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Keywords

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In this article I consider certain aspects of pitch organization in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* and, to a lesser degree, that opera's earlier version, *Gustavo III/Una vendetta in dominò* (more below on the hybrid nature of this version).¹ My focus is almost entirely on Act II. Although compositional history is not my principal subject, a few issues concerning the opera's history will be discussed along the way and in my concluding remarks.

As many readers of *Verdi Forum* will know, *Un ballo in maschera* was the site of a methodological battle over thirty-five years ago. The chief antagonists were Siegmund Levarie, a follower of Alfred Lorenz, and Joseph Kerman, a follower of Donald F. Tovey.² Levarie claimed, very much *à la* Lorenz, that Verdi's opera has a single tonic (B♭), that all other keys in the opera may be understood in relation to it, and that keys separated by as many as four curtains, three hours, and two intermissions may be understood not only in relation to each other but as harmonic progressions, specifically cadential progressions. (For example, the A major that concludes Act I "may be interpreted as a tonicized leading tone," even though the centrality of B♭ is established no earlier than the end of Act II.) Leaning heavily on Tovey, Kerman argued for "strict contextualism" in key relations as opposed to Levarie's "radical absolutism." Given the last word, Levarie characterized the competing viewpoints with the Neoplatonist terms "ontic" (pertaining to being) and "gignetic" (pertaining to becoming), and he argued for the necessity of the ontic in a "civilization [... that] has completely sold out to gigneticism."

Gignetic he may have been, but Kerman was regarded by most readers (including me) as having won his argument with Levarie. Kerman did not oppose music analysis *per se*; by today's standards he was something of a formalist. In retrospect, though, the incident seems to have presaged a decline in the musical analysis of opera, a decline that Kerman's 1985 book *Contemplating Music* helped to accelerate.³ The anti-analytical tradition in writings on opera goes back, indeed, to Richard Wagner, who repeatedly cautioned that his own operatic music must not be considered simply as music, divorced from its dramatic matrix.⁴ The nadir of opera analysis may have been reached in the

¹ I wish to thank Philip Gossett and Andreas Giger for providing me with information and score material, derived from the critical edition, concerning *Un ballo in maschera* and *Gustavo III*. Vocal scores are in preparation with University of Chicago Press and Casa Ricordi; full scores are available for rental from Ricordi. The *Ballo* vocal score is edited by Ilaria Narici and Giger; the reconstructed *Gustavo III* is edited by Gossett and Narici.

² Siegmund Levarie, "Key Relations in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*," *19th-Century Music* 2 (1978): 143–47; Joseph Kerman, "Viewpoint," *19th-Century Music* 2 (1978): 186–91; Guy Marco, "On Key Relations in Opera," *19th-Century Music* 3 (1979): 83–88; Levarie, reply to Kerman, *19th-Century Music* 3 (1979): 88–89.

³ Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

⁴ Wagner's most sophisticated expression of this position is his 1879 essay *Über die Anwendung die Musik auf das Drama* ("On the Application of Music to the Drama"). An earlier expression occurs in his letter of 31 May 1852 to his friend Theodor Uhlig; see *Richard Wagner's Letters to His Dresden Friends*, trans. J[ohn] S[outh] Shedlock (New York: Scribner and Welford, 1890), 231.

recent history of opera by Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, who dedicate their book to Kerman and regard him as a formative influence.⁵ Abbate and Parker, the latter a recovering Verdi analyst, complain that discussions of harmony and melody figure too prominently in recent scholarly writings on opera. To underscore the point, their book dispenses with musical notation.

My own viewpoint is different. I have not tired of reading (or writing) about harmony and melody, and I find much operatic music, especially Verdi's, too fascinating *not* to analyze. Besides, through longstanding habit (I am a card-carrying music theorist) I find it difficult to regard listening and analysis as wholly distinct activities; at most they differ in degree. At least for this opera-lover, to be asked not to analyze is to be asked not to listen. Imagine my delight, then, when I read a review of the Abbate-Parker book by a non-professional musician, the Princeton classicist Glen W. Bowersock, who dismisses the authors' disavowal of not only musical analysis but musical examples.⁶ As Professor Bowersock puts it, "They condemn previous work on opera for introducing harmonic and melodic detail, but without a technical mastery of harmony and counterpoint none of the composers who interest them could have written any notes worth hearing." Just so. Verdi devoted much inspired effort, not to mention years of training, to his "little hooks" (*rampini*, his humorous term for notes).⁷ Analysts do him no wrong when they ponder the patterns that resulted.

Another analytical treatment of *Un ballo in maschera*, by Roger Parker (of Abbate-Parker fame) and Matthew Brown, appeared a few years after the Levarie-Kerman kerfuffle.⁸ Because it mostly concerns the first scene of Act I, their study has limited bearing on the present one. But its methodological eclecticism—a combination of quasi-Schenkerian analysis, David Lawton's concept of "double cycle," and a certain amount of *ad hoc* association—is appealing;⁹ and the authors' attitude toward pitch organization in Verdi is one that I largely share. The following could almost have been written by Kerman:

[I]t seems that the musical structure of the opera, whether geared to motivic or harmonic matters, or to both, lies essentially in an accumulation of detail rather than in any abstract pattern. Verdi's treatment of tonality and motive is best expressed metaphorically as a complex web of interlocking relationships. [...] What all this proves is that any *one* explanation of the tonal or motivic structure of a piece as complex as *Un ballo in maschera* is bound to be unsatisfactory.¹⁰

⁵ Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, *A History of Opera* (New York: Norton, 2012).

