Emperor, from A-flat major to D Dorian.

Strikingly, all of these instances are preceded by pauses that serve to delineate, not only key areas and structural units, but new events in the dramatic narrative. Musical transitions, which can sound so fluidly natural in much of Puccini's output (usually helped along by common tones or pedal points), are lacking here: the formal seams seem

perceptible by design. If so, this would mark a change of direction for Puccini—yet it harkens back to the traditional numbers opera as much as it looks ahead.

Tritones (C/F-sharp and E/B-flat) also appear as added pedal tones at III/25/6 to a restatement of the theme from the Executioner's chorus first heard at I/10/1. This creates a hexaphonic "aura," although the theme itself has not been *projected* onto that collection. [Exx. 13.8a-b]

Ex. 13.8:

a) I/10/1

b) Addition of tritone pedals, III/25/6

The score is riddled with whole-tone sonorities (as most of Puccini's mature operas are), such as the fortissimo whole-tone crash at I/15/9, in the ministers' scene at II/3/10, and in the middle of "Nessun dorma" (III/4/6). Parallel whole-tone chords are interjected into the scene-change processional at II/26/11.

Nevertheless, compared to earlier operas, such as *Madama Butterfly* or *La fanciulla del West*, *Turandot* does not belong to a strong hexaphonic sound world. In this opus, the whole-tone elements are *directly conflated* with other harmonies, which dilutes their distinctive coloring. For example, in the eerie phantom scene at I/38/0, a whole-tone tetrachord from WT0 (C-E-F-sharp-G-sharp) is overlaid with an F dominant seventh chord with which it shares only note C (all the other chord members belong to WT1). Three bars later, the tetrachord

belonging to WT0 has been transposed up a whole step to D-F-sharp-G-sharp-B-flat, while it is combined with the tritone A-E-flat, a subset of WT1. [Ex. 13.9]

Ex. 13.9: *Direct conflation* in the “phantom chord,” I/38/0

whole-tone + F<sup>7</sup> = “phantom” chord

These more complex *direct conflations* give the *Turandot* score its unique physiognomy, even though the process itself is an extension of techniques Puccini had employed previously. One further iridescent example is the coda-like suffix to Liù's G-flat-major “Signore, ascolta,” at I/42/15. As if it were a traditional diatonic coda, the tonic is prolonged with a pedal on G-flat over these four bars. Laid over that, however, is the chromatically rising line A-flat-B-double flat-B-flat-C-flat-C-D-flat. Supporting that line is a third layer of chords: A-flat minor, E-double flat major, B-flat augmented, F-flat major, and E-double flat half-diminished seventh. The effect is magical, particularly coming between pentatonic passages, with the vocal line ascending to high B-flat.<sup>41</sup>

### *the “new” Puccini?*

We have seen how dissonant pedal points and other *direct conflations* of contrasting material seem to have been used by Puccini to suggest multi-focal situations. These separate layers of music point to multiple narrative threads, events, or states of being. The same has held—up

<sup>41</sup>Baragwanath analyses this passage in “Analytical Approaches,” §17. He relates the rising chromatic line in the orchestra as “the logical culmination of a musical process if the overall melody is regarded as contrapuntally determined,” for which he supplies a Schenkerian-style graph. At §19, he adds, “But this explanation does not take into account the unconventional harmony and the melodic direction of the chromatic final section [...] which seems to confound syntactical norms of closure [...] by *rising* to the final cadence. Even the two-measure post-cadential orchestral coda lacks any clear gesture of descent.” In this author's interpretation, the Schenkerian structural tonic of G-flat is reached before this passage, after a 3-2-1 descent in which scale degree 2̣ (A-flat) is implied, and the remainder of the aria is a suffix.

until now—for Puccini's use of bitonality/polytonality. In *Turandot*, however, Puccini opens each act with a bitonal gesture, as the “frame” so to speak of the canvas; that is, these compound structures seem no longer to be aligned with any particular aspect of the event narrative.<sup>42</sup>

Puccini's contemporary, Alfredo Casella—writing in 1923, just a year before Puccini's death—explains polytonality as “the interpenetration of diverse scales” that presupposes the continued presence of the original tonalities. Further, he claims, polytonality, or *simultaneous* polymodality, is the next logical step after (Debussy's) *successive* polymodality—a concept that could be a species of our *direct* and *indirect conflation*. Casella describes polytonality as “simultaneous modulation” and compares it to pictorial Cubism, in which (according to Casella) an object is simultaneously viewed from diverse perspectives in space and time—the negation of normal time flow.<sup>43</sup> If the polytonality in *Turandot* were seen in this light, no longer representing multiple, overlapping events in a naturalistic narrative, then perhaps the synchronic interpenetration of different sonic worlds could suggest the absence of a standard time flow—that is, the unreal, “non-time” of a legend.

Although polytonality was a widely accepted musical feature by the 1920's, thanks in great part to the enormous impact of the *Rite of Spring* (1911),<sup>44</sup> Puccini never before used the technique on such a massive scale. In addition to the opening of all three acts, striking bitonal moments of half-step-related sonorities occur at I/27/0, on B-flat and A major, just before the reprise of the opening motive; at I/30/1 with A-flat/B-double flat in the outer voices and F/F-flat between [Ex. 13.10a]. Third-related bitonal combinations occur at II/63/6 with D-flat minor+F-flat augmented, transposed two bars later to B minor+D augmented, and then to A minor+C augmented. This passage has already been examined in Chapter 2 as an example of an *indosso*—here, the superimposition of dissonance over a traditional bass. However, when the pattern of this polytonal series ends on G major, at II/63/16, the bass notes have also outlined the whole-tone fragment D-flat-B-A-G, linearizing a tritone. Thus we have here *direct*

<sup>42</sup>Ashbrook and Powers find associative links for “bicentric” tonality in the pairings of Prince/Princess, fire/ice, sun/moon, and silver/gold. Ashbrook and Powers, *Turandot*, 107.

<sup>43</sup>Casella, “Problemi sonori odierni,” 5, 9.

<sup>44</sup>Casella writes: “After the *Rite*, polytonality became current practice by the majority of the boldest European musicians.” [Dopo la *Sagra*, la politonalità divenne cosa di uso corrente presso la maggioranza dei musicisti europei più arditi.] *Ibid.*, 10-11.

*conflations* that embed tonal and atonal elements in multiple layers. [Ex. 13.10b]

Ex. 13.10

a) Polytonality, I/30/1

b) *Direct conflation* with polytonality, II/63/6-16

If we examine Ex. 13.10a in context, however, an interesting situation arises. This polytonal section occurs in the midst of clear A-flat major, with a pentatonic melody (Ashbrook and Powers's I.C.1); it is, then, an example of a dissonant *innesto* or *indirect conflation*. The bitonal conflict between A-flat and B-double flat continues for five measures, until another dissonant clash at I/31/0 (including tritones B-flat-F-flat and A-E-flat). But this is followed by repeated returns to A-flat major and reprises of the original polytonal configuration at I/31/10 and I/33/19. Thus, throughout this entire long passage, A-flat has been re-asserted in the bass. It is possible to conjecture, then, that A-flat is being prolonged here and is thus more structural than B-double flat.

