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ABSTRACTS FROM THE SARASOTA CONFERENCE ON VERDI'S REVISIONS

The Two Venetian *Traviatas*

Martin Chusid, *New York University*

The well-known fiasco of the original version of *La traviata* was attributed by the composer to his principal singers; and indeed all three had problems: the tenor and baritone with their voices, the soprano with her full-blown, overly healthy appearance. But the notable revisions in the great duet of Violetta and Germont in Act II, and minor changes elsewhere in Acts II and III of the opera, suggest that Verdi himself recognized problems with the original score. This explains his refusal for 14 months to allow the first version to be performed elsewhere with different singers; that is, until he had had time to revise the work.

This paper discusses the weaknesses in the original duet and the reason the composer allowed the opera to be performed with those weaknesses, namely the pressure of time. There were only six weeks between the first performances of *Il trovatore* (Rome, 19-22 January 1853 with Verdi directing) and *La traviata* (Venice, 6 March 1853). Furthermore, each opera was preceded by three weeks of rehearsal for Verdi and the performers.

The paper also points to a surprisingly large number of similarities between the plot and music of *Traviata* and the enormously successful *Rigoletto*, whose premiere was also in Venice only two years earlier (11 March 1851). Verdi appears to have been sensitive to these similarities, and they led him to insist on modern dress for *Traviata*, although he did so unsuccessfully.

Revising *Stiffelio*:

Verdi's Sketches for *Aroldo*

Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell, *The University of Chicago Press*

The autograph materials for *Stiffelio*, recovered in 1992 in the Villa Verdi at Sant'Agata, comprise not only the sketches, continuity draft, and portions of the full score for that opera, composed in 1850, but also several fascicles of sketches for *Aroldo*, the revised version first performed in 1857. The *Aroldo* sketches shed important new light on the rationale

for this revision. Together with the evidence in the draft libretto for *Aroldo*, worked out by Verdi and Piave and also preserved at Sant'Agata, they add weight to previously aired hypotheses that for Verdi, trying to make *Stiffelio* into a work more viable for performance in the 1850s, more was at stake than mitigating censorial objections to the plot. At least two other fundamental considerations were important: a desire for lasting popular appeal and, with it, the conviction that for audiences of the time some of the most unusual musical features of the *Stiffelio* score were just those that worked against this desired effect.

Only about 45% of *Stiffelio* appears in *Aroldo*, and even those sections contain numerous revisions, thus confirming Verdi's remark that "about half of the music [...] is entirely new." The 24 pages of sketches for *Aroldo* preserve an early stage in the creation of the new portions of the score. None is in the form of a continuity draft representing the near-final version of a movement. Many sketches have no vocal text, but some of those that do correspond to Verdi's draft version of the libretto, inserted into the pages that Piave sent him in February 1856, but prior to the librettist's polishing of the text later that year. Other evidence shows that the music for both the heavily revised *Introduzione* and the new concluding *Finale* must have been composed after July 1856. This in turn indicates that the presence in the full score of French paper for those sections is explained not by their composition early in the 1850s, suggested elsewhere, but by their creation after September 1856, when Verdi had returned to Paris.

The *Aroldo* sketches contain drafts in at least some form for nearly all the new pieces and movements, but for the wholly new Act IV portions of the "Burrasca" and the *Finale* are missing. The pages containing them have apparently been separated from those now available. This factor, taken together with the substantial differences in the sketches for a number of the set pieces from the definitive versions in the full score, suggests that intermediate sketches or even portions of a continuity draft once existed and may yet be recovered for *Aroldo*. Even the substantial group of sketches now available, however, reveals the evolution in Verdi's compositional strategies during the passage from the early drafts of a declamatory section or an initial sketch for a set piece, to the full-blown version in the definitive score.

The Two Versions of Don Carlo's Romance, "Je l'ai vue/Io la vidi"

James Hepokoski, *University of Minnesota*

The most prominent aspect of Verdi's 1882-83 revision of his 1867, five-act *Don Carlos* was the jettisoning of the first act altogether for the sake of dramatic conciseness. Thus the first act (the only act whose plot, as "background information," was situated in France) was removed totally—except for one lyric moment within it, the *romance* for Don Carlos, "Je l'ai vue," the tenor's only solo piece. For the four-act revision Verdi wanted this piece to be plucked out of the abandoned France and transplanted into Spain, and into a radically different dramatic and emotional context, near the beginning of the new Act I (that is, the original Act II). This obliged him, in those pre-*Otello* years, to recompose a new "Je l'ai vue," grounded in the same opening melody but utterly transformed in expressive content. The revised "Je l'ai vue" ("Io la vidi" in the more usual Italian translation) was a different piece, one that we now hear only within the four-act version.