⁶ Glen W. Bowersock, "Opera is Not Dead," *The New Republic*, 27 May 2013; <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/113095/opera-not-dead>; accessed 16 November 2014.

⁷ The term reportedly derives from a conversation overheard by Verdi between two peasants on his farm at Sant'Agata. See, e.g., *Bollettino dell'Istituto di Studi Verdiani* 1, no. 1 (1960), "Un ballo in maschera," 242 and 596.

⁸ Roger Parker and Matthew Brown, "Motivic and Tonal Interaction in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 36 (1983): 243–65.

⁹ Lawton's concept is thoroughly explored in his Ph.D. dissertation, "Tonality and Drama in Verdi's Early Operas," University of California, 1973.

¹⁰ Parker and Brown, "Motivic and Tonal Interaction," 262–63 and 264.

I agree, but with mild reservations. I do not abjure “ontic” relationships entirely, although I invoke them far more cautiously than Levarie did. Also, it is not entirely clear what Parker and Brown mean by “abstract pattern.” If they mean “predetermined pattern,” I am with them (and the opera’s compositional history bears me out). If they mean patterns, the explication of which involves a fair degree of abstraction, I cannot agree.

Two further studies of *Ballo*, both analytical in part, appeared in Martin Chusid’s 1997 volume *Verdi’s Middle Period*. One, by Elizabeth Hudson, discusses major-minor contrasts in the opera as part of its celebrated *chiaroscuro*.¹¹ Her most interesting analytical observation is that the key of B♭ major—Levarie’s putative tonic—plays a similar role in each act, dissolving menacing situations into (temporary) mirth. Riccardo’s “È scherzo od è follia” (Act I), the “laughing chorus” that ends Act II, and Oscar’s “Di che fulgor” (Act III) are indeed parallel in just this way. This doesn’t mean that B♭ major is tonally central, as Levarie claimed, merely that it is Comedy Central—a key that wears the mask of comedy while certain minor keys, especially B♭ minor, wear that of tragedy. The other is Harold Powers’s “*La dama velata*,” which I have saved for last because it is the most impressive study of all and because, had it not existed, I would have published an article like this one at least ten years earlier.¹² Henceforth I will mix my observations with Powers’s, but I will try to keep clear which ideas originate with him.

In 2000, as I was just beginning to study opera in a purposeful way, I undertook an analysis of individual acts from several operas; one was Act II of *Un ballo in maschera*. I found much that excited me, including a connection of the act’s first three numbers into a sort of super-number and a large-scale harmonic design that hinged on a single diminished-seventh chord. After analyzing the act, I looked to see what had been written about it. I soon came upon Powers’s then-recent essay, in which all of my main discoveries were presented, and in which those musical insights were set within a study of the opera’s history, libretto, and staging of which I would not have been capable then or, indeed, now. I proceeded to cover Act II in a seminar that fall, but I set aside my plan to publish an article on it. It was David Rosen’s invitation to participate in the 2013 Verdi study day at Cornell that led me back to my old notes on *Ballo* and to the thought that I might be able to offer a few observations complementary to Powers’s. At Rosen’s suggestion I contacted Philip Gossett, who sent me photocopies of Act II from the still incomplete and unpublished critical edition of the vocal scores to *Ballo* (with its originally intended Swedish setting and hence retitled *Gustavo III*) and its earlier musical incarnation, the latter reconstructed from Verdi’s continuity draft for *Gustavo III* (Act I) / *Una vendetta in dominò* (Acts II–III).¹³ Powers did not have access to Verdi’s continuity

¹¹ Elizabeth Hudson, “Masking Music: A Reconsideration of Light and Shade in *Un ballo in maschera*,” in *Verdi’s Middle Period, 1849–1859: Source Studies, Analysis, and Performance Practice*, ed. Martin Chusid, 257–72 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

¹² Harold Powers, “*La dama velata*: Act II of *Un ballo in maschera*,” in *Verdi’s Middle Period*, 273–336.

¹³ The opera was known first by the title *Gustavo III* and then, by the end of December 1857, as *Una vendetta in dominò*, with its setting transposed from Stockholm to Stettin (modern-day Szczecin). The libretto of the reconstructed *Gustavo III* follows the 1858 revision (for Rome) of Antonio Somma’s libretto. See Philip Gossett, *Divas and Scholars: Performing Italian Opera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

draft of *Gustavo/Vendetta*, which remains in the possession of the Carrara-Verdi family.¹⁴ His study is based on Verdi's autograph score of *Ballo*, housed in the Ricordi Archives in Milan, which (as Gossett has detailed) includes approximately three-quarters of the skeleton score of *Una vendetta in dominò*.¹⁵

Of the four numbers in Act II of *Vendetta* (numbers 3–6 in *Ballo*), Powers's essay concerns the first three, which cohere musically on the basis of both tonality and harmonic detail.¹⁶ (Verdi also directs that they be performed without pause.) The opening number, Scena ed Aria Amelia, begins in D minor and ends in F major. The third number, Terzetto, traces the reverse trajectory, beginning in F major and ending in D minor. The intervening Duetto moves from A minor to C major, but its *cantabile* or slow movement is primarily in F major. Example 1 (p. 18) gives an overview of Act II, including the finale, from the standpoint of key. Later I will comment on the special role of F major in this act.