Extrapolating, we might hypothesize that in polytonal combinations such as these, Puccini might have still considered the harmony as emanating upward from the bass. If this theory is correct, it would have ramifications for how one understands the larger-scale tonal patterning in this work. And, in the end, it would add weight to the judgment that the “new” Puccini is still the same composer wearing new musical clothes.

There exists, in fact, written evidence of Puccini's imbuing a diatonic structure with both *direct* and *indirect conflation*s. In one of his sketches for the finale of *Turandot*,<sup>45</sup> under the heading "stacco per duettone" [interruption for the great duet], he wrote the following: "Nel villaggio but with chords and harmonized differently and modern movements and reprises and surprises."<sup>46</sup> ("Nel villaggio" is a reference to Fidelia's diatonic aria from Act III of *Edgar*.) In other words, he was planning to interrupt one passage with another (*indirect conflation* or *innesto*), and to adorn a simple diatonic framework with new harmonies, rhythms, returns and surprises (*direct conflation* or *indosso*).

Given these clues, it is possible to construct a hypothetical version of what Puccini might have composed at this spot (except, perhaps, for the surprises). Ex. 13.11a shows the melody from the *Edgar* aria as written, accompanied only with tonic and dominant harmonies. Ex. 13.11b is a hypothetical version with added *indossi*: parallel augmented triads, parallel sevenths in the bass and an extra layer articulating tritones.

Ex. 13.11

a) *Edgar*, "Nel villaggio"

The musical score for Ex. 13.11a consists of two staves. The upper staff is a treble clef with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature. It contains a melodic line with a sequence of notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (beamed eighth notes), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half). The lower staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It provides harmonic accompaniment with chords: G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter). Vertical lines connect the notes of the melody to the corresponding notes in the accompaniment.

b) Hypothetical version with *indossi*

The musical score for Ex. 13.11b consists of two staves. The upper staff is a treble clef with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. It contains a melodic line with a sequence of notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (beamed eighth notes), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half). The lower staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It provides harmonic accompaniment with chords: G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter), G2-B2-D2 (quarter). Vertical lines connect the notes of the melody to the corresponding notes in the accompaniment. Labels 'augmented triads' and 'parallel sevenths' are placed above the bass staff, and 'tritone' is placed below the bass staff.

<sup>45</sup>Ms. sketch 91.A.III.35, probably dating from January 1924. Schickling, *Giacomo Puccini: Catalogue of the Works*, 377. The sketch is reproduced in Celli, "Gli abbozzi per *Turandot*," 56.

<sup>46</sup>[Nel villaggio ma con accordi e armonizzato diverso e movenze moderne e riprese e sorprese etc.]

## *poi Tristano*

The Puccini who created *Turandot*—whether he be an old or new version—still loved Wagner. As has been often noted, the composer left a written note in sketch 17 for the Act III finale that reads, “poi Tristano” [then *Tristan*]. Celli has posited that Puccini was at this spot planning to use the unaccompanied Mariner’s theme (Act I, scene 1, “Frisch weht der Wind der Heimath zu”).<sup>47</sup> Maehder has pointed out that the text that would have accompanied this reference to *Tristan*, was, “What does life matter / Death is also beautiful!” [Che m’importa la vita! / È pur bella la morte!], thematically related to the longing for death in the Wagner opus.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, we would suggest that a more pressing dramatic theme at this final moment is that of Love, and that the “Tristano” to which Puccini refers is actually the *Liebesruhe* Leitmotiv from *Tristan*’s Act II. [Ex. 1.4i] Wagner’s motive was originally set diatonically (Ex. 13.12a, [next page] from Act II, scene 2, shows it over a prolonged G-flat major). But its first three pitches have been borrowed and set more adventurously by Richard Strauss at the opening of *Till Eulenspiegel* (1894-5) [Ex. 13.12b], and by Paul Dukas in *Ariane et Barbe-Bleu* (1907) at III/69, an opera Puccini had seen [Ex. 13.12c].<sup>49</sup> We believe Puccini’s scribbled “Poi Tristano” refers to this motive, which also constitutes the opening of *Turandot*—played there fortississimo in parallel octaves—its jagged shape an image of Turandot’s cruelty that will ultimately transform into her love.

<sup>47</sup>Celli, “Gli abbozzi per *Turandot*”: 62.

<sup>48</sup>Jürgen Maehder, “Studi sul carattere di frammento della *Turandot* di Giacomo Puccini,” *Quaderni pucciniani* 2 (1985): 105. An Italian translation of “Studien zum Fragmentcharakter von Giacomo Puccinis *Turandot*,” *Analecta musicologica* 22 (1984): 297-397; abridged and translated as “Puccini’s *Turandot*: A Fragment: Studies in Franco Alfano’s completion of the score,” *English National Opera Guide*, n. 27 (London and New York, 1984), 35-53. Cited in Ashbrook and Powers, *Turandot*, 139.

<sup>49</sup>Celli also mentions this in “Gli abbozzi per *Turandot*,” 63. Puccini was in Paris in June 1907 when he saw one of the first performances. In a letter to Sybil Seligman he writes: “Last night I went to Ducas—what a blue-beard! Impossible.” Seligman, *Puccini Among Friends*, 135.

## Ex. 13.12

a) Wagner, *Tristan*, “Liebesruhe” motive, Act II, scene 2

Chord progression: Gb: I I

b) Richard Strauss, *Till Eulenspiegel*, opening

Chord progression: F: I V/IV IV V I

c) Paul Dukas, *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, III/69

The adaptability of this motive to different pitch collections is demonstrated by the diatonicism of the Wagner and Strauss settings and the nearly whole-tone one in the Dukas. That flexibility could have made the motive attractive to Puccini, in addition to the fact that it consists, in its most compact form, of a tritone plus a whole step—Puccini’s “signature,” set class (026).

Although Ashbrook and Powers identify this as the “Execution” motive and see it as representational of their “Dissonance” *tinta*, the motive’s first appearance has strong diatonic implications. Puccini writes the opening motive with the second pitch notated as E-sharp, not F-natural, the leading tone to F-sharp minor, which arrives two bars later. In fact, although written without a key signature, this motive



could be heard entirely in a (quite insipid) normative progression in F-sharp minor. [Ex. 13.13]

Ex. 13.13: Hypothetical harmonization of Act I opening motive

The musical notation for Ex. 13.13 shows a piano accompaniment in F# minor. The right hand plays a four-note motive: F# (quarter), C# (quarter), G# (quarter), and A (quarter). The left hand plays a bass line: F# (quarter), C# (quarter), G# (quarter), and A (quarter). The chords are labeled as F#, i, vii<sup>-3</sup>, V<sup>7</sup>, V<sup>2</sup>, and i<sup>6</sup>.