Studying the details of this late-Verdian revision can invite a broader reading that transcends the immediate plot of the opera—a reading concerned with aging, loss, and the specific history of this opera itself. In order to arrive at this larger reading, we need to consider, first, just what Carlos's *romance* was in 1867; and, second, what it *became* when Verdi recomposed it in 1882-83. These issues involve questions of genre and structure. The 1867 version of the *romance* was generically straightforward, purposefully formulaic, rounded, and musically closed for specific dramatic reasons appropriate to its original context. In the revision from the 1880s Verdi subjected the original text and music to structural distortion or "deformation." The essence of the new, more strained "Je l'ai vue" lies in its provocative dialogue with the more normative 1867 piece.

The immediate expressive point of this structural deformation appears to have been to suggest that the contextual plot-situation of the original *romance*—the context that initially determined its meaning—had altered. Given Carlos's agitated present (obsessed with the loss of Elisabeth of Valois), Verdi was using structural distortion apparently to demonstrate that the character is now unable to attain the security and wholeness of the lost "Fontainebleau" past. But it is possible to extend the argument beyond the merely local plot-sit-

uation of Carlos and Elisabeth. On broader interpretive levels, the "loss" that saturates the revised version suggests also the loss of the entire first act in the revision—and perhaps, even more broadly, one might additionally understand it as the aging Verdi's own loss of the operatic world that had made the original "Je l'ai vue" possible in the first place.

The Two *Boccanegras*

Harold Powers, *Princeton University*

The presentation had five divisions, the first three dealing with overall design and the Central Finale, the last two having to do with duets and cabalettas.

1. Summary overview of *Simon Boccanegra* in both versions.

There are three time periods covered. The earliest is rehearsed entirely in narratives occurring here and there during the course of the Prologue and the first set of Act I; the Prologue itself is the enactment on stage of a second slightly later time period. The third time-period comprises the main action in three acts, twenty-five years later, taking place in a proper Aristotelian manner during the course of a single day.

There are two interlocked stories involved in the opera: (1) the history of the young woman known as "Amelia Grimaldi" (*prima donna*), who is in fact the illegitimate daughter of the plebeian corsair Simon Boccanegra (*primo baritono*) and Maria de' Fieschi, deceased daughter of the patrician Jacopo Fiesco (*primo basso*); (2) the hatred of Fiesco for Simon Boccanegra, who is elevated from sea captain to Doge of Genoa during the Prologue. Fiesco's hatred is doubly motivated, not just by class disjunction and political rivalry, but also by Simon's seduction of his daughter.

There are also two supplementary plot lines: (1) the love between "Amelia Grimaldi" and the patrician Gabriele Adorno (*primo tenore*), a deadly enemy of Doge Simon Boccanegra, who had been responsible for the death of his father in battle; (2) the actions of Paolo Albiani, (*baritono comprimario*), the plebeian political wizard that got his fellow-plebeian Boccanegra elevated to the Ducal throne in the Prologue, who betrays and poisons the Doge during the course of the main action after Simon has refused to use his authority to gain the supposedly rich "Amelia Grimaldi" for him in marriage.

2. The replacement of the Central Finale in *Simon Boccanegra*

There were five principal features in the transformation of the 1857 Act I Finale into the Council Chamber Scene of 1881. (1) The preliminary matter, a celebration of Boccanegra's Golden Jubilee as Doge of Genoa, was completely replaced by an appeal for peace between Genoa and Venice by the Doge, addressed to the joint Council of Patricians and Plebeians. (2) The action from the interruption of Gabriele Adorno through Amelia's sudden entrance and narrative of her abduction and escape was retained, with new text and music for the first interruption (Adorno's) and (3) old music lightly revised for Amelia's narrative. (4) The Doge makes a second appeal for peace, this time between the patrician and plebeian factions in the Council and in Genoa at large, each group having accused some unknown person from the other of engineering Amelia's abduction. (5) The original *stretta* calling for "anatema" on the unknown abductor was replaced, and its fundamental idea highly intensified, by a dialogue between Boccanegra, who knows his henchman Paolo must have been the abductor of Amelia (whom he knows is his long-lost daughter), and Paolo, in which Boccanegra makes Paolo curse himself ("maledizion!"). The music is new throughout except for Amelia's narrative (3), which was touched up here and there and given a new transition into (4) the Doge's appeal for peace between patricians and plebeians.

3. Consequences of the new Finale for the rest of the new *Boccanegra*

The change with the greatest consequence for the rest of the revision was the elimination of the celebration of the Doge's Golden Jubilee from the 1857 version. It had begun with a "Hymn to the Doge"; this music also occurs at the very beginning of the 1857 *Preludio* to the opera, and at the beginning of the last act, Act III. (The rest of the melodic ideas in the *Preludio* reflect, in order of appearance, four important emotional high spots of the opera that are in fact still part of the 1881 version.)