Amelia's Scena ed Aria is organized around not two keys (D minor, F major) but three: A^b major is an important presence in both parts; indeed, as Powers notes, the first version of the *scena* ended with full closure in A^b major. Amelia's three tonics, D–F–A^b, are separated by minor thirds, and these minor thirds are incorporated into a frequently recurring sonority, the diminished-seventh chord D–F–A^b–B^h, which Powers calls "Amelia's diminished-seventh chord." Enharmonic reinterpretation allows the same diminished-seventh chord to resolve into all three of Amelia's keys, acting in each case as a leading-tone seventh chord to the dominant: vii^{o7}/V, or, as Heinrich Schenker would have put it, #IV⁷, a chord a tritone removed from the tonic.¹⁷ Although Powers notes the pre-dominant function of the chord, he does not point out the tritone relationship. The consistency of harmonic function should not be taken for granted; it is something deliberately chosen by Verdi. It means that the chord, when rooted on G#, will resolve to the key of D; when rooted on D, it will resolve to the key of A^b; when rooted on B^h, it will resolve to the key of F.¹⁸ Examples of all three resolutions are shown in Example 2 (p. 18). One might say that the chord's four pitch-classes are refracted into a set of four tonics, any of which may be realized in either mode. Missing from Act II is a resolution to the key of B. In this connection, one recalls that a mixed B major/minor (B major for Riccardo, B minor for the conspirators) is where *Un ballo in maschera* begins, and that this is an unusual key for a Verdian beginning.¹⁹ This B major/minor music is echoed, a

2008), 489–513, especially 493; see also *Carteggio Verdi-Somma*, ed. Simonetta Ricciardi (Parma: Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani, 2004).

¹⁴ The family has generously made these materials available for study in the preparation of the critical edition.

¹⁵ Gossett, *Divas and Scholars*, 501–03.

¹⁶ Gossett (*ibid.*, 602, n25) notes that these numbers, and only these, are missing from Verdi's continuity draft. Powers's essay "The Laughing Chorus in Contexts" (*Un ballo in maschera*, English National Opera Guide, ed. Nicholas John, 23–40 [London: Calder, 1989]) is devoted to the Act II finale.

¹⁷ Following the Viennese fundamental-bass tradition established by Simon Sechter, Schenker (like Schoenberg) used upper-case Roman numerals exclusively.

¹⁸ I am using third-stacking as my criterion for determining the root of diminished-seventh chords. Many theorists, from Rameau onward, have determined the root in other ways.

¹⁹ One learns from Gossett (*Divas and Scholars*, 505) that, in the continuity draft, Act II ended in B major, not the B^b major of the skeleton score and the final version. I do not claim special significance for this B major, however, not only because it did not survive into the skeleton score but also because Amelia's diminished-seventh chord plays a somewhat smaller role in *Vendetta* than it does in *Ballo*.

tritone away, by the conspirators' music in F (mostly minor) at the beginning of the Act II finale. These tritone-related tonics are members of Amelia's diminished-seventh chord.

No. 3. Scena ed Aria Amelia (**d**→**F**)

Sinfonia: **d**–**D**–**d** [mm. 1–28 prolong **d**:V]

Scena: **d**→(**f**)→**A****b**:**V**⁷

Aria: **f** (with hints of **A****b**)→**d** [prolongs **d**:V]→**F**

No. 4. Duetto (**a**→**C**)

Introduction (mm. 1–8): (**d**)→**a**

Tempo d'attacco: **a**→**D**→**a**→**C**–**F**:**V**

Cantabile: **F**→**D****b**→(**A**)→**F**

Tempo di mezzo (same tempo and meter): **F**:**V**→**A** (*Più lento*)→(**d**)→**g**–**C**:**V**

Cabaletta: **C**→**E** (*[Più lento] come prima*)→**C**

No. 5. Terzetto (**F**→**d**)

Scena: **C**–**F**:**V**

Tempo d'attacco: **F**–**f**→(**D****b**)→(**b****b**)→**F**

Tempo di mezzo: **A****b**:**V**→**F**:**V**→**d**:**V**

Cabaletta: **d**

No. 6. Finale II (unstable→**D****b**→**B****b**)

Recitative: **d**→**F**/**f**:**V**

Conspirators (*versi lirici*): **f**:**V**→**D****b**:**V**

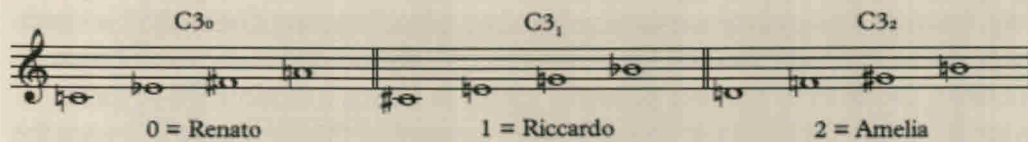
Moderato (*Tempo d'attacco*): **D****b**→**A**–(**a**)→(**d**)–**g**:**V**

Laughing Chorus (*Concertato*): **B****b**→(**g**→**d**→**F**)→**B****b**→(**D****b**→**b****b**:**V**)–**B****b**

Keys in parentheses are transient. Arrows indicate progression to a new key or root. Occurrences of the interval cycles **D**–**F**–**A****b** (minor thirds) and **D****b**–**F**–**A****b** (major thirds) are highlighted in boldface.