Puccini sets the motive in a diatonic context at I/25/11 as part of a dominant ninth chord on G. But the motive also appears in whole-tone settings, such as at I/39/13, where one statement of the four-note motive overlaps with the next. [Ex. 13.14]

Ex. 13.14: Overlapping whole-tone setting of opening motive, I/39/13

The musical notation for Ex. 13.14 shows a piano accompaniment in a whole-tone setting. The right hand plays a four-note motive: F# (quarter), C# (quarter), G# (quarter), and A (quarter). The left hand plays a bass line: F# (quarter), C# (quarter), G# (quarter), and A (quarter). The chords are labeled as F#, b, and whole-tone.

Thus, the protean nature of this motive embodies the diatonic/non-diatonic flexibility that runs throughout this opera, at almost every level, and hints at the larger question of whether the opera is ultimately tonal or not. If one accepts the criterion established by Alaleona (see Chapter 1), atonality can only be present if atonal structures do not resolve—and without the ending of *Turandot* composed by its creator, we will never know if, on the largest scale, that occurs. We can, however, venture an hypothesis.

### *coda*

In Puccini's operas *Tosca* and *La fanciulla del West*, large-scale dissonant structures find their resolutions at the conclusion. In both cases, these were whole-tone-based sonorities that had been

introduced at the beginning in the works and presented as incomplete tonal “problems” awaiting solutions. In *Tosca*, the tritone-related opening motive (B-flat-A-flat-E) was matched, at the end of Act I, with its own tritone transposition (E-D-B-flat) to create an octave span (B-flat-B-flat) that served as dominant to the tonic E-flat; and this was seen, in Chapter 8, to be expanded throughout the work. In *Fanciulla*, the initial whole-tone chord (C-E-G-sharp-B-flat) resolves at the end to E major, as a common-tone sonority to the tonic. Therefore, if Puccini had planned to follow a similar strategy in *Turandot*—and if a dissonant construct were to resolve at the end—it might do so as either a dominant substitution or a common-tone embellishment.

The pitch-classes F-sharp/G-flat, B-flat and D are reiterated at salient moments throughout this opera. In Act I, we have previously noted two major-third cycles of F-sharp-D-B-flat: at the beginning of the opera F-sharp minor moves to D minor (plus C-sharp major), and then to B-flat major (plus A major) at I/1/2. In Act II, another major-third cycle can be found beginning at G-flat (F-sharp) major at II/47/0.

A larger-scale expansion can also be traced from the opening F-sharp of Act I to B-flat at I/9, which returns at I/10 to F-sharp; we have B-flat at I/12, F-sharp at I/13. After we hear the opening motive again just before I/17, the tonality shifts to D major (at the moonrise); B-flat is reasserted strongly again at I/27, Liù’s “Signore, ascolta” at I/42 is in G-flat/F-sharp, and the act ends in E-flat (as did the first act of *Tosca*).<sup>50</sup>

Act II of *Turandot* begins with a bitonal gesture ending on B-flat in the bass, and reaches its first clear tonal center of D minor at II/1. The key changes to D major at II/9, and to B-flat major at II/13, which resolves to E-flat minor at II/14. D is strongly reasserted at II/40 and remains in effect until II/46. After the expanded G-flat-B-flat-D at II/47, D minor sounds at II/53, and the act concludes in B-flat major.

Act III opens with D minor in the lower stratum of the bitonal complex and moves to B-flat as in the opera’s opening. Rehearsal number III/9 brings a pentatonic melody on D and at III/26 begins a long pedal on F-sharp, which leads to B-flat the dominant of E-flat minor. While we cannot know how this act concludes, Puccini left a

<sup>50</sup>Greenwald has noted the F-sharp/B-flat relationship, and the ultimate resolution to E-flat in this first act, but gives less weight to the third leg of the augmented triad, D. Greenwald, “Dramatic Exposition,” 89-95.

sketch for the finale (17v) that reads, “the end of the serenade” [fine serenata]; it shows a series of D-minor chords. Thus, we can conclude that there would have been at least one more articulation point on D in the third act.

If we accept these moments as structural waystations, then the plan looks not unlike the overall layout of *Tosca*—a dissonant prolongation based on B-flat that would ultimately resolve to E-flat. Berio has finished the work in this key, not in Alfano's choice of D or Maguire's of D-flat.

Indeed, if there were to be a resolution of dissonance at the end, then Puccini's final work would ultimately have to be regarded as grounded more in the traditional than in the progressive. But we will never know with certainty: perhaps he would have taken another step along *Madama Butterfly*'s path of non-resolution. In the end, the tug-of-war between traditional and progressive elements that informs his entire career cannot be settled, even at the sunset of his life. This Puccinian mystery, among many, must remain unsolved.



## Appendix: Plot Summaries

*Le villi* (opera-ballo in two acts, *première*: Teatro Regio, Turin, 26 December 1884)

Act	Action
I. Spring, outside the house of Guglielmo Wulf in the Black Forest	The engagement of Guglielmo's daughter Anna to Roberto is being celebrated in front of Wulf's house. Roberto must go to Mainz to claim an inheritance. Anna gives him a bouquet of forget-me-nots and worries that she will never see him again ["Se come voi piccina"]. Roberto promises to be faithful, and asks Guglielmo to bless them before his journey to Mainz.
Intermezzo	1. "The Abandonment": a poem tells of Roberto's seduction in Mainz by a temptress, and now he has forgotten Anna. Anna, who has waited for Roberto in vain, dies and her funeral procession is seen behind a scrim. 2. "The Witches' Sabbath": the legend of the Villi is explained: the spirits of the forsaken women force their betrayers to dance until death.
II. Winter, outside the house of Guglielmo Wulf	Guglielmo calls upon the Villi to take vengeance on Roberto ["Anima santa della figlia mia"]. Roberto appears, having been rejected by the temptress, returning home with remorse ["Torna ai felici di"]. The Villi conjure the ghost of Anna, who tells Roberto of her suffering. The Villi surround them and dance Roberto to death. He collapses as they sing "Hosanna!"