Eliminating the celebratory preliminaries from the central Finale, with its "Hymn to the Doge," in turn required scrapping the *Preludio* and therefore making a new beginning for the opera as a whole. The reprise of the "Hymn to the Doge" that comes at the beginning of Act III also had to be scrapped, so that Act III had to have a new beginning as well.

Once the new Finale was made, further changes arose that turn on the *comprimario* baritone role, Simon's henchman Paolo Albiani. Paolo begins both the Prologue and Act III, where changes forced by eliminating the "Hymn to the Doge" had to be made in any case. More than that, though, Boito had taken the occasion, as Verdi put it, to elevate Paolo from a mere scoundrel to a real villain, much in the Boitian Mefistofele/Barnaba/Iago mold. Following up his melodramatic conclusion for the new Act I Finale, in which Simon forces Paolo to curse himself, Boito gave Paolo a new and murderous monologue at the beginning of Act II, replacing a rather perfunctory recitative.

Thus the new Finale not only had its own new beginning and ending but also necessarily led to a new beginning for both the Prologue and Act III, consequent on the elimination of the "Hymn to the Doge"; and it led indirectly to a new beginning for Act II as well, consequent on the new treatment for Paolo at its end.

4. *Simon Boccanegra*: the duet opera

The number and variety of the duets are what make this opera special. There are three one-movement duets, two of them "dialogue duets" (the melodic continuity is in the orchestra, which the vocal lines take turns doubling and abandoning in a *parlante* texture). The Fiesco-Gabriele duet in Act I was a vengeance duet in 1857, replaced in 1881 by a blessing and prayer. The two dialogue duets, both involving Paolo, were retained in 1881, the second (in Act II) with some altered text.

Of the five multi-movement duets the first and last, for Fiesco and Simon, are the emotional pillars of the opera: in the penultimate number of the Prologue, in two movements, Fiesco refuses to make peace with Simon; in the penultimate number of Act III, in three movements, Fiesco learns that his ward Amelia is in fact his long-lost granddaughter, Simon's daughter, and the two men are reconciled. Both these baritone/bass duets presume the generic four-movement Italian duet scene on the "horizon of expectation," and in their frustration of generic expectations lies much of the tremendous musical and dramatic power of these two monumental duet scenes. The texts were unchanged in the revision, and musically merely touched up in a few places.

5. The Cabalettas in *Simon Boccanegra*

The other three multi-movement duets have the usual four movements: an opening action movement, the so-called

tempo d'attacco, that sets the mood for the first formal piece, a slow movement; a second action movement between the two formal musical numbers, a *tempo di mezzo*, provides the dramatic pretext for a change of mood in the second formal movement, the cabaletta.

In the 1857 *Boccanegra*, the two four-movement duets in the first set of Act I, one for Amelia and Gabriele, the other for Amelia and Simon, have conventional duet cabalettas: a statement for each character, a ritornello, a restatement, *a2*, and a coda. In the 1881 *Boccanegra* an already drastically foreshortened cabaletta from 1857 in Act II for Gabriele and Amelia was retained, while their conventional Act I cabaletta was reduced to comparable brevity for 1881 by eliminating the ritornello and the second singing of the cabaletta, going directly from the initial statements to a second statement *a2* amalgamated with a new coda.

The formal dimensions of the cabaletta in the Amelia/Simon duet in Act I, concluding the famous father/daughter recognition duet, were reduced in much the same way for 1881, but with seemingly new material for Amelia's statement and the statement *a2* and coda that follow it. This material, however, is easily shown to have been derived from its 1857 predecessor.

Reflections on the Revisions of *Don Carlos*

David Rosen, Cornell University

Although one Verdi scholar has reckoned that there are seven versions of *Don Carlos*—this calculation counts as different “versions” various stages in the *genesis* of the work preceding the première, including pieces that never even reached orchestral rehearsals—the work could be more simply viewed as consisting of three basic versions (or complexes), or, if the changes made in two numbers in 1872 pass the litmus test for a separate version, four. Here is an overview:

1867: Cuts made before the 11 March 1867 première at the Paris Opéra because of the excessive length of the work: even before being placed into orchestral rehearsal an Elisabeth/Eboli duet (IV, i) and Carlos/Philippe duet (IV, ii) were cut—of the nine duets Verdi composed for the opera these were the only two that did not effect a change in the dra-

matic situation. An extended Introduction (I) was cut later, and there were also five shorter cuts in numbers that survived. Even with these cuts on opening night the opera had about 3 hours and 34 minutes of music, with four intermissions totaling at least an hour. **Immediately after the première** Verdi authorized cutting the Finale of Act IV, thus ending the act with the death of Posa. For the **1872 Naples** production (with Italian text) Verdi reworked the Posa/Philippe duet and removed the the *allegro marziale* section from the Act V Elisabeth/Carlos duet; otherwise this version is identical to the 1867 Paris version (with the omission of the Act IV finale). (One of Verdi's letters requesting text from Antonio Ghislanzoni appeared in the last issue of the *Verdi Newsletter*.)