Example 1. Overview of keys in Act II of *Un ballo in maschera*

Example 2. Three possible resolutions of “Amelia’s diminished-seventh chord” from her Act II Scena ed Aria



Example 3. The three distinct diminished-seventh chords and Powers's assignments of dramatic significance

Example 3 (above) shows the three diminished-seventh chords that exist within the equally tempered twelve-pitch-class system, together with Powers's assignment of dramatic significance to each. I follow George Perle in labeling each diminished-seventh chord as a cycle of three-semitone intervals (minor thirds and augmented seconds). The label C₃, which stands for "cycle 3" or "interval-3 cycle," indicates a complete cycle of minor thirds/augmented seconds, such as C–E \flat –F \sharp –A–C; each note in the cycle is three semitones away from the nearest note on either side.²⁰ C₄ indicates a cycle of major thirds/diminished fourths, such as C–E–G \sharp (A \flat)–C. C₂ denotes the whole-tone scale, C₁ the chromatic scale. A subscript may be added to indicate the lowest pitch-class number within a given interval cycle, using the well-known system of numerical correspondences in which 0 represents C \natural or B \sharp , 1 represents C \sharp or D \flat , 2 represents D \natural , and so forth. Thus the label C₃₀ refers to that transposition of the diminished-seventh chord that includes the note C, namely C–E \flat –F \sharp –A and all of its enharmonic equivalents. C₃₁ refers to the diminished-seventh chord C \sharp –E–G–B \flat , including any and all enharmonic respellings; C₃₂ does the same for D–F–A \flat –B. As Example 3 shows, Powers identifies C₃₀ with the character of Renato, C₃₁ with Riccardo, and C₃₂ with Amelia.

Powers's identification of C₃₀ with Renato is mistaken, in my opinion. If this chord belongs to anyone in *Ballo*, it is Ulrica. Example 4 (p. 20) shows the orchestral introduction to Ulrica's *invocazione* in Act I. This scene-setting music employs all three diminished-seventh chords (they are labeled in Ex. 4), but C₃₀ is clearly the main one, as befits Ulrica's key of C minor (as in Act II, diminished-seventh chords function here mostly as #IV⁷). Striking, however, is the unresolved statement of Amelia's diminished-seventh chord, C₃₂, in mm. 21–22: although Amelia is not yet present in the scene, she will eventually become its focus. If "her" chord is interpreted here as #IV⁷, the implied key is D, probably D minor, Amelia's key at the beginning of Act II. Notice the emphasis, in mm. 4–6, on the bare tritone, the *diabolus in musica*, and the melodic motive of the rising and falling third (usually a minor third) throughout the passage. Both features will recur.

Example 5 (p. 21) shows the orchestral introduction to Amelia's Act II *scena* in *Una vendetta in dominò*, as reconstructed by Gossett and Narici. Gossett has rightly noted a strong resemblance to the music of Example 4.²¹ If Example 4 strains the limits of conventional tonal coherence, Example 5 surely exceeds them. We begin seemingly on the dominant of C, with the tritone F \sharp –C representing #IV⁷ in that key. This is C₃₀, Ulrica's diminished-seventh chord. The full chord enters just afterward (m. 7) in all its

²⁰ George Perle introduced this notation for interval cycles in *The Operas of Alban Berg: Lulu* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 199.

²¹ Gossett, *Divas and Scholars*, 504.

diabolic glory. Rather than resolving to C minor, Verdi resolves the chord to F# major, a tritone away, treating it as a common-tone rather than a leading-tone diminished seventh. A plagal cadence in F# major follows (mm. 10–12).²² A unison chromatic ascent then leads to A minor, the third of the four potential tonics in Ulrica's diminished-seventh chord (the fourth tonic, Eb, does not appear). After a return of the oscillation between the bass G and the F#–C tritone, C minor is firmly established with the help of C3₂, Amelia's diminished-seventh chord (m. 20), here used uncharacteristically as vii^{o7} rather than #IV⁷.

Example 4. Orchestral introduction to Ulrica's scene in Act I of *Un ballo in maschera*²³

²² One might hear this as a half cadence in B minor, but the rhythmic gesture more strongly suggests a plagal cadence.

²³ Giuseppe Verdi, *Un ballo in maschera: melodramma in tre atti* (Milan: Ricordi, 2006), vocal score, plate number 48180.