*Edgar* (revised version: dramma lirico in three acts, *première*: Teatro Comunale, Ferrara, 18 January 1892)

Act	Action
I. Flanders, 1302, piazza of a Flemish village	At dawn, as the church in the town square rings the Angelus, Fidelia, the daughter of Gualtiero, wakes Edgar. He is sleeping near the tavern, not far from his house. Fidelia gives him a flowering almond branch. As the townspeople enter the church, Tigrana, a temptress, waits for Edgar. Fidelia's brother Frank confronts Tigrana, who has rejected him. He says that his love for her is shameful but insuperable ["Questo amor"]. As the church service begins, Tigrana sings the scandalous "Tu il cuor mi strazi." The townspeople berate her, but Edgar defends her. In a rage, Edgar sets his own house on fire, and invites Tigrana to leave with him. Frank tries to stop them and a duel ensues between the two men. Frank is wounded, and Gualtiero curses Tigrana and Edgar as they depart.
II. The terrace of a sumptuous palace	In the moonlight, as an orgy is finishing, a weary Edgar longs for Fidelia and his old way of life ["Orgia, chimera dall'occhio vitreo"]. Tigrana comes to him, trying to rekindle his feelings for her, but he will not be moved. Some soldiers are heard approaching, and when they arrive, Edgar and Tigrana recognize Frank leading the troops. Edgar wants to join Frank, and they embrace. Tigrana objects and as the two men prepare to leave, she begs them not to abandon her.
III. The bastion of a fortress near the city of Courtray	A funeral procession arrives on the platform of the fortress. Pallbearers carry a stretcher with the body of a soldier in full armor, followed by Frank and a monk whose face is obscured by his hood (Edgar in disguise), and place it on a catafalque. The crowd sings a requiem for the fallen hero, Edgar. Fidelia is there and sings "Addio, mio dolce amor!" to her lost love. Frank begins the eulogy when the monk interrupts him recounting Edgar's sins. The crowd's anger swells and they denounce Edgar. Fidelia defends him and calms the crowd ["Nel villaggio"]. Gualtiero leads Fidelia away. Tigrana appears, approaches the coffin and expresses her love for Edgar. Frank and the monk test Tigrana's true feelings; they attempt to bribe her with jewels to denounce Edgar ["Bella signora"]. Tigrana accepts the jewels and incites the crowd against Edgar. They attack the coffin and the empty suit of armor falls to the ground in pieces. Edgar throws off his monk's costume and reveals that he is alive. Fidelia, who has

	reappeared with Gualtiero, embraces Edgar, who then turns to confront Tigrana. She tries to run away and hide, but suddenly returns unobserved and stabs Fidelia. Edgar sobs over Fidelia's body as the soldiers drag Tigrana away.
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*Manon Lescaut* (dramma lirico in four acts, *première*: Teatro Regio, Turin, 1 February 1893)

Act	Action
I. Amiens, the second half of the eighteenth century	The busy town square is filled with students, soldiers and townspeople, when Edmondo enters and sings "Ave, sera gentile." Des Grieux arrives and expresses that he has never been in love, but the woman he wants may be among those present ["Tra voi belle"]. The post carriage arrives, and from it descend Lescaut, his sister Manon, who is being escorted to a convent, and the wealthy Geronte. Des Grieux falls in love with Manon at first sight ["Donna non vidi mai"], and he manages to arrange to meet her later. Meanwhile Geronte himself would like to kidnap Manon and, once Lescaut is distracted by gambling, Geronte hires a carriage from the innkeeper so that he can take her away. Edmondo overhears the conversation, and warns Des Grieux, suggesting that Des Grieux, not Geronte, should run away with Manon. Des Grieux and Manon make their escape. Geronte wants to pursue them, but Lescaut calms him and says he is sure that Manon will go to Paris, and they will find her there.
II. Paris	Manon is now living with Geronte in his opulent accommodations. She is surrounded by luxury and is having her hair done. Lescaut enters and admires her, but senses that she is unhappy at having left Des Grieux. A group of singers now enter to entertain Manon with a madrigal. Geronte returns with some musicians, a few friends and a dancing master, who gives Manon a minuet lesson. After Geronte and his guests leave, Des Grieux suddenly bursts in and he and Manon express their love. Geronte returns and when he protests at the situation, Manon mocks his age and looks. Geronte departs to alert the authorities, while Des Grieux urges Manon to flee with him. Her reticence at leaving behind her jewels delays them just long enough for the guards to arrive and arrest her. She is dragged away as Des Grieux watches.
Intermezzo	This wordless instrumental piece is accompanied in the score (unperformed) by Des Grieux's declaration of love for Manon. He relates that he desperately tried to obtain her freedom, but failing that, has decided to follow her into exile in America.
III. Le Havre	At the harbor is a prison with a barred window. Sentinels stand guard and a ship is partly visible. Manon is a prisoner, about to be deported to America. Lescaut has a plan to save her: he has bribed an archer, who will take the guard's place when the latter is relieved. But the plan fails, and Manon must leave. A guard calls the roll of prisoners, many of whom are prostitutes, and Manon is among them. Des Grieux attempts to accompany Manon, but he is pushed aside. Finally the captain of the vessel takes pity on Des Grieux and permits him to sail to America with them.
IV. The desert near New Orleans	Manon and Des Grieux enter, disheveled and exhausted. Manon is dying, and the desperate Des Grieux tries to comfort her. Manon faints and Des Grieux goes off to search for water. Manon comes to and, thinking he has forsaken her, feels abandoned ["Sola, perduta, abbandonata"]. Des Grieux comes back, but Manon is delirious, recalling the minuet tune from Act II. She dies as Des Grieux embraces her.

*La bohème* (scene liriche in 4 tableaux, *première*: Teatro Regio, Turin, 1 February 1896)

