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Many of those involved with the new Verdi edition have long suspected that the principles drafted to underpin the editing of the earlier works—most notably, the special privileging of the readings of the autograph scores—would have to be modified, or even completely rethought, when confronting the last operas. This is certainly the case with *Falstaff* (1893). New evidence, for example, demonstrates that after receiving the last portion of the autograph score from Verdi in early October 1892, the publisher Giulio Ricordi called upon at least two prominent Milanese instrumentalists, Gerolamo De Angelis (violin, viola) and Giuseppe Magrini (cello), to undertake a substantial “revision of the parts.” This was clearly to be an editorial standardization that would permit the parts to be engraved prior to the first performances. Additional evidence confirms both that Verdi was aware of this editorial intervention and that he approved of it. Moreover, the composer doubtless had a further hand in endorsing and extending these editorial retouchings during the January 1893 rehearsals, by which time the original autograph score had become an editorially obsolete document.

As one reviews the available information surrounding the history of the printing of the first orchestral score of *Falstaff*, certain conclusions become inescapable. Among them: The preferred principal source for any future edition—at least one that claims to be an improvement on what is readily available today—should not be the autograph score. The existing evidence consistently and clearly shows that the autograph score was not produced to serve as the final court of appeal in editorial questions, rather, it was an “initiator-text” whose task, in accordance with the conventions of operatic publication in the 1880s and 1890s, was to set into motion a larger, collaborative process of grooming the work for its public appearance.

In short: To be sure, the autograph score of *Falstaff* is a precious historical document. It is of great interest to historians and to all admirers of the opera who might wish to venerate the hand of the *vecchio maestro* in the act of creation. But it is no longer of significant editorial interest. In terms of authority, it preserves an older, essentially abandoned state of the verbal and musical text, and, for all practical purposes, present-day performers, qua performers, need not be concerned with it. In nearly all cases, readings in the autograph score should not be permitted to override those in the more reliable early printed sources. In general, it is the autograph score that should be overridden. ♣

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