Allegro

pp

6a

ff

10a

pp

crescendo

15a

ff

19a

ff

pp

Example 5. Orchestral introduction to Amelia's Act II *scena* in *Gustavo III/Una vendetta in dominò*, as reconstructed by Gossett and Narici (© Casa Ricordi, Milan, by kind permission)

Example 6. Samiel motive from Weber's *Der Freischütz*

Ulrica's *invocazione* is not the only previous music that Example 5 calls to mind. It also recalls—perhaps too closely for Verdi's comfort—the Wolf's Glen scene from

Weber's *Der Freischütz*, which is based on the same diminished-seventh chord, C3₀, and on the same set of minor-third-related tonics (Weber uses all four). Verdi's first six measures, which recur twice more in abbreviated form, also recall—again, perhaps too closely—the Samiel motive from *Der Freischütz* (Ex. 6, p. 21). The resemblance to Weber's depiction of supernatural horror may be one reason why Verdi recomposed Amelia's *scena* when it came time to revise the opera for its belated premiere.²⁴ Another effect of the revision is that Amelia now appears—in this, her only solo number in the opera—as a heroine in her own right, not as a musical appendage of Ulrica.

Example 7. End of Amelia's Act II *scena* in *Gustavo III/Una vendetta in dominò* (© Casa Ricordi, Milan, by kind permission)

²⁴ Verdi's knowledge of *Der Freischütz* is conjectural but extremely likely. The opera's Italian premiere at the Teatro della Pergola in Florence (1843) forms part of the prehistory of Verdi's *Macbeth* (1847), another opera in the *genere fantastico*. In his chapter on *Macbeth* in *Studio sulle opere di Giuseppe Verdi* (1859), Abramo Basevi cites both *Der Freischütz* and Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable* in connection with *Macbeth*. In addition, *Der Freischütz* was a favorite in Paris from its introduction in 1824 (as *Robin des bois*) until at least 1870, receiving 201 performances between 1855 and 1868 alone; Katherine Ellis, "Systems Failure in Operatic Paris," in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist, 49–71 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), at 55.

Example 7 (p. 22) shows the end of Amelia's *scena* in *Gustavo/Vendetta*. Her diminished-seventh chord, C3₂, has by this point displaced Ulrica's C3₀; even the oscillation between a bass note and a tritone has adjusted to the new chord (see mm. 55–59). As it usually does, the chord functions here as #IV⁷, leading to the aforementioned full close in A^b (mm. 60–62).

Powers traces the network of diminished-seventh chords in Act II of *Un ballo in maschera*, the opera's final version. This may be the most important network of pitch relations in the act, but it is not the only one. I will describe three others.

Example 8 (below) shows nine fragments selected from a motivic network based on the interval of a fourth, either perfect or diminished, that is usually traversed by step. (Powers notes several of these statements, but only ones in which the fourth is perfect.) In many cases the motivic fourth is not a harmonic interval, meaning that its beginning and ending notes do not belong to the same harmony; indeed, a diminished fourth cannot be harmonic except in the context of an augmented triad, a chord little used in *Ballo*. But the fourth is a prominent melodic interval throughout the three numbers with which we are concerned. The perfect fourth is the unmarked interval of the pair; the diminished fourth is marked by its dissonance.

Example 8. Nine fragments selected from a motivic network based on the interval of a fourth

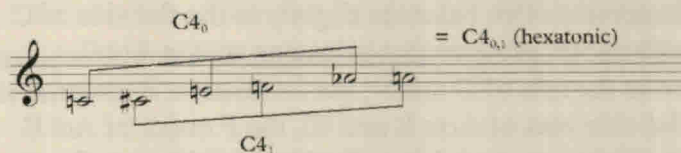
The diminished fourth F–C# is present obliquely in the act's first two chords (Ex. 8a), but this dissonant interval comes to the fore as a malevolent bass interjection—scored for low bassoons, trombones, and cimbasso—between the phrases of Amelia's prayer theme, which appears here as a quotation from the Ulrica scene in Act I (Ex. 8b). Meanwhile, her prayer soars heavenward on the wings of a diatonic, ascending, harmonic fourth in the solo flute (Ex. 8c). The ominously descending diminished fourth returns, transposed, just before the end of Amelia's *scena* (Ex. 8d). Diatonically descending, the perfect fourth F–C is the vehicle for Amelia's first reminder to Riccardo, in the duet, that she belongs to his loyal friend Renato (Ex. 8e). Later in the duet (Ex. 8f) it is Riccardo who sings the diatonic fourth, again F–C, as he begs Amelia to admit that she loves him. In the first movement of the trio, Riccardo sings the descending fourth, yet again F–C, as he swears to protect Amelia (Ex. 8g). In the same movement, a rare appearance of an augmented triad includes the diminished fourth F–C# as a vertical interval (Ex. 8h). The same diminished fourth, native to the key of D minor, appears in the bass of the trio's final movement (Ex. 8i). The fourth-motive, like the super-number as a whole, thus comes full circle, from D minor to D minor. All but two of our examples have involved motion from some form of F (natural or flat) to some form of C (natural or sharp).