Tableau	Action
I. In the garret	In a freezing Parisian garret, Marcello, a painter, is working on his “The Crossing of the Red Sea” while poet Rodolfo gazes over the roofs of Paris [“ <i>Nei cieli bigi</i> ”]; to keep warm they burn one of Rodolfo’s plays. Soon philosopher Colline and composer Schauard enter, the latter bringing food, wine, cigars and wood, which he paid for with money earned by playing music for an Englishman’s parrot (that he soon poisoned). About to depart for the Café Momus to celebrate Christmas Eve, a knock on the door brings the landlord Benoit demanding rent; the four bohemians ply him with wine and lead him into discussing his extramarital flirtations, after which, in mock horror, they expel him from the garret. Rodolfo stays behind to write as his friends leave for the café. He hears another knock on the door, and this time it is the frail Mimi, his neighbor, who asks for him to light her candle and then faints. Just as she is about to leave, she realizes her key is lost; in the darkness, they both search for the key, which Rodolfo finds and pockets. Their hands accidentally touch. They introduce themselves with arias [“ <i>Che gelida manina</i> ” and “ <i>Mi chiamano Mimi</i> ”] and, as they begin to fall in love [“ <i>O soave fanciulla</i> ”], they decide to join the other bohemians at the café; they finish their duet offstage as the curtain falls.
II. The Latin Quarter	A crowd of townsfolk, soldiers, students, shop workers, and children are milling around near the Café Momus and local businesses on Christmas Eve. Rodolfo buys Mimi a bonnet and soon they join the other bohemians at a table outside the café; the toyseller Parpignol arrives and is surrounded by children and their scolding mothers. Suddenly, the flirtatious Musetta, former lover of Marcello, appears with an elderly beau, Alcindoro, and sings a self-celebratory waltz, much to the painter’s chagrin [“ <i>Quando m’en vo</i> ”], which reawakens Marcello’s love for her. Musetta pretends to have hurt her foot, so Alcindoro rushes to repair her shoe. The bill, which the bohemians cannot pay, arrives just as a military tattoo enters. Musetta tells the waiter to give the check to Alcindoro on his return, and the bohemians join the parade with Musetta hoisted on their shoulders.
III. At the Tollgate d’Enfer	It is a February dawn, with snow everywhere; the tollgate of the Rue d’Enfer is on the right; on the left is a tavern adorned with Marcello’s painting “The Crossing of the Red Sea” now named “At the Port of Marseilles.” Mimi enters, searching for Marcello who is in the tavern with Musetta. Marcello comes out and listens to her tale of troubles with Rodolfo: he is jealous and they quarrel bitterly. Rodolfo is staying at the tavern and, as he comes out, Mimi hides where she can overhear the conversation. Rodolfo tells Marcello that Mimi is a flirt, but Marcello does not believe him. Rodolfo admits that he really does love Mimi but his poverty is preventing her recovery: he only pretends to quarrel so she will leave him and find a more wealthy lover. Mimi’s coughing reveals her presence. Meanwhile Musetta has been flirting in the tavern and Marcello becomes jealous. Mimi and Rodolfo decide to part [“ <i>Donde lieta</i> ”] but will stay together until spring. The final quartet shows Mimi and Rodolfo coming together while Musetta and Marcello separate.
IV. In the garret	As in the first tableau, Marcello and Rodolfo are at work in the garret, but are now thinking of their lost loves. Colline and Schauard enter with food, but this time it is only some bread and one herring. Even so, again in high spirits, they have a mock dance and duel. Suddenly the door opens: it is Musetta with a dying Mimi who has fled from the hospital, wishing to be once more with the bohemians. She is lain on the bed and speaks of her cold hands. The others try to find ways of getting her a muff and medical help: Musetta gives Marcello her earrings to sell, and Colline will sell his coat [“ <i>Vecchia zimarra</i> ”]. Mimi, now alone with Rodolfo [“ <i>Sono andati?</i> ”], recalls with him their first meeting. Schauard, Musetta and Marcello return with a muff and medicine; with her hands finally warmed by the muff, Mimi goes to sleep and dies,

	unnoticed by anyone. While Musetta prays, Schaunard discovers that Mimi has died. As Rodolfo tries to adjust the window so no sunlight falls on Mimi's face, he notices the strained atmosphere and realizes the truth. He collapses on Mimi's body and cries her name as the curtain falls.
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*Tosca* (opera in three acts, *première*: Teatro Costanzi, Rome, 14 January 1900)

Act	Action
I. Rome, June 1800, Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle	Cesare Angelotti, an escaped political prisoner, appears in the church seeking to hide in his sister's family chapel. He finds the hidden key and goes in. A sacristan enters, followed by Mario Cavaradossi, an artist with political subversive leanings, who is painting a portrait of Mary Magdalene. The unknowing model for the portrait was Angelotti's sister, the Marchesa Attavanti, whom Cavaradossi had seen in the church. She had been there to hide women's clothes, a fan, and the key for her brother. Cavaradossi admires the portrait of the blonde marchesa and compares her to the dark beauty of his lover, the singer Floria Tosca ["Recondita armonia"]. Angelotti emerges and Cavaradossi, who recognizes him, offers him his food and drink. But the arrival of Tosca interrupts them, and Angelotti hides again. Tosca, who had heard whispering, is jealous and reminds Cavaradossi of their planned evening together at his secret villa. When she leaves, Angelotti re-emerges from the chapel. A cannon sounds, indicating that the police have discovered Angelotti's escape, and the two men flee to the painter's villa. The sacristan enters with choirboys to celebrate a Te Deum in honor of the recent victory over Napoleon. But their unruly celebrating is cut short by the arrival of Baron Scarpia, chief of police, who has tracked Angelotti to the church. When Tosca returns looking for Cavaradossi, Scarpia understands that Cavaradossi has helped to hide Angelotti, and that arousing Tosca's jealousy will lead him to both men. Scarpia shows Tosca the fan with the Attavanti crest that he has just found. The ploy works and Scarpia sends his men to follow her to Cavaradossi's villa ["Tre sbirri... Una carozza?"]. While the congregation sings the Te Deum, Scarpia reveals his lust for Tosca.
II. The Palazzo Farnese, Scarpia's room	While eating his dinner, Scarpia offers his "creed" of enjoying wine and women: violent sexual conquest not romance. ["Ha più forte sapore"]. His henchman Spoletta arrives, explaining that he could not find Angelotti but has arrested Cavaradossi. While Scarpia interrogates the painter, music from the celebrations is heard outside: a gavotte and a cantata with Tosca as soloist. Scarpia sends for her and, when she arrives, forces her to listen while Cavaradossi is tortured in the next room. She finally reveals Angelotti's hiding place, thinking it will save her lover. But as the disheveled and injured Cavaradossi is brought in, Sciarrone arrives with the surprising news that Napoleon has won the Battle of Marengo after all. Cavaradossi shouts "Vittoria," revealing his true subversive sentiments, and is returned to imprisonment for summary execution. Scarpia, returning to his supper, offers Tosca a bargain: sex for Cavaradossi's freedom. Tosca prays ["Vissi d'arte"] and, after news arrives that Angelotti has killed himself, she ultimately decides to accept the proposition. Scarpia insists that Cavaradossi must appear to be executed and so he will stage a mock execution. Tosca believes him and insists on a safe-conduct pass. Scarpia agrees and, as he writes out the pass, Tosca sees a knife on his dinner table. As he approaches her, Tosca stabs him. After setting candles and a crucifix around the corpse, Tosca pardons him, takes the pass out of his dead hand, and leaves.
III. The platform of the Castel Sant'Angelo	A shepherd boy sings a folk tune and the bells of Rome ring in the dawn as Cavaradossi is brought up to the roof of the Castel Sant'Angelo for execution. He bribes the jailer to allow him to write a farewell letter to Tosca. He finds that he cannot write, but instead recalls their passionate nights together ["E lucevan le stelle"]. Just as he has given up hope, Tosca enters with preparations for their voyage. She tells him of Scarpia's death and the pass; he cannot



	believe that her gentle hands committed murder [“O dolci mani”]. Still credulous of the mock execution, Tosca instructs Cavaradossi how to fall convincingly. The soldiers fire and depart. When she realizes that the bullets were real, she rushes, pursued by Spoletta and soldiers who have discovered Scarpia’s murder, to the edge of the Castel, and leaps into the void.
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*Madama Butterfly* (tragedia giapponese in three acts, *première of final version*: Opéra Comique, Paris, 28 December 1906)