1883: Four-act version revised in 1882-83 and first performed at La Scala in January 1884. In revising Verdi worked with French text, the language of the original work; the Italian translation in which one usually hears the work has justifiably been criticized—e.g., in the final duet the reprise of the word “rêve” triggers a musical reprise of music from the preceding Elisabeth/Carlos duet but the translation obliterates the textual reprise—but it must be recognized that Verdi himself authorized keeping the translation already made in 1867 for the unrevised passages and participated actively in the translation of the new text.

Large-scale cuts: Act I removed (including Introduction, Romance, Duet, and Finale); the Ballet and the preceding scene with chorus were replaced by a newly composed Prelude (this change was optional, but apparently generally followed). See also Finales below.

Solo set pieces: Carlos's Romance was moved to the new Act I and, as a result of its new mood and text, revised. The other seven solo set pieces remain unchanged.

Duets: Carlos/Posa (I, i); Posa/Philippe (I, ii); Elisabeth/Carlos (IV)

Kinetic scenes between two characters: Elisabeth/Philippe before the Quartet (III, i) and Elisabeth/Eboli before Eboli's aria (III, i)

Larger ensembles: the music of the Quartet (III, i) was revised, but the text remained the same, an unusual procedure in the revision of *Don Carlos*.

Finales: A short revised finale restored to Act III, ii; the finale of Act IV, featuring a chorus of inquisitors, was replaced by a short scene following the duet of Elisabeth and Carlos.

1886: Five-act version without ballet, first performed at the Teatro comunale of Modena. This is a scissors-and-paste job in which the 1867 Act I (and, in order to avoid a repetition of

Carlos's Romance, the beginning of Act II) was grafted on to the 4-act version (starting after the Romance).

Verdi typically undertook revisions with a very specific goal in mind but, once having reexamined the score, would be "struck by things that [he] would not have wished to find" and would go far beyond his original motivation for re-engaging with the score. In the case of *Don Carlos* this immediate goal is unique in all of Verdi revisions: to shorten the work to make it "an opera that will circulate throughout the world." (In the first five years of the opera's life [1867-72] *Don Carlos* received only an average of 6 productions per year, and in the period 1873-84 the figure dropped to a disappointing 3 productions per year.) The cuts succeeded in reducing an enormous work to a merely long one, consisting of about 2 3/4 hours of music and three intermissions, rather than four, a work roughly of the length of *La Forza del destino*. Not surprisingly, of Verdi's six most extensive revisions it alone yields no newly composed numbers, except for a brief Prelude.

Once the revision process was set into motion Verdi found that other issues needed to be addressed as well. The cuts made before the 1867 premiere had suppressed crucial information, principally two symmetrical references to adultery: Phillippe's suspicion of Elisabeth and Eboli's confession to Elizabeth of her affair with Phillippe. In rereading Schiller Verdi had noticed these omissions—curiously, he seems to have for-

gotten both that he had already composed but then cut passages that provided the necessary information and that his revision of the Posa-Phillippe duet in 1872 had restored Phillippe's revealing his suspicions to Posa. To be sure, by filling these lacunae Verdi brought the plot closer to Schiller's original play, but there is no reason to believe that Verdi considered adherence to Schiller to be a goal *per se*. Verdi never revered Schiller as he did Shakespeare; indeed, he wrote of Schiller's *Don Carlos*, "...in this drama there is nothing historical, nor is there any Shakespearian truth or profundity in the characters."

As the overview of the revised pieces indicates, Verdi directed his attention primarily to duets and kinetic duet scenes preceding other set pieces. Of the six duets that remained after Act I was removed, he revised fully half, as well as two kinetic duet scenes preceding other set pieces. Two of these duets, Carlos/Posa and Phillippe/Posa were based on (unusually flexible) treatments of the conventional form for duets: a *tempo d'attacco* (an initial movement, often a kinetic action piece), slow movement, *tempo di mezzo* (often another kinetic action piece), and cabaletta. Verdi revised both duets to distance them from the conventional structure; among other changes, he removed the slow movement from both.

Finally, the paper considered the revision of the final duet, pointing to specific stylistic traits but also to the role of this duet in a reading of the opera as a *Bildungsoper* dealing with the development of Carlos's character.



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