A second network involves chords of the augmented sixth and its inversion, the diminished third; Example 9 (below) shows four instances. One of the most striking sonorities in the act is the inverted augmented-sixth chord with appoggiatura shown in Example 9a; notice the use of both C \flat and C#, with a hint of cross-relation between the two. Equally arresting is the common-tone augmented sixth to A major in Example 9b, approached and spelled as though it were the dominant seventh of B \flat ; the inner-voice ascent C \flat –C# is the locus of surprise here. This motion is reversed when the original tempo returns: C# descends to C \flat in the bass (Ex. 9c), restoring the key of F (now F major). A more conventional use of the augmented-sixth chord is seen in Example 9d, but here the contrast between D \flat and C# in the bass touches on another of the act's enharmonic preoccupations—and this brings me to the last of my three networks.

The musical score for Example 9 consists of four parts, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. Part a) Amelia: The vocal line has a melodic phrase, and the piano accompaniment features a diminished third chord (C#) and an augmented sixth chord (C#). Part b) Amelia: The vocal line has a melodic phrase, and the piano accompaniment features a diminished third chord (C#) and an augmented sixth chord (C#). Part c) oboe: The oboe line has a melodic phrase, and the piano accompaniment features a diminished third chord (C#) and an augmented sixth chord (C#). Part d) Amelia: The vocal line has a melodic phrase, and the piano accompaniment features a diminished third chord (C#) and an augmented sixth chord (C#).

Example 9. Four instances from a motivic network involving chords of the augmented sixth and diminished third

The relation just outlined between $C\sharp$ and $C\#/D\flat$ is part of a larger construct, a hexatonic system, shown in Example 10 (below). This is my third network. The hexatonic collection, set class (014589), has figured prominently in recent writings on nineteenth-century harmony, especially those by Richard Cohn.²⁵ It can be understood as, among other things, the union of two augmented triads a semitone apart—in this case, the augmented triads $C-E-A\flat$ ($C4_0$) and $C\sharp-F-A$ ($C4_1$). Perle's label for the entire six-note collection would be $C4_{0,1}$, the comma representing union. Any hexatonic collection contains six consonant triads, three major and three minor: the collection in Example 10 includes major and minor triads on F, A, and $C\#/D\flat$.



Example 10. A hexatonic system

William Drabkin and Edward T. Cone have noted Verdi's deployment of major-third cycles in, respectively, *Il trovatore* and *Simon Boccanegra* (the latter chiefly in its 1881 revision).²⁶ Unlike Cohn, these authors consider only tonic notes in their accounts of interval cycles. Both point to the cycle $C4_0$, $C-E-A\flat$, as a basis for large-scale harmonic organization. $C4_0$ was much favored by nineteenth-century composers, as Matthew Bribitzer-Stull has made clear.²⁷ If we restrict ourselves to major keys, $C4_0$ relates, and balances, a four-sharp key (E major), a four-flat key ($A\flat$ major), and a neutral key (C major).²⁸ Verdi and other nineteenth-century composers may have favored $C4_0$ for this reason, since contrasts between sharp and flat keys often have dramatic significance in nineteenth-century music. Beethoven's *Fidelio* is another opera that makes use of $C4_0$, the cycle's major keys being associated with Leonora (E major), Florestan ($A\flat$ major), and liberty (C major).

In Act II of *Un ballo in maschera*, Verdi forms patterns of tonics using a different major-third cycle, $F-A-D\flat$ or $C4_1$. $C4_1$ governs two passages, the central part of the duet and the beginning of the finale (not including the introductory recitative). Refer back to Example 1 (p. 18), where keys related by either $C4_1$ or $C3_2$ are highlighted in boldface. In the duet, the A-major avowal of love in the *tempo di mezzo* is balanced by Amelia's $D\flat$ -major response to Riccardo in the *cantabile*. Both keys, A and $D\flat$, are reached from F major, to which they relate as chromatic mediants, respectively III \sharp and \flat VI. Before the

²⁵ See especially Richard Cohn, *Audacious Euphony: Chromatic Harmony and the Triad's Second Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Cohn, one of the few American theorists to include examples by Verdi in his work, discusses a passage from *Il trovatore* on p. 116.

²⁶ William Drabkin, "Character, Key Relations and Tonal Structure in *Il trovatore*," *Music Analysis* 1 (1982): 143–53; Edward T. Cone, "On the Road to *Otello*: Tonality and Structure in *Simon Boccanegra*," *Studi Verdiani* 1 (1982): 72–98.

²⁷ 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 (2006): 167–90.

²⁸ In *Il trovatore*, the key of E is more often minor than major, E minor being one of the keys associated with Azucena. See Pierluigi Petrobelli, "Towards an Explanation of the Dramatic Structure of *Il trovatore*," trans. William Drabkin, *Music Analysis* 1 (1982): 129–41 (reprinted in Petrobelli's *Music in the Theater: Essays on Verdi and Other Composers* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994], 100–12); and Drabkin's own article in the same issue (full citation in note 26 here above).

music returns from D \flat major to F major to end the *cantabile*, the orchestra turns the bass note D \flat into C \sharp , supporting a first-inversion A-major chord (review Ex. 9c). This chord foreshadows the ecstatic A major of the *tempo di mezzo*.

The mid-nineteenth-century theorist Carl Friedrich Weitzmann was the first to observe that any diminished-seventh chord shares exactly one note with any augmented triad.²⁹ C3₂ (diminished-seventh chord) and C4₁ (augmented triad) thus overlap by one note; that note happens to be F.³⁰ Not surprisingly, F major plays a mediating role in Act II, especially as a point of departure and return in the Duetto and the Terzetto (refer, again, to Ex. 1, p. 18).