Act	Action
I. Hill near Nagasaki, Japan, the present day [early 20th Century]	U. S. Navy Lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton has leased a house for 999 years, subject to monthly renewal, from Goro a marriage broker. The house, overlooking Nagasaki harbor, is where he will live with his new bride, Cio-Cio-San ( <i>Butterfly</i> ). When the American consul Sharpless arrives, breathless from climbing the hill, Pinkerton describes himself as a “Yankee vagabondo” to whom this Japanese marriage will mean nothing. Sharpless warns him that the girl, who is only fifteen, may not understand, but Pinkerton scoffs and says he will someday have a real American wife. <i>Butterfly</i> ’s voice is heard as she arrives for the ceremony, soon followed by her relatives. <i>Butterfly</i> tells Pinkerton that she will convert to his religion. The happy occasion is interrupted by the arrival of the Bonze, a priest who is <i>Butterfly</i> ’s uncle; he is furious that she renounced her family’s religion. Pinkerton orders everyone to leave, and <i>Butterfly</i> remains alone with her new groom and her maid Suzuki. <i>Butterfly</i> tells Pinkerton she is rejected but happy. She changes clothes and they make love.
II. Inside <i>Butterfly</i> ’s house	<i>Butterfly</i> has been waiting for her husband’s return for three years. Suzuki, aware that money is running out and that <i>Butterfly</i> has not faced the truth, prays to the gods for help. Sharpless returns to visit <i>Butterfly</i> because he has received a letter from Pinkerton, who will be returning to Japan. Goro arrives with the rich Prince Yamadori, who wants to marry <i>Butterfly</i> , but whom she rejects. When Sharpless suggests that perhaps <i>Butterfly</i> should reconsider Yamadori’s offer, <i>Butterfly</i> fetches the young son she had with Pinkerton. Sharpless leaves, but soon the cannon that announces the arrival of a ship is heard. <i>Butterfly</i> and Suzuki read the name of Pinkerton’s ship through a telescope. <i>Butterfly</i> and Suzuki plan for Pinkerton’s return by spreading flower petals all over, and they wait behind a screen with the child, keeping vigil.
III. [The same]	An intermezzo depicts the long vigil, the dawn breaking, sounds of morning birds and sailors in the distance. Pinkerton has not yet arrived. <i>Butterfly</i> and the child try to get some sleep. When Sharpless appears with Pinkerton and his new wife Kate, Suzuki foresees tragedy. Pinkerton is overcome with guilt and flees the scene. When <i>Butterfly</i> enters expecting to see Pinkerton, she sees Kate instead. She understands the situation—that they want to take the child—and decides to die with honor as her father did. She takes out the knife with which he committed <i>hara-kiri</i> and is about to stab herself when Suzuki brings the child in. But this will not deter her: she blindfolds the child, gives him an American flag, and kills herself as Pinkerton is heard calling “ <i>Butterfly!</i> ”

*La fanciulla del West* (opera in 3 acts, *première*: Metropolitan Opera House, New York, 10 December 1910)

Act	Action
I. California, the “gold rush” era, the interior of the “Polka” Saloon	Gold Rush miners enter the saloon after a day of working at the mines. After a song by traveling minstrel Jake Wallace [“Che faranno i vecchi miei”], one of the miners, Jim Larkens, is homesick and the others collect enough money for his fare home. Some miners who are playing cards discover that Sid is cheating and try to attack him. Sheriff Jack Rance quiets the fight and pins two cards, the sign of a cheater, to Sid’s jacket. A Wells Fargo agent, Ashby,

	<p>enters and announces that he is chasing the bandit Ramerrez and his gang of Mexicans. Rance toasts Minnie, the girl who owns the saloon, as his future wife, which makes Sonora jealous. The two men begin to fight. Rance draws his revolver, but at that moment a shot rings out: Minnie appears, standing next to the bar with a rifle in her hands. She then gives the miners a reading lesson from the Bible. The Pony Express rider arrives and delivers a telegram from Nina Micheltorena, who has offered to reveal Ramerrez's hideout. The sheriff tells Minnie that he loves her ["Minnie, dalla mia casa"], but she is waiting for the "right" (and unmarried) man ["Laggiù nel Soledad"]. A stranger enters the saloon and asks for a whisky and water; he introduces himself as Dick Johnson from Sacramento, someone whom Minnie had met earlier. Johnson invites Minnie to dance with him and she accepts. Rance watches them angrily. Ashby returns with the captured Ramerrez gang member, Castro. Upon seeing his leader, Johnson, in the saloon, Castro agrees to lead Rance, Ashby and the miners in a search for Ramerrez, and the group then follows him on a wild goose chase. But before Castro leaves, he whispers to Johnson that someone will whistle, and Johnson must reply to confirm that the coast is clear for robbing the saloon. A whistle is heard, but Johnson fails to reply. Minnie shows Johnson the keg of gold that she and the miners take turns guarding at night, and Johnson assures her that the gold will be safe there. Before he leaves the saloon, he promises to visit her at her cabin. They confess their love for each other. Minnie begins to cry, and Johnson comforts her before he leaves.</p>
II. Minnie's dwelling	<p>Wowkle, a Native American squaw who is Minnie's servant, her lover Billy Jackrabbit, and their baby are present as Minnie enters, wanting to get ready for Johnson's visit. Johnson enters Minnie's cabin and she tells him all about her life. It begins to snow. They kiss and Minnie asks him to stay till morning. He denies knowing Nina Micheltorena. As Johnson hides, a posse enters looking for Ramerrez, telling Minnie that Johnson himself is the bandit. After they are gone, she angrily orders Johnson to leave. After his exit, Minnie hears a gunshot and she knows Johnson has been shot. Johnson staggers in and collapses, and Minnie helps him hide in her loft. Rance enters looking for the bandit, and is about to give up searching for him, when drops of blood fall on his hand from the loft above. Rance forces Johnson to climb down at gunpoint. Minnie desperately offers Rance a deal: if she beats him at poker, he must let Johnson go free; if Rance wins, she will marry him. Hiding some cards in her stockings, Minnie cheats and wins. Rance honors the deal and Minnie throws herself on the unconscious Johnson on the floor.</p>
III. The Great California Forest	<p>Johnson is again on the run from Ashby and the miners. Nick and Rance are discussing Johnson and wonder what Minnie sees in him when Ashby arrives in triumph: Johnson has been captured. Rance and the miners all want Johnson to be hanged. Johnson accepts the sentence and asks only that the miners not tell Minnie about his capture and his fate ["Ch'ella mi creda"]. Just before the execution Minnie arrives, armed with a pistol, and throws herself in front of Johnson to protect him. While Rance tries to proceed with the hanging, she convinces the miners that they owe her too much to kill the man she loves, and asks them to forgive him. One by one, the miners yield to her plea. Rance is not happy but finally he too gives in. Sonora unties Johnson and sets him free. The miners bid Minnie farewell. Minnie and Johnson depart California, heading East to start a new life.</p>