Especially in his middle period, Verdi's flat keys tend to have more flats than his sharp keys have sharps, so his tonal universe often balances slightly to the flat side of C major. The one-flat system, F major/D minor, plays such a balancing role in Act II. Powers has drawn deserved attention to the role of D minor, but its relative, F major, is almost as important. Owing to the flat-side bias of Acts II and III, the F major of Act II bears something of the neutral quality that is commonly ascribed to C major—the quality of contextual, if not absolute, balance between sharp and flat sides. I, at least, hear the B \flat major of the “laughing chorus” as having gone one step beyond harmonic equilibrium, as if to prepare the overwhelming preponderance of flat keys in Act III. From a “gignetic” rather than an “ontic” point of view, the B \flat major that ends Act II is not a resolution, much less one to the “tonic,” but a leap into the unknown, much as Amelia's public unveiling by her husband extinguishes the last chance for marital and political equilibrium to be restored to seventeenth-century Boston. Act II points beyond itself, both dramatically and tonally. It is only in Act III—and only in that act's latter half—that B \flat becomes, arguably, something like a tonic for the opera as a whole.

Although Acts II and III include passages in sharp keys, such passages are more prominent in Act II, where they get progressively sharper: D, A, and E major, in that order. In neither act do sharp key signatures appear in the score, whereas Act I begins with a signature of five sharps and ends with one of three. Sharp-side sonorities erupt throughout Act II, reflecting the eruption of love between Amelia and Riccardo. Several of these moments occur in the cabaletta of the Act II duet, where they are set in relief by the movement's main key of C major; triads to the sharp side of C major are sharp in absolute as well as relative terms. Four passages from the cabaletta are shown in Example 11 (p. 27). The second and third statements of the cabaletta theme are separated by an intensified outburst of the *Più lento* music, now in E major (Ex. 11a) in place of the earlier A major. The cabaletta's coda begins (Ex. 11b) with a repeated C-major cadence in which the vocal lines outline an E-major triad, if one allows A \flat to count as an enharmonic equivalent to G \sharp . Soon afterward, chords of A major, then B major, come crashing in, with full participation of the orchestra's brass section (Exx. 11c and 11d). Although these chords resolve conventionally as secondary dominants, the way that Verdi underscores them rhythmically and orchestrally points to larger, associative meanings.

²⁹ Carl Friedrich Weitzmann, *Der übermässige Dreiklang* (Berlin: T. Trautwein, 1853); trans. Janna Saslaw as “The Augmented Triad,” *Theory and Practice* 29 (2004): 133–228.

³⁰ Had Verdi used C4₀ instead of C4₁, the common tone would have been A \flat .

a) Orch. (Piu lento) *ff* etc.

b) Ricc., then "E major" Amelia

c) Riccardo *p* *f*

d) Amelia

Example 11. Four passages from the cabaletta of the Act II Duetto between Amelia and Riccardo

Powers believes that the aria, duet, and trio together constitute a super-number within Act II; I came to the same conclusion independently. Powers asserts super-numberhood partly on the basis of tonal return: the trio ends in D minor, the key in which Act II begins. As is well known, though, tonal return (a/k/a “tonal unity”) is not a requirement for Verdi even within a single number, much less within a super-number. Why is it relevant that the trio ends in D minor? Do the three numbers compose out the D-minor triad in a sense that Heinrich Schenker would have recognized? Carl Schachter has claimed exactly this for the overture and the first two numbers of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, an opera that Verdi knew thoroughly thanks to his early study with Vincenzo Lavigna.³¹ Schachter makes a convincing case for a D-minor prolongation throughout Mozart’s super-number.

I make no such claim for *Un ballo in maschera*. What binds Verdi’s three numbers together is, first, the recurring use of Amelia’s diminished-seventh chord as a pivot, both literal and figurative, in the music’s modulatory journey, something that Powers has eloquently demonstrated. Second, there are the motivic and harmonic cross-references among the three numbers, many of which Powers identifies. Third, there is the undeniable return of D minor after an extended absence. But what makes this return so powerful—what makes it signify closure—is not merely the *fact* of return but the *way* in which D minor returns.

Example 12 (p. 28) shows the recitative-like passage that immediately precedes the trio’s D-minor *stretta*. The orchestral texture here is based on the motive of a minor third traversed chromatically, recalling the storm scene in *Rigoletto*; significantly, the same motive was prominent at the end of the *sinfonia* preceding Amelia’s Act II aria. Using this motive, Verdi climbs down a ladder of minor thirds, from the dominant of A \flat to the dominant of F to the dominant of D, precisely reversing the series of ascending minor thirds in Amelia’s *scena*. When we reach the timpani’s ominous roll on V of D minor, I cannot help but feel that we have returned to the emotion and the color of the act’s opening pages—Verdi’s “sinfonia of strong and terrifying colors (*sinfonia a tinte*

³¹ Carl Schachter, “E Pluribus Unum: Large-Scale Connections in the Opening Scenes of *Don Giovanni*,” *Essays from the Fourth International Schenker Symposium*, ed. Allen Cadwallader, 2 vols. (Hildesheim: Olms, 2008), I: 3–22. See also Petrobelli, “Verdi and *Don Giovanni*: On the Opening Scene of *Rigoletto*,” in *Music in the Theater*, 34–47.

forti e terribili),³² whose first twenty-eight measures prolong, in a Schenkerian sense, the dominant of D minor. As Amelia sings at the beginning of the *stretta*, “Odi tu come fremono cupi / Per quest’ aura gli accenti di morte?” [Do you hear the tones of death trembling grimly in the night air?], she has been hearing those tones since the beginning of the act, if not before. Now we hear them, too, thanks in part to the ways in which the *stretta* brings the super-number back to its beginning.

(Indicando Amelia)

RI. Pro-met-ti-mi, giu-ra che tu l'addur-rai, ve-la-ta, in cit-

RE. -po-ni.

RI. -tà... ne un det-to, ne un guar-do su es-sa trar-

RI. -rai. E che toc-che le por-te, n'an-

REN. Lo giu-ro.

RI. -drai da so-lo all'op-po-sto.

RE. Lo giu-ro, e sa-rà.

(Timp.)

The musical score consists of four systems. Each system includes vocal lines (RI. and RE.) and piano accompaniment. Annotations include circled chord symbols: $A^b: V$, $f: V$, and $d: V$. The piano part features a prominent bass line with a strong sense of harmonic direction. The vocal lines are in a recitative-like style. The score concludes with a timpani roll.

Example 12. The recitative-like passage preceding the D-minor *stretta* of the Act II Terzetto (Verdi, *Un ballo in maschera*, Ricordi vocal score, plate number 48180)

³² The description is Verdi's, part of a memorandum explaining the impossibility of a proposed revision of the *Gustavo/Vendetta* libretto at the behest of the Neapolitan censors. The passage is reproduced in Powers, “*La dama velata*,” 277, and Carteggio Verdi-Somma, 370.

Serious arguments have been made against the significance of key relations in Verdi's operas. These do not include the argument-free (and very British) prejudice of Julian Budden, who dismisses the subject at the outset of his Verdian *magnum opus*.³³ Nor did Kerman, for all his Toveyan skepticism, reject key relations as a legitimate object of contemplation. The most serious objections have come from musicologists who have studied Verdi's compositional process, because they have seen at first hand how frequently Verdi altered keys in the process of composition and revision. With respect to *Vendetta/Ballo*, for example, Gossett has noted that parts of Act II, including the final "laughing chorus," were initially sketched in other keys.³⁴ Many other instances of *en route* transposition, often by half step, have been discussed in the Verdi literature. As we know from the well-documented case of the Act II quartet in *Otello*, which Verdi transposed from B major to B \flat major, some (perhaps many) of these transpositions were made out of concern for vocal range and timbre.³⁵ In many cases, though, only more or less educated guesses at Verdi's intentions can be made.

James Hepokoski and Harold Powers have devoted well-known studies to the subject of Verdi's transpositions, both focusing primarily on operas from Verdi's middle period.³⁶ The two come to much the same conclusion—namely, that when a passage in an opera is transposed from one key to another, it comes to participate in what Hepokoski calls "the web of tonalities" in a different way: the passage continues to associate with other passages in the opera on the basis of key, but the passages with which it associates are different ones. (Hepokoski coined the term "split association" to describe this change.) What neither author says, but both seem to imply, is that in a work as manifold as a Verdi opera, the act of association itself is inevitable.

That is the stance taken in the present study, although I may be giving it a slightly more radical spin. Who is doing the associating, the composer or the listener? Ideally both, I suppose, but the ideal is not necessary for association to occur. Short of being drugged or distracted, a certain kind of listener will always make musical associations, whether the author intended them or not. I cannot vouch for Verdi's intent for any of the musical relationships that I have pointed out here, but the considerable overlap between my analytical findings and Powers's establishes an intersubjective reality, at least, to our hearings of *Un ballo in maschera*. I would very much like to let Verdi in on the game, and I strongly suspect that he was an active participant long before Powers or I came onto the scene. But I cannot prove it, and Verdi is unavailable for comment.

³³ "There is no way of explaining the relations or lack of them." Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 3 vols. (New York: Praeger, 1973; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), I: 15.

³⁴ See Gossett, *Divas and Scholars*, 602, n25 and n26. More detailed information is given in his article "The Skeleton Score of Verdi's *Una vendetta in domino* [sic]: Two Surviving Fragments," *Notes* 64 (2008): 417–34. Andreas Giger informs me (personal communication) that the duet's cabaletta was originally sketched in B \flat major instead of C major, and that other portions of the duet were also transposed.

³⁵ See James Hepokoski, "Verdi's Composition of *Otello*: The Act II Quartet," in *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner*, ed. Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, 125–49 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

³⁶ James Hepokoski, "Compositional Emendations in Verdi's Autograph Scores: *Il trovatore*, *Un ballo in maschera*, and *Aida*," *Studi Verdiani* 4 (1986–87): 87–109; Harold Powers, "One Halfstep at a Time: Tonal Transposition and 'Split Association' in Italian Opera," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 7 (1995): 135–64. Powers's study includes operas by Puccini as well as Verdi.