*La rondine* (commedia lirica in 3 acts, *première*: Théâtre de l'Opéra, Monte Carlo, 27 March 1917)

Act	Action
I. A salon in Paris, c. 1860	<p>Rambaldo Fernandez is hosting a party in the salon of his mistress, Magda. One of his guests is the poet Prunier, who holds forth on the subject of love. Lisette, Magda's feisty maid, dismisses the idea of sentimental love. Prunier performs his latest song, about a young woman, Doretta, who dreams of a maid rejecting a king's love because money cannot buy happiness ["Chi il bel sogno di Doretta"]. The song is not finished, but Magda supplies the ending: a student comes and shows Doretta the meaning of true passion. Rambaldo presents Magda with a new necklace, but she remains convinced that money cannot buy happiness. Lisette comes in, announcing the arrival of a young man, the son of a childhood friend of Rambaldo. Magda recalls once running away from her aunt to the Bal Bullier, where she danced and enjoyed herself with the students ["Fanciulla è sbocciato l'amore!"]. She describes how a young man had sat with her, ordered two bocks, and left a big tip; then they both wrote their names on the table. They fell in love but nothing ever happened. Magda now wants to relive those moments. Prunier leads the women to a corner where he reads their palms. Prunier tells Magda that, like a swallow, she will fly away toward love. Meanwhile, Ruggero Lastouc, the son of Rambaldo's childhood friend, has arrived. Since it is Ruggero's first night in Paris, he wants to know where to go, and is told to visit the Bal Bullier. Ruggero leaves, followed by the rest. Lisette has the night off too and will go out with Prunier ["T'amo!"]. She dresses in one of Magda's gowns, and Prunier makes suggestions about her outfit. Magda decides to return to the Bal Bullier's and relive her youthful adventure: she comes out of her boudoir disguised as a grisette.</p>
II. Bullier's	<p>Bal Bullier is filled with happy crowds ["Fiori freschi!"] when Magda appears at the entrance. She looks around hesitantly, and they bring her over to Ruggero. She apologizes for the intrusion ["Scusatemi, scusate"]. Ruggero thinks she is different than the other women, that she reminds him of the girls from his town of Montauban. Ruggero asks her to dance ["Nella dolce carezza della danza"]. Prunier and Lisette enter and begin to dance. When Magda and Ruggero finish dancing, he orders two bocks, which reminds her of her former escapade. She then asks him to give a large tip to the waiter, and they write their names on the table, just as long ago. However, she says her name is Paulette. Ruggero feels close to her ["Io non so chi siate voi"] and they kiss. Lisette recognizes Magda, but when Ruggero introduces her as Paulette, Lisette says nothing. The two couples drink a toast to love ["Bevo al tuo fresco sorriso"]. Rambaldo enters and wants to know why Magda is there. Magda asks for his forgiveness, but states that she must follow her own destiny; Rambaldo leaves. It is now morning, everyone has gone, and Ruggero asks Magda to depart with him.</p>
III. A seaside hotel	<p>Ruggero and Magda have been living by the seashore, and are very much in love. Ruggero surprises her by saying that he wrote to his parents about her, requesting money and asking for their consent to marry her. Magda is shocked; he professes his love for her for always ["E laggiù non sapevo"], and wants her to return with him to his home. He even looks forward to having a child with her. Magda must now decide whether to tell him about her past. Lisette and Prunier enter: Lisette has had a disastrous debut on the stage, and she wants to return to her old life as Magda's maid. Prunier predicts that Magda will also return to her old ways. Ruggero's mother has written giving her consent to the marriage, and looking forward to the birth of their future children. Magda confesses that she has an impure past. Ruggero does not mind, but Magda insists that she must end the relationship. She departs as Ruggero weeps.</p>

*Il trittico* (three one-act operas, *première*: Metropolitan Opera House, New York, 14 December 1918)

*Il tabarro* (Opera in one act)

	<b>Action</b>
A barge on the Seine in Paris, 1910	<p>At sunset, Michele is on deck, smoking his pipe as his wife Giorgetta does chores. He asks her to kiss him, but she rejects him. She offers wine to the stevedores, and, to the accompaniment of a passing organ grinder, Tinca and then Luigi dance with Giorgetta, interrupted by Michele's return. A passing song seller peddles his wares, singing about a girl who lived and died for love, Mimi ["Primavera, primavera"]. Frugola, the wife of one of the stevedores, Talpa, arrives to take him home and shows the others what she has collected during the day; she sings about her cat, Caporale ["Se tu sapessi"]. Another worker, Tinca, plans to get drunk to forget his troubles. Luigi agrees with him that drinking is the only way to face their bleak lives ["Hai ben ragione"]. Frugola expresses her dreams of living in the peaceful countryside ["Ho sognato una casetta"], but Giorgetta longs to return to her home in Belleville, a suburb of which Luigi is also a native ["E ben altro mio sogno"]. The others leave and Giorgetta warns Luigi, with whom she is having an affair, to be careful of her jealous husband ["O Luigi! Luigi!"]. Michele returns on deck, and Luigi, finding the situation with Giorgetta torturous, asks to be discharged when they arrive at Rouen. Michele convinces him to stay. When Michele is gone, Giorgetta and Luigi arrange to meet later: they will use the usual signal, a lit match. Luigi leaves. When Michele returns, he tries to rekindle Giorgetta's love for him by remembering the days before the death of their child, when he would wrap her and the child in his cloak. But she is no longer interested and leaves to go to bed. Michele suspects that Giorgetta is in love with someone else, but he cannot determine with whom ["Nulla! Silenzio!"]. As he sits down to think, he lights his pipe with a match. Believing this lit match is the signal, Luigi appears. Michele seizes him and forces him to admit that he loves Giorgetta. When Luigi does, Michele strangles him, and wraps the body in his cloak. Giorgetta, frightened, comes back on deck to beg Michele's forgiveness. When Michele pulls back his cloak to reveal Luigi's dead body, Giorgetta screams.</p>

*Suor Angelica* (Opera in one act)

	<b>Action</b>
A convent in the latter part of the seventeenth century, May	<p>Nuns are in chapel singing an "Ave Maria." After the service the Monitress questions them about their sins. One of the sisters, Genovieffa, relates that it is the special time of year, when the sun illuminates their fountain for three days. Some of the sisters admit they still have worldly desires: Genovieffa misses the lambs she used to care for, and Dolcina misses good food. Angelica denies having any desires, but the rest know she desperately longs for some word from her family. For seven years she has been isolated from them, banished to the convent for unknown reasons. Sister Chiara enters, having been stung by wasps and the sisters need Angelica, who is knowledgeable about herbs and plants, to provide a remedy. Soon the two sisters who collect alms enter, showing what they have amassed. They describe a beautiful coach that has arrived. Angelica hopes that the coach may be bringing word from her family. It is indeed Angelica's cruel aunt, the Princess. The Princess explains that she was made the guardian of Angelica and her sister, Anna Viola, upon the death of their parents when Angelica's parents died ["Il principe Gualtiero"]. Because Anna Viola is getting married, Angelica, having disgraced the family, must sign legal papers dividing the estate. With rising anxiety, Angelica begs for news of her son. When the Princess tells her the child died two years before, Angelica swoons, but recovers enough to sign the papers. The Princess leaves and Angelica</p>

	imagines her son dying without his mother at his side [“Senza mamma”]. In despair, she gathers poisonous herbs, so that in dying she can be reunited with her child. After drinking the potion, she suddenly realizes that this act will damn her and she will not be able to see her son in heaven. Praying for salvation from the Virgin Mary, joined by angelic voices, the Virgin appears miraculously and gently pushes the child toward the dying Angelica.
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*Gianni Schicchi* (Opera in one act)

	Action
The bed-chamber of Buoso Donati, Florence, 1299	Buoso Donati’s greedy relatives are gathered at his deathbed to mourn his passing, but their tears are hypocritical. They have heard rumors that Donati has left nearly everything to a monastery, and they search frantically for his will. Rinuccio, who needs money in order to marry Lauretta, the daughter of Gianni Schicchi, finds the document. Everyone reads it and weeps genuine tears when the rumor proves true. Rinuccio suggests that Gianni Schicchi, known for his shrewdness, can help. Rinuccio sings an ode to Florence [“Firenze è come un albero fiorito”]. Schicchi arrives with Lauretta, and trades sharp words with the elder female relative, Zita. Disgusted, Schicchi intends to leave, but Lauretta dissuades him [“O mio babbino caro”]. After sending Lauretta outside, Schicchi explains his proposed plan to impersonate the dead man and dictate a new will. The doctor Spinelloccio arrives to check on Buoso, but Schicchi’s disguised voice convinces the doctor that the patient is still alive. After the doctor leaves, Schicchi dons Buoso’s nightshirt and cap to prepare for the notary’s visit, during which he will dictate the new will. All the relatives try to bribe Schicchi to leave them the best parts of the estate. He agrees to all their secret requests, but warns them that they must forever keep the secret of his deception or face cruel punishment—an amputated hand and eternal banishment from Florence. When the notary arrives, Schicchi requests that all be left to his old friend Gianni Schicchi. As soon as the notary departs, the relatives fly into a rage and grab what they can from the house. Schicchi orders them out. He looks toward the young lovers, out on the terrace, gazing at the cityscape. Addressing the audience, Schicchi points to the happy pair, and pleads for a verdict of “guilty with an explanation.”

*Turandot* (dramma lirico in 3 acts and 5 tableaux, *posthumous première*: Teatro alla Scala, Milan, 25 April 1926)

Act	Action
I. Peking in mythical times. The walls of Imperial City	An edict is read to the crowd that Princess Turandot will marry any prince who can answer three riddles. But if the suitor fails, he will be executed. The Prince of Persia, who has failed the test, will be beheaded at moonrise. In the crowd, a young slave Liù calls for help because her master, Timur (the elderly former king of the Tartars), has fallen: Calaf (the Unknown Prince) comes to help and they recognize each other: Calaf is Timur’s son, whom Liù loves because he once smiled at her. When the moon rises, a funeral procession leads the Persian Prince to his death; Turandot appears and orders the execution. Calaf falls in love with Turandot at first sight, and—despite pleas from Timur and Liù [“Signore, ascolta”]—approaches the gong to signal his desire to try to win Turandot’s hand. The ministers Ping, Pang and Pong, try to discourage Calaf, but he ignores them. The spirits of Turandot’s dead suitors proclaim their undying love for Turandot. Calaf resolutely goes to the gong and sounds it.
II. First tableau: a pavillion	Ministers Ping, Pang and Pong decry the bloody results of Turandot’s riddles, and they long for the peace of their homes in the country [“Ho una casa nell’Honan”]. They hope the riddles can be solved by the new stranger.
Second tableau: the vast palace square	The Emperor, sitting atop a long flight of steps, tries to dissuade Calaf from attempting the contest. Turandot appears and explains how her ancestor Lo-u-ling was kidnapped and killed by a foreign prince. In consequence,

	Turandot refuses to ever be possessed by a man [ <i>"In questa reggia"</i> ]. She asks Calaf the first riddle: "What is born each night and dies each dawn?" He correctly answers "Hope." The second riddle is "What is feverish, but can transform into languor, darts like a flame but is not a flame?" He answers "Blood." Turandot asks the third riddle: "What is ice that sets you on fire?" Calaf correctly answers "Turandot." Stunned by his success, Turandot begs the Emperor to release her from the oath, but is refused. Calaf takes pity on her and offers her a riddle of his own: if she can guess his name by dawn, he will die.
III. First tableau: the Palace garden, night	Turandot has commanded that no one sleep until the stranger's name is discovered. Calaf thinks about his coming victory [ <i>"Nessun dorma"</i> ]. Ping, Pang and Pong attempt to bribe Calaf with women and riches if he will relent. All are fearful that if Turandot does not learn the name, they will be killed. The mob turns against Calaf just as soldiers drag in Liù and Timur who know the prince's name. When Turandot arrives, Calaf swears not to know the two captives. Liù, in order to save Timur from torture, exclaims that she knows the name but she would rather die than reveal it. She is tortured, but does not name Calaf. It is love, she tells Turandot, that has given her courage, and that Turandot will also know love someday [ <i>"Tu che di gel sei cinta"</i> ]. Liù then grabs a dagger from a guard and stabs herself. The body is borne away by the lamenting crowd. Calaf, now alone with Turandot, kisses her [ <i>"Principessa di morte"</i> ]. She feels love for the first time and weeps [ <i>"Del primo pianto"</i> ]. He reveals his name to her, confident that she will have mercy on him.
Second tableau: outside the Imperial palace	The Emperor and his court are assembled to hear Turandot's response. She says that she knows the prince's name, and it is Love. The two embrace as the crowd erupts in joy